

Country Report Addition



**COUNTRY REPORT FOR THE ASIAN NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION CONFERENCE,
KOBE, 17/18 DECEMBER 1995**

United Kingdom Overseas Development Administration

The United Kingdom is prone to a limited range of major natural hazards, in particular river and coastal flooding, and occasional high winds. While these have caused extensive economic losses the threat to communities and loss of life has been relatively minimal. In addition, the development of a sound scientific understanding of the UK risks, the construction of appropriate engineering works and the establishment of natural hazard warning systems have all helped to reduce the threat of disasters.

Scientific and technological work in the preparedness and mitigation field within the UK is historically linked to these domestic risks. But there has also been a gradual development of major areas of scientific expertise relative to hazards which are not experienced in Britain or which pose relatively minor threats. This expertise is highly relevant to the design of critical facilities such as nuclear power plants, major tunnels and bridges etc. Overall, pure and applied research in the UK now addresses the full range of global hazards within the fields of seismology, volcanology, geomorphology, hydrology and meteorology. There is also a major international concentration of scientific expertise in the field of drought alleviation and famine prevention based on hydrological, agricultural and economic analysis. The scientific commitment on hydrological, agricultural and economic and analysis of risks, the improvement of forecasting skills and the development of a wide variety of social, economic and physical techniques to reduce risks.

Despite the limited range of hazards within the UK, there is extensive interest in reducing risks elsewhere. Thus the primary focus of United Kingdom activities related to the United Nations' International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) has been on providing assistance to reduce risks within hazard-prone developing countries. This emphasis is in part a reflection of the historical scope of international aid from UK sources. Commonwealth links are very strong and these coincide with many hazard-prone regions of the world, such as the Caribbean, South Pacific island countries, Africa, the Indian



sub-continent and South East Asia.

Responsibility for coordination of the British Government's support for disaster preparedness and mitigation projects lies primarily with the Emergency Aid Department of the Overseas Development Administration (ODA), which is a part of the Foreign Office of the British Government.

The ODA's priority concern has been to encourage the implementation of projects that will have a tangible impact to protect vulnerable communities. At the bilateral level, ODA has, therefore, concentrated its support on programmes that will have a demonstrably beneficial effect on recipient countries' capacity to mitigate or respond to disasters.

The UK sees promotion of and support for disaster preparedness and mitigation programmes in developing countries as an integral part of the continuum which is increasingly recognised as a sound approach to international assistance programmes. This concept, usually defined as the Relief/Development Continuum, envisages the consistent inclusion in emergency relief programmes of elements to facilitate the transition from straightforward relief activities through reconstruction and rehabilitation projects to a smooth resumption of sustainable development programmes. Support for disaster mitigation and preparedness activities can, therefore, be seen as the first step of the same continuum.

Thus ODA seeks opportunities to support preparedness programmes in the most disaster-prone countries, which are frequently those where long-term development programmes are under way. The intention is that by continuing to concentrate efforts in these areas, those countries will build the capacity to mitigate the effects and cope better with disasters when they do occur, protect development investment and allow normal development programmes to resume as soon as possible.

The ODA has increased the resources allocated to disaster prevention and preparedness in recent years. On the one hand, a separate annual budget, administered by the Emergency Aid Department, has been established specifically to promote disaster mitigation and



preparedness projects and UK capacity for swift, effective emergency response. This budget was increased to £3 million for the current financial year. Examples of projects in Asia being funded from this budget include:

- the development of a network for community organisations involved in disaster mitigation in South and South East Asia;
- the development of a strategy for combating hazards posed by glacial lake over-flows in Nepal;
- training for officials involved in disaster management activities in the Philippines.

At the same time, efforts are being made to integrate mitigation and/or preparedness elements into major rehabilitation assistance following the Maharashtra earthquake in India, the ODA is seeking to build up local and regional disaster management capacity; and in the Bangladesh Flood Action Plan funded by ODA mitigation measures such as rechanneling water flows play a major role.

On the international level, ODA continues to support the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA). It recognises the need for the UN to have a strong body to coordinate the UN response to emergencies as well as mitigation and preparedness activities. In addition to its support to the UN system, the UK Government also supports the Disaster Preparedness Programme run by the European Union Humanitarian Officer (ECHO), in which a number of British non-governmental organisations are involved.

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