

2016 Newsletter vol.3

A Word from our Chairman

As you will see reading this newsletter, there are continuing disasters around the world that are affecting so many people who do not have the capacity to restore their losses.

We as Rotarians must stay knowledgeable and prepared, to help wherever we can.

There are consistent discussions that Rotary International is not a disaster relief agency, and that is true. Rotary International does not have the capacity to react as an organization to every disaster.

However, we as Rotarians always want to reach out and help our fellow man.

Through the DNA -RAG you have that ability to find out what is going on in various parts of the world and how you can help. We serve as advisors, trainers, mentors, communicators and disaster knowledgeable Rotarians. We serve as the catalyst between the affected area and Rotarians who want to help.

Our membership is growing but **we really need more Rotarians to join** (just go to our website and follow the process). There is much need in the world and we need eyes and ears on the ground so we can follow what is happening.

We need experts in many fields to help advise how to restore communities, economies, buildings, etc.

We need you!

Imagine if your area gets hit with a disaster.

Are you prepared? Would you know where to turn for help? Quickly? Do you know how to set up a quick DAF to raise funds? We all know that immediate response is critical, so the more of us that know how to assist with that, the sooner each community can start taking responsibility, with our help, for relief and restoration.

We can be the change and we can be the Gift to the World, if we unite our efforts.

Barry Rassin

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STRUCTURE OF THE DNA-RAG

In addition to the four officers of our RAG that have been previously profiled in the Newsletter, there are an additional 8 directors and currently 17 members of an Advisory Board. The Advisory Board is comprised of representatives from other RAG's and Rotarian Fellowships. In addition there are representatives from other Rotarian based or linked groups and individual Rotarians who have special knowledge or expertise regarding various aspects of disaster preparedness and response. These RAG's, Fellowships, and Rotarian linked groups are listed below along with their website contact information.

We are in discussion with two more RAG's that we hope will provide members for our Advisory Board.

FELLOWSHIPS:

Rotarians on Amateur Radio (ROAR) www.ifroar.org (*ROAR can provide us with an international emergency communications network and we are encouraging our membership to tell their fellow Rotarians about their existence and potentially to join them*)

International Fellowship of Rotarian Doctors www.rotariandocors.org
 International Fellowship of Flying Rotarians www.iffr.org
 International Fellowship of Scouting Rotarians www.ifsr-net.org
 International Yachting Fellowship of Rotarians www.iyfr.net

ROTARIAN ACTION GROUPS:

Food Plant Solutions RAG www.foodplantsolutions.org
 Water and Sanitation RAG www.wasrag.org
 Alleviation of Hunger and Malnutrition RAG www/alleviatehunger.org

OTHER ROTARY LINKED ORGANIZATIONS:

Disaster Aid International www.disasteraidinternational.com
 ShelterBox www.shelterboxusa.org
 Stop Hunger Now www.stophungernow.org

EXPERTISE BY INDIVIDUAL ROTARIAN'S:

U.S. Government – FEMA liaison
 Communications (Website and Social media)
 Regional & Community Preparedness
 Engineering
 Military Liaison Humanitarian and Disaