



ADRC Highlights

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➤ **Public Forum "Living with Risk" on October 4 is just around the corner**

Commemorating the 80th anniversary of the Great Kanto Earthquake and the 2003 International Disaster Reduction Day, the Public Forum "Living with Risk - are we prepared for the next big one?" will be held at UNU, Tokyo, Japan from 14:00-18:00, October 4 (Sat).

This forum is co-organized with United Nations University (UNU), Cabinet Office of Japan, UN ISDR Secretariat, World Seismic Safety Initiative (WSSI), Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC), and is in cooperation with NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation).

The forum will provide an opportunity to discuss the current status and challenges of earthquake disaster preparedness in Japan. Speakers are Dr. Tsuneo Katayama, President, National Research Institute for Earth Science and Disaster Prevention (NIED), and Dr. Kimiro Meguro, Associate Professor, University of Tokyo, and Prof. Hareesh Shah, Professor of Stanford University, as well as Dr. David Mammen, President, Institute of Public Administration (IPA). Coordinator of the forum will be Mr. Tsuyoshi Matsuo of NHK.

Japanese-English simultaneous translation will be provided. Everyone is welcome to take part in the event with free admission. To register, please email your name, address and phone/fax number to rep@adrc.or.jp by 3 October 2003. For more information, please go to http://www.adrc.or.jp/OpenForum_200310/Public_Forum_20031004_en.htm.

➤ **Introduction of ADRC's Visiting Researcher**
□ **Mr. Vilayphong Sisomvang from Laos**

Since 1998, I have been working for the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare (MLSW) in Laos, National Disaster Management Office. My job title is Training Manager and I am in charge of training activities on disaster management in Laos. Established in 1993, the MLSW has been devoting to vigorous activities on relief and mitigation. My department is responsible for running project on relief and mitigation with NGOs partners in areas vulnerable to disasters. National Disaster Management Office was established in 1999 as a secretariat to National Disaster Management Committee, and its main responsibility is to promote public awareness and education activities for disaster preparedness, mitigation, response, and prevention at local (especially community) level.

My previous assignment was to conduct training courses on disaster management for government officials at central, provincial, district and community levels. Cooperating with Lao other organizations, I also conducted another training program for school

teachers, policemen, army in central and provincial levels. I have joined ADRC as one of two visiting researchers and will stay in Japan until December 2003. I would also like to take this chance to share my views and exchange information on Laos with ADRC.

□ **Disaster Situation and Management in Laos**

Laos is a landlocked country which is less populated with 6 million people. Laos is one of the least developed countries in the world with 350 US\$ of GDP per capital. The country enjoys a tropical monsoon climate with two distinct seasons – the rainy season from the beginning of May to November and the dry season from December to April.



Major disasters in Laos are floods, droughts and fires and epidemics as well as infestation. Every year, these hazards cause the loss of people's lives and properties and great amount of economic loss. People living along the Mekong River and its tributaries are vulnerable to flood disaster. The core problems lie in that fact that those people at risk are very poor, have no assets and living in remote areas.

In order to deal with these disasters, the Government of Laos has allocated substantial amount of its budget. Both structural and non-structural mitigation measures are used, and disaster preparedness and prevention activities are regarded as central to reduce the risk. Relief and mitigation activities are also concentrated, especially during the post disaster period.

"The National Strategy of Action Plan on Disaster Management to 2020" has been launched in 2003, with the final objectives to establish disaster management committees at all 130 districts in the country. Directly linked to the Central government, each committee is planned to implement effective early warning system and education programs.

➤ **Recent Natural Disasters in Asia :**
□ **Japan – "The Tokachi-oki Earthquake in 2003"**

Two powerful earthquakes, one of them measuring 8.0 on the Richter scale, rocked northern Japan, missing 2 people, injuring 591 people and forcing thousands more to evacuate their homes. The bigger quake, the strongest to hit Japan in almost nine years, occurred at 4:50 am (1950 GMT Sep 25) on September 26, 2003. Its epicenter was located some 80 kilometers (50 miles) off the southeastern coast of Hokkaido island and 42 kilometers below sea-level, some 750 kilometers north of Tokyo.

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

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