

2. Highlights of FY 2020

In 2020 and early 2021, many of ADRC activities were implemented through virtual means due to travel restrictions brought about by COVID-19 pandemic.

2.1. Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction 2020

With the theme, “Can we Adapt to the New Normal?”, the Asian Conference on Disaster Reduction (ACDR2020), 20-22 October 2020, virtually gathered representatives from ADRC member countries, partner organizations, private sector, and the general public to share experiences and lessons.

20 Oct: Opening and Keynote Speeches

On the first day, three dignitaries, namely, H.E. Mr. OKONOGI Hachiro, Minister of State for Disaster Management for the Government of Japan; H.E. Mr. Rustam Mazarzoda, Chairman of the Committee of Emergency Situations and Civil Defense of Tajikistan; and Prof. HAMADA Masanori, Chairman of ADRC delivered opening remarks touching on the rationale of organizing the event and the relevance of the theme. Tajikistan would have originally hosted the ACDR2020 but curtailed by COVID-19 pandemic. So, the country is hoping to have another opportunity to host the event in the future. Following the remarks was a special presentation delivered by Mr. NAKAO Akifumi, Director of the International Cooperation Division of the Disaster Management Bureau of the Cabinet Office of Japan.



Figure 2.1. Opening and Keynote Speakers

After this, keynote speeches were delivered by Mr. Sanny Ramos Jegillos, Senior Adviser of the Disaster Risk Reduction Bangkok Regional Hub of the UNDP; Prof. ISOBE Masahiko, President of the Kochi University of Technology; Prof. Arnold M. Howitt, Faculty Co-Director of the Program on Crisis Leadership at the Harvard Kennedy School; and Prof. Ian Robert Davis, Visiting Professor at Kyoto, Lund, and Oxford Brookes Universities. Topics covered in the keynote speeches included multifaceted impacts of COVID-19 in the Asia-Pacific region, two-level framework of coastal disaster reduction; challenges of concurrent crises, and countermeasures to tackle risk reduction and climate change from intensifying hazards.

21 Oct: DRR Measures and Challenges to Intensifying Disaster Risks

Dr. Manzul Kumar Hazarika of the Asian Institute of Technology moderated this session, which included presentations from member countries and experts. In Myanmar, Ms. Myat Moe Thwe reported that managing cyclone risk remains challenging. One of the measures introduced was the development a platform called MUDRA which provide data to ministries and line agencies. Some concrete actions included the building of 236 multipurpose shelters and establishment of cyclone response fund. In Vietnam, Ms. Nguyen Thi Xuan Hong and Mr. TANAKA Yasuhiro jointly reported the challenges brought by flooding. While structural measures such as embankments are put in place, suitable legal framework as well as the development of a Comprehensive Flood Management Plan are also pursued.

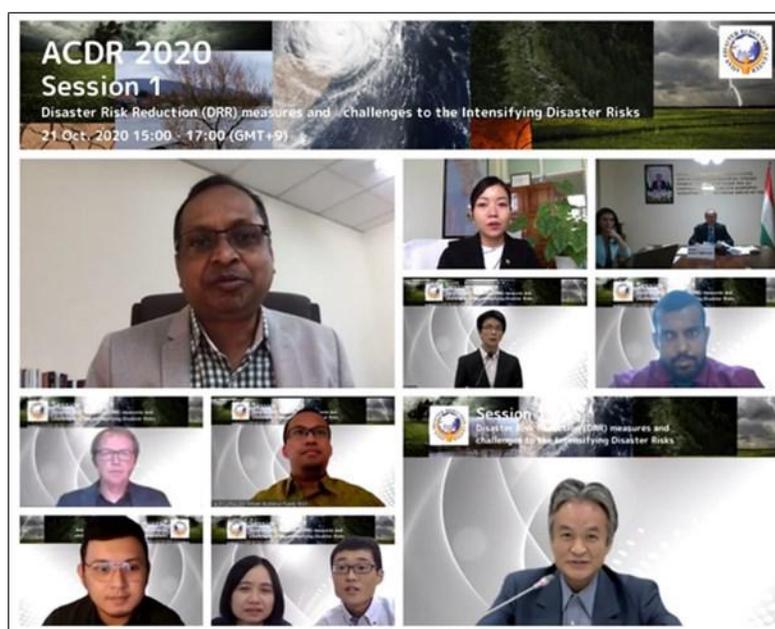


Figure 2.2. Session 1 Speakers

In the Maldives, Mr. Umar Fikry reported that coastal erosion is becoming a big challenge due to the effects of tropical cyclones and storm surges. Countermeasures are being deliberated, noting that as the temperature rises by 2 degrees, the coral reefs will be disappearing from the Maldives in the next 12 years. In Tajikistan, Mr. Kamalov Jamshed reported that institutional capacity of the national platform could face challenges in implementing its National Disaster Risk Reduction Plan 2030. So, the platform intensively collaborates with other agencies in pursuing various disaster prevention projects (e.g., ADB, the World Bank, JICA, and the King Salmon Foundation). In Japan, Mr. TAKAHASHI Kazuaki reported the challenges posed by climate change and corresponding mitigation activities, such as the government support in achieving zero greenhouse gases by 2050.

