

Foreword

As previous years, the year 2007 brought severe natural disasters all over the world. The highest death toll resulted from the windstorms and floods in Bangladesh, the highest affected population from the floods in China and the countries of South Asia, and the highest level of economic damage from the earthquake and in Japan. The year 2007 was one of the most devastating for the Asian region in recent years. Africa also suffered droughts, floods, and epidemics. Windstorms and floods that occurred in Americas caused majority of casualties and economic losses. Europe (especially UK) experienced extreme temperatures and floods which claimed many lives and caused casualties throughout the region. Oceania sustained floods and wind storms, and was moderately impacted by earthquake and tsunami in Solomon Islands. Solomon Island, Australia and Papua New Guinea were the most severely affected countries of Oceania. The earthquake in Japan caused the highest economic damage in the year 2007. The UK, European region and China were also hit by intense floods, which caused relatively high levels of economic damage for 2007.

The prevalence and magnitude of these natural disasters have clearly had serious consequences for many societies, national economies, and the global environment. Natural disasters have increased noticeably in frequency and severity all over the world. The exponential increase in economic losses associated with natural hazards in the developing countries poses a major obstacle to development. Thus, the devastation caused by natural disasters and the economic uncertainties they create have had an adverse effect on the ability of developing countries to compete in the global economy. The statistics for the last 32 years clearly show that Asia is the most disaster-afflicted region in the world, accounting for about 90% of all those affected by disasters, and about 60% of the total fatalities and about 47% of the economic losses. It is therefore imperative that we analyze past disasters and look at annual trends from the perspective of development mechanisms.

We have compiled this publication to analyze the natural disaster trends in the year 2007 for the purpose of accelerating and strengthening global and regional socio-economic frameworks for addressing the consequences of natural disasters and designing effective disaster reduction mechanisms with due consideration to the country's socio-economic and environmental framework. We hope this publication will be of use not only to policy planners, researchers, and scholars, but also to grass-roots promoters of development initiatives. We sincerely hope that this data book will further our efforts to transform the total disaster risk management approach into an instrument for global sustainable development.

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