2-3. Information on Disaster Management Systems

The major components of a disaster management system include the legal system, organizations, basic plans, and disaster manuals.

(1) Legal frameworks

Not all countries have national laws comparable to Japan's "Disaster Countermeasures Basic Act." The cultural backgrounds and processes for formulating laws and regulations vary from country to country, and there is no single "best way" for all countries to follow. Still, sharing information on the disaster legislation adopted in different countries can provide useful reference material for countries striving to establish similar legal frameworks or to improve their current frameworks.

(2) Organizations

As is the case for legal frameworks, disaster reduction agencies vary from country to country. These organizations are often restructured while the fundamental legal framework for disaster reduction remains unchanged. National variations in environmental conditions and socio-cultural backgrounds do not reduce the significance of studying the organizational systems of other countries since disaster reduction is a common purpose shared by all nations. Knowledge of the roles and chains of command adopted in the organizations of other countries is also important for facilitating international collaboration on disaster reduction.

(3) Basic plans

Many member countries have yet to develop comprehensive disaster reduction plans designed to strategically strengthen their disaster preparedness. Open and shared information on the disaster reduction plans adopted in other countries will serve as a useful resource to countries planning to formulate or revise their disaster reduction plans. Feedback and reviews from these countries will also be useful in promoting multinational collaboration on disaster reduction.

(4) Disaster manuals

Most disaster manuals or hazard maps are compiled based on the natural disasters experienced by a particular country or region, or based on the type of natural disaster specific to a particular area. However, inaccessibility to such manuals and hazard maps makes it difficult for countries and regions that have suffered similar disasters to share experiences and information on countermeasures, and can hamper the actual implementation of international, regional, national, or inter-regional cooperation. ADRC is therefore committed to collecting information and facilitating the sharing of existing disaster manuals and hazard maps. Waves of urbanization and globalization continue to accelerate the pace of change, and ADRC will continue its efforts to promote the exchange of valuable experiences, knowledge, and views of disaster management measures that have been accumulated throughout Asia.

(5) Levels of information sources

Since the first responders in a disaster situation are individuals, local communities, and municipal governments (cities, towns, or villages), it is important to collect information not only at the national level, but also at the local government (city, town, and village) and community levels. Central governments and the international community step in only when a disaster exceeds the capabilities of local governments. Legal and organizational frameworks established by a central government alone do not automatically improve actual disaster reduction capabilities and preparedness down to the municipal and grassroots levels. To build a disaster-resistant society, cross-organizational cooperation is indispensable. Information sharing at all levels is the first step toward this goal.

(6) Reports from member countries

In 2008, ADRC continued its effort to gather information on the disaster reduction systems of member countries by issuing requests for information, conducting field surveys, and holding international conferences, and by through its own unique methods using the Internet. All these reports are available on the ADRC website. In recent years, the disaster reduction organizations of many countries have been actively promoting information dissemination over the Internet. The ADRC website has links to these websites in situations where it is more efficient to point users to those sites for the latest information than to add reports to the ADRC website.