



# ADRC Highlights

Vol.71

*Asian Disaster Reduction Center Biweekly News*

June 2, 2003

➤ **Recent Natural Disasters in Asia**

□ **Severe deluge washed away southern and southwestern Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka is a tropical island in the Indian Ocean located at 6°~10° North latitude and 80°~82° East Longitude just south of India. With a total land area of 65,525 Km<sup>2</sup> (including inland waters) and a population density of 304 people/sq.km, Sri Lanka has a consistent temperature of (mean annual) 27°C in the lowland, and 15°C at Nuwara Eliya (altitude 1800 m). Relative humidity varies from 70% during the day to 90% at night. The annual rainfall is 2500mm to over 5000mm in the southwest of the island and less than 1250 mm in the northwest and southeast of the island. Sri Lanka experiences rain during the southwest monsoon season (May to August) and northeast monsoon season (November to February). (picture courtesy-Daily News, Sri Lanka)



The southwest monsoon this year brought record-breaking rain and floods to the country. Sri Lanka experienced the worst flood in its history, spanning over 50 years. Floods and consequent landslides affecting many of the regions of south and southeastern Sri Lanka caused severe human suffering and death. Official statistics confirmed over 300 deaths and about 177,820 stranded households (Matara 83,300, Galle 40,000, Ratnapura 50,000, Kalutara 24,650 and Gampaha, Colombo, Hambantota 11,000). Sri Lanka's government has already allocated over Rs.17.00 million (approx: US\$175,150) for relief and more and more international assistance in various forms is flowing into the country. Moreover, the flood has already completely destroyed about 15,200 houses and partially destroyed about 26,300 houses. Apart from the local residents, international disaster rescue workers are also on the scene to help the victims.

The majority of the infrastructure in the affected areas is badly damaged and many roads in the districts of Hambantota, Matara, Galle, Ratnapura, and Kalutara have been submerged by floodwaters and obstructed by landslides, making them impassable. Floods and landslides have also affected about 200,000 school children and many schools, reducing available temporary shelter. In addition to this catastrophe, secondary disasters, like disease epidemics due to water pollution, are also expected. The initial damage is estimated to be several hundreds of millions of US dollars, but the official figure is not yet available due to the continuous rain and evacuation activities.

Though Sri Lanka is highly prone to windstorms and floods and has experienced many severe floods in the past years, the current flood is the severest in terms of loss of life, people rendered homeless or injured, and damage. Also, the Government has taken several steps to provide relief to the affected population with the

help of international emergency aid and resources. Prime Minister has appointed Disaster management committee and invited the President to head this committee which is to monitor details and coordinate efforts and will comprise Prime Minister and several ministers in charge of the relevant subjects thus endorsing the severity of the flood disaster. For more information, please contact Dr. SriGowri Sanker ([sanker@adrc.or.jp](mailto:sanker@adrc.or.jp)).



➤ **SOPAC "Communities@Risk" Conference held in Fiji**

SOPAC (South Pacific Applied GeoScience Commission) organized the 11<sup>th</sup> Pacific Regional Disaster Management Meeting and its first international conference on disasters "Communities@Risk" from the 5-7 of May, in Shigatoka, Fiji. On May 5<sup>th</sup> the National Disaster Managers of this region met and the following areas were identified as of most relevance and greatest concern: improving national legislation and planning arrangements, strengthening the institutional capacity of the NDMO office and, continuing support for a range of training and development programs. The Communities@Risk conference was held on the 6-7<sup>th</sup> of May with sessions focusing on the following topics:

1. Sustainable communities through risk management practices
2. Scientific knowledge and new technologies in disaster reduction and risk management
3. Strengthening community resilience.

Mr. Satoru Nishikawa, Executive Director of ADRC was invited and made a presentation titled "Application of Ultra High-Speed Satellite Communication and GIS for Immediate Assessment of Earthquake and Tsunami Damage" based on a series of experiments which were undertaken by Japan's space development agency NASDA, ADRC, and partners in 2001-2003. This attracted great interest from countries with scattered islands that may face communication difficulties in the event of large scale tsunamis. A special session was dedicated to "Reviewing the Implementation of the Yokohama Strategy in the Pacific", which served as the second of a series of regional meetings for ISDR (the first regional ISDR meeting for Asia was held in January 2003 in Kobe), contributing to the review process that will lead to the Kobe Conference in January 2005. For more info, please contact Mr. Nishikawa ([nishikawa@adrc.or.jp](mailto:nishikawa@adrc.or.jp)).



If you have comments or requests for this Newsletter, please write to ADRC at the address on the right.

Published by : **Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC)**

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