



Prior to the disaster, in 1988

(Source: Reproduced out of the original aerial photo by the Geographical Survey Institute)



After the disaster, in 1993

(Source: Kokusaikogyo Co., Ltd.)

Aonae Point, south end of Okushiri island

This report was prepared by the UNCRD's Quick Response Investigation Team consisting of:

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Photo on cover: Courtesy of Maritime Safety Agency

A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DISASTER

occurred on a small island in the northern part of Japan: a major earthquake with a magnitude of 7.8 on the Richter scale took place on the boundary of the Eurasian and North American Plates at 22:17 on 12 July 1993, followed by massive tsunamis with a maximum height of 30.6 m and a devastating mass fire which burned 189 houses. Among the devastation due to the earthquake, the damage resulting from the tsunamis were so enormous that the peaceful small island of Okushiri, dependent upon fishery and tourism, changed in an instant into the very picture of hell with countless tragedies of human casualties and vast property losses: innumerable people without homes, children without parents and fishermen without boats.

This booklet is a report compiled by a quick response investigation team of UNCRD dispatched to Okushiri island two weeks after the disaster. In this totally affected island, the team found not only accumulated tragedies but also multiple lessons which should be shared with other areas throughout the world prone to similar disasters.

In fact, A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DISASTER is a long-running tragedy; similar ones were performed in Flores island in Indonesia in 1992 and along the coast of Nicaragua in 1992 and might run continuously in other parts of the world if the international community does not pay any attention to this tragedy taking place in a remote area. UNCRD believes that the exchange of experiences at the global level is fundamental for achieving the objectives and target of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR).

Towards mitigating future earthquake disasters, UNCRD wishes to disseminate the results of its investigation by the publication of this booklet.

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