

## Foreword

The year 2004 witnessed severe natural disasters occurred in the world. The highest death toll came from the Sumatra Earthquake and Indian Ocean Tsunami, the highest affected population from the floods in Bangladesh, China, and India and the biggest economic damage from Japan's typhoon and Niigata earthquake. Tsunami almost lashed out entire Asian region caused severe setback to the economic development of this region. Africa also experienced earthquake in Morocco in 2004 which claimed heavy human loss and economic damages in the region. Further unexpectedly, in contrast to the year 2003, Europe experienced floods which claimed considerable human loss and sufferings in the region. America also experienced severe storms affecting many people and causing economic damages.

It is quite evident that the prevalence and magnitude of natural disasters have had serious consequences on human society, economy and global environment. Also the frequency and the severity of natural disasters have notably increased around the world. The exponentially increasing economic losses associated with natural hazards in the developing countries considerably obstruct the phase of development. Hence the devastation caused by natural disasters has adverse effects on the ability of developing countries associated with economic uncertainties to compete in the global economy. When we look at the statistics for the last 30 years, it is clear that Asia is the most highly disaster afflicted region in the world, with about 90% of the totally affected people, and over 50% of the total deaths and total economic losses respectively. Hence, it is imperative to analyze past disasters, looking at annual trends from the perspective of development mechanisms.

With the aim of accelerating and strengthening global and regional socio-economic frameworks for addressing the consequences of natural disasters and designing effective disaster reduction mechanisms, we have edited this publication to analyze trends in the occurrence of natural disasters in the year 2004. We hope this publication will be of use not only to policy planners, researchers and academics but also to grass root level participants in development initiatives. We sincerely hope that this data book furthers our efforts to transform the total disaster risk management approach into an instrument for global sustainable development.

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