Experts showcased new technologies in this session. Prof. Cees van Westen (University of Twente) introduced digital technology for disaster prevention that is implemented in Asian countries, including Tajikistan and Vietnam. This technology simulates future scenarios through risk assessment and mapping, and uses a multi-hazard framework. Dr. Mizan Bustanul Fuady Bisri (United Nations University) introduced a knowledge management tool called CARI, an online search engine that could locate locally-relevant knowledge on DRR. This tool addresses the gaps of fragmented and scattered knowledge that overlooked locally existing information. Mr. Keith Paolo C. Landicho (AHA Centre) reported various platforms at AHA Center that are used to monitor and analyze disasters. One of these is the ASEAN Science-based Disaster Management Platform (ASDMP), which is interactive research portal that has access to thousands of disaster research products in Southeast Asia.

22 Oct: Disaster Countermeasures in the Midst of COVID-19

Prof. ISHIWATARI Mikio (University of Tokyo) moderated this thematic session, which included a keynote speech from Dr. Jemilah Mahmood (Malaysia) as well as presentations from member countries and partner organizations. In the Philippines, Dir. Claudio Yucot reported new practices in responding to typhoon Ambo (Vongfong) in May 2020: (i) suspected COVID-19 cases were segregated from the evacuation area; (ii) separate facilities were designated to take care of suspected COVID-19 cases; and (iii) occupants of the evacuation room must be either members of one family or people who know each other from the same neighborhood. In India, Mr. Sandeep Poundrik said that the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), in anticipation of the cyclone season (e.g., Amphan in May 2020), developed a GIS-based Decision Support System (DSS) platform to manage disaster

in the midst of COVID-19. In the Republic of Korea, Mr. KANG Jinmo mentioned that the Ministry of the Interior and Safety (MOIS) developed a New Guideline for the Temporary Shelter to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19. This guideline specifies the quarantine measures prior to facility operations and the stockpiling of hygienic supplies (e.g., sanitizers and facemasks). In Armenia, Ms. Syuzanna Vardazar Kakoyan said that the Ministry of Emergency Situation (MES) integrated COVID-19 response in the Risk Analysis and Emergency Response Plan. In Nepal, Mr. Beda Nidhi Khanal said that the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority (NDRRMA) strengthened the institutional coordination between the disaster response system and the COVID-19 management system in all levels of the government.



Figure 2.3. Session 2 Speakers

Partner organizations reported how they extended support to DRM institutions in innovative ways. Ms. Helen Mould (OCHA) said that OCHA-ROAP supports 12 Asia-Pacific countries through the implementation of the Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP), particularly by seeking the funding. Prof. SHIBASAKI Ryosuke (University of Tokyo) reported the open-source software called “Mobipack” that serves as decision support system (DSS) tool for managing disasters during COVID-19 pandemic. In his commentary, Dr. Khamarrul Azahari Razak (UTM Malaysia) mentioned that responding to disasters during pandemic requires multi-level collaboration and enhanced multi-hazard preparedness efforts.

At closing session, H.E. Mr. AKAZAWA Ryosei (Government of Japan) thanked the over 240 participants from 22 countries, partner organizations, and general public who actively joined the virtual conference. Dr. OGAWA Yujiro (ADRC) also expressed gratitude to member countries and partner organizations for sharing reports and case studies. Outcomes of ACDR2020 showed that in Asia, most governments have introduced adaptation measures to reduce the impact of intensifying disaster risks as well as address the concurrent crises experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Figure 2.4. Closing Session Speakers

2.2. DRR Measures During COVID-19 Pandemic

On top of COVID-19, Asian countries continue to experience disasters from natural hazards. Considering this, ADRC initiated to collect disaster risk Reduction (DRR) measures during COVID-19 pandemic from ADRC member countries, which are available on the ADRC website.

2.2.1. Reports on Challenges in Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 Infection

In May 2020, some ADRC member countries (e.g., Republic of Korea, China, Japan, and Singapore) had already documented their respective practices in responding to COVID-19. China, Singapore, Japan, and Republic of Korea highlighted the importance of learning from past experiences in managing SARS and bird flu by building on those measures and