

Capacity building for coastal resilience in action: Early warning skills development for meteorologists and disaster management coordinators in Sri Lanka

Interest Story

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Colombo, Sri Lanka – With the continued support from the ESCAP Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Tsunami, Disaster and Climate Preparedness, Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) is implementing the project titled *Technical assistance for enhancing the capacity of end-to-end multi-hazard Early Warning Systems (EWS) for coastal hazards in Myanmar, Sri Lanka and the Philippines*. This regional project is making a significant impact in strengthening the end-to-end coastal hazard early warning systems in three countries and bringing important lessons to the region.



A need for hands-on training

In Sri Lanka, ADPC is implementing the project in an active collaboration with the Ministry of Disaster Management and the two respective departments under the Ministry, namely Disaster Management Centre (DMC) and Department of Meteorological (DOM). The project initiatives in are being developed through a consultative process and taking feedbacks from the Project Steering Group (PSG) under a close coordination of the Ministry. The needs-based activities of the project were identified from the gradual interactions with the multi-agency representation in the Project Steering Group. This helps align the project inputs to the national need and priorities in a systematic way.

Since the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004, Sri Lanka has suffered from coastal hazards in many ways. The skills of the professionals engaged in coastal disaster risk management for both the scientific groups (e.g., meteorological department) as well as the disaster management coordinators remain heavily tested on many occasions. There is a great deal of need for development of the hands-on skills for both sectors.

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Developing 'hands-on skills'

In recent times, ADPC has conducted a series of needs-based training and capacity building programs to develop 'hands-on skills' for the stakeholders in Sri Lanka. Several national- and regional-level trainings have taken place on for example the topics of weather research and forecasting, storm surge modeling, climate downscaling, standard operating procedures, end-to-end early warning systems development, and media interactions for early warning.

Two specialized training workshops were conducted during 19–23 May 2014 in Colombo particularly targeting professionals who are involved in the development of coastal hazard early warning in Sri Lanka to develop skills in detection, monitoring, forecasting and warning as well as the overall management of coastal risks. These two training workshops conducted included:

- *Capacity Building Training Workshop on Tools for Coastal Hazard Modeling, Forecast Visualization and Verification* organized by ADPC and the Department of Meteorology (DOM)

- *National Level Hands-on Training Workshop on the End-to-End Early Warning System Tools and Response for Coastal Hazards* organized by ADPC and Disaster Management Center (DMC)

A total of 37 officers from the Ministry of Disaster Management were trained. Both the trainings were focused on the coastal hazards early warning systems in Sri Lanka, as the overall project focuses on coastal areas and coastal hazards. The two trainings were exclusively targeted towards two different sets of professionals to gain appropriate skillsets or professional applications. The first training was conducted in collaboration with the DOM officials who are working in modeling and forecasting of the coastal hazards whereas the second training with the disaster management coordinators working in the coastal districts of Sri Lanka.

Introducing effective tools

The training conducted in cooperation with the Department of Meteorology focused on enhancing the participants skills on new tools including a meteorological visualization tool called DIANA developed by Norwegian Meteorological Institute; storm surge models developed by Japan Meteorological Administration; climate modeling tools as well as forecast verification skills and tools.



The training implemented in cooperation with the Disaster Management Center dealt with the fundamentals of early warning systems and brought elements from the end-to-end people centric early warning systems. The participants learned about various tools for strengthening the different elements of early warnings and seeing them as an end-to-end system. The hands-on capacity building program brought in various tools and procedures for assessments, risk mapping, evacuation mapping, and end-to-end dissemination systems. During the training, the participants also discussed the question of how to work with persons from diverse backgrounds including persons with disability.

The two trainings helped the stakeholders to grow their in-service skills to tackle the coastal hazards in a more systematic way, and will help them function with more knowledge and skills in their respective duty areas. The Ministry of Disaster Management of Sri Lanka and the Project Steering Group have seen these sets of in-country capacity building initiatives as a timely and systematic move towards strengthening the end-to-end coastal hazard early warning system in the country, and expressed a wish for continued support of such initiatives in the future.

For more information on the initiative please contact:

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