



ADRC Highlights

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TOPICS

Letter from a Former Visiting Researcher

Mr. Zafar Waqar Taj from Pakistan

Announcements

¶ Publication of "Private Sector Activities in Disaster Risk Reduction: Good Practices and Lessons Learned"

¶ International Symposium "Cooperative Actions for Disaster Risk Reduction (CADRR)" to be Held 4-6 March 2009

¶ New Web Address

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● Letter from a Former Visiting Researcher Mr. Zafar Waqar Taj from Pakistan

My name is Zafar Waqar Taj, and I am currently working as Additional Deputy Commissioner in Gilgit in the northern most region of Pakistan, officially named the Federally Administered Northern Areas.



This part of Pakistan is a rugged and mountainous region. Due to the particular topographical conditions of this area, which are shaped by the presence of the world's three mightiest mountain ranges (the Karakurums, Himalayas, and Hindukush), the area has been, until very recently, extremely poverty stricken and largely cut off from the rest of the country.

The Additional Deputy Commissioner is basically second in the chain of command at the district level, and thus is responsible for coordinating all the public and private sector agencies, maintaining law and order, and overseeing the general administration of the area. All the government departments (e.g. police, health, education, building and construction, planning and development) and elected local bodies work closely with the district administration.



In the wake of the tragic earthquake that struck in October 2005, Disaster Management Authorities were established throughout the country. The Northern Area Disaster Management Authority (NADMA) is the primary provincial-level organization while the District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs) operate at the district level.



Being second in charge at the district level, I am directly responsible for emergency preparedness and response. Since I also come from this area, I see the opportunity to make a difference in the development of the Northern Areas as not only my duty, but my privilege.

The Northern Areas, including the capital of Gilgit, are prone to a number of disasters that can be categorized as follows.

- Frequent: floods, flash floods, landslides, avalanches, debris flows, mud flows, rock falls
- Intermittent: droughts, earthquakes, glacial lake outburst floods (GLOF),

Continued

infectious diseases/epidemics

- Human Induced: civil conflicts, solid waste disposal, accidents, pollution

In 2008, I was nominated by the NADMA to participate in a six-month disaster risk reduction (DRR) training course as a visiting researcher at the Asian Disaster Reduction Center (ADRC) in Kobe, Japan. During my stay at the ADRC, I had a chance to visit many of the major institutions that conduct research on DRR and are involved in efforts to improve the mechanisms of disaster risk analysis and mitigation. I am grateful to the ADRC for giving me opportunities to participate in seminars, workshops and lectures on DRR, as well as to participate in study tours to Kyoto University, Yamaguchi University and Fujitokoha University. Briefings and presentations arranged at various organizations in Kobe, Tokyo, and Kyoto gave me a direct and better understanding of the emergency response system in Japan.

The NADMA has devised a Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Plan at the provincial level in consultation with UNDP experts. Subordinate disaster management authorities, i.e. the DDMA's, have been asked to independently formulate District DRM Plans and standard operating procedures (SOPs) for disaster risk management in their respective districts. To ensure that a well coordinated risk reduction/mitigation and emergency response system is established, all the relevant government departments have been engaged in formulating SOPs that explain their roles in various situations.

My experience as a visiting researcher helped give me a better understanding of my mission, and this in turn has helped me communicate to others the importance of risk reduction. Since returning from the ADRC, I have conducted three seminars on District DRM, water and sanitation, and GLOF, and have also participated in a number of meetings and workshops convened to promote the formulation of DRM Plans. We hope to have our District DRM Plan completed within the next six months.

● Announcements

Publication of “Private Sector Activities in Disaster Risk Reduction: Good Practices and Lessons Learned”

On 13 January 2009, the ADRC and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR) Secretariat Hyogo Office held a joint press conference to introduce the UN/ISDR's latest publication, “Private Sector Activities in Disaster Risk Reduction: Good Practices and Lessons Learned 2008.”

The ADRC has supported various projects that promote disaster risk reduction efforts through public-private partnerships. As a part of this effort, the ADRC published “Promoting Public-Private Partnerships in Disaster Risk Reduction: Japanese Cases” in collaboration with the UN/ISDR in June 2007.

At the press conference, open remarks were given by Mr. Sálvano Briceño, Director of the UN/ISDR, and Mr. Koji Suzuki, Executive Director of the ADRC, and these were followed by reports by the four distinguished companies selected for their demonstration of best practices in public-private partnerships for disaster risk reduction.

- The Glass Power Campaign: Disaster-Resistant Glass Promotion and Donation to Evacuation Centers (Asahi Glass Company, Ltd.)
- Raising Disaster Awareness Through the Puppet Show “Inamura no Hi” (Sompo Japan Insurance Inc.)



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- Ensuring Safe Gas Use Through Collaborative Partnerships with Local Communities (Tokyo Gas Company, Ltd.)
- “Our Community Disaster Reduction: Map Simulation” Activity (Japan Consumers’ Cooperative Union)

The activities of these companies show that Japan has accumulated knowledge in the field of disaster risk management that needs to be shared with the rest of the world. It is hoped that the collection of best practices in the promotion of public-private partnerships for disaster risk reduction will help reduce disaster risks and vulnerability, and contribute to sustainable social and economic development.

The full text of the “Private Sector Activities in Disaster Risk Reduction: Good Practices and Lessons Learned 2008” is available on http://www.preventionweb.net/files/7519_PPPgoodpractices.pdf.

International Symposium “Cooperative Actions for Disaster Risk Reduction (CADRR)” to be Held 4-6 March 2009

The ADRC will co-organize the International Symposium “Cooperative Actions for Disaster Risk Reduction (CADRR)” with the International Association for Wind Engineering, United Nations University (UNU), UN/ISDR, and Tokyo Polytechnic University.

The symposium will focus on CADRR, providing a stimulating and constructive forum where engineers, educators, government officials, citizens, and others involved in the field of disaster reduction will have an opportunity to exchange ideas and share the latest information. The symposium will be divided into two parts: invitation-only sessions on 4-5 March and general sessions on 6 March. Details are provided below.

- Date: 4 (Wed) – 6 (Fri) March 2009
- Venue: U Thant International Conference Hall (3F) & Elizabeth Rose Conference Hall (5F),
UNU Headquarters Building (5-53-70 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo)
<http://www.unu.edu/access/> (A 5-minute walk from Omotesando station (Ginza, Hanzomon & Chiyoda line: Exit B2) or 8- minute walk from Shibuya station)
* There is no parking available on the UNU campus.
- Registration fee: 5,000JPY, waived for full-time students. (Reception dinner not included)
* You can register online or send a fax or e-mail with your name, address, affiliation, telephone & fax number(s), and e-mail address to the Secretariat by 25 February 2009.
- Symposium Secretariat: Global COE Office, Tokyo Polytechnic University
Address: 1583 Iiyama, Atsugi, Kanagawa 243-0297, Japan
Phone/Fax: 081-46-242-9658
E-mail: cao@arch.t-kougei.ac.jp, gcoeoffice@arch.t-kougei.ac.jp
<http://www.wind.arch.t-kougei.ac.jp/ISWE4/index.html>

New Web Address

The ADRC’s website has moved to <http://www.adrc.asia>. Please update your “Bookmarks” or “Favorites.” Thank you!

For Inquiries & Subscription Information

For more information or details regarding email subscriptions to this newsletter, please email editor@adrc.asia.