
2. Highlights of 2010/2011

2-1. Mentawai Islands Tsunami Field Survey

The earthquake that struck off Sumatra Island on the night of 25 October triggered a tsunami and left more than 500 people dead or missing on North and South Pagai in the Mentawai Islands. The Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC) participated in the Indonesia and Japan joint survey team organized by the "JICA-JST Indonesia Multi-disciplinary Hazard Reduction from Earthquakes and Volcanoes in Indonesia" project. During the field survey, ADRC focused on such areas as disaster preparedness (awareness, education, and training), emergency response (search and rescue, emergency supplies, shelter), and early recovery (house and household recovery). The following provides a snapshot of the major findings from this survey.

- Remote and scattered island areas like the Mentawai Islands present particularly difficult logistical challenges when it comes to the distribution of humanitarian assistance. Indeed, many NGOs have left the area without fulfilling their tasks due to a lack of transportation and other logistical struggles.

- The relocation of high risk coastal communities to safer higher ground areas has been promoted by the government. While this option is certainly desirable, it may be very difficult to implement given its sheer scale. At the very least, it will take a considerable amount of time for this policy to be fully implemented on the Mentawai Islands, let alone on the many other earthquake

- and tsunami-prone islands in Indonesia. It is therefore imperative, while relocation is promoted, to secure evacuation routes and identify evacuation shelters in high risk areas as a matter of urgency. For this to be done well, risk assessment efforts in coastal villages should be a first step.

- A warning system is still needed in this region, though it cannot be known how effective it might have been in this latest disaster. Such a system can make use of ordinary means of communication, such as TVs, mobile phones, and radios. To use those tools effectively, efforts must be made to raise awareness, provide disaster education, and promote disaster preparedness.



- - NGOs currently operating in the region may terminate their activities in the coming weeks or months. Early recovery is needed not only in housing but also in livelihoods, but it is unclear how soon livelihood recovery can be achieved. Disaster victims are currently living in extremely harsh conditions. Thus, massive levels of urgent support need to be provided by the government as well as multilateral and bilateral organizations.

- - In highly disaster-prone countries like Indonesia, some kind of risk-sharing scheme may need to be developed that cannot be run on a commercial basis. In this case, government intervention will be required.



- - Last but not least, the capacity of disaster management agencies at various levels, from the national to the local level, as well as among community groups, should be further strengthened. Disaster management should not only cover the disaster response phase, but also short-term and long-term recovery as well as mitigation and preparedness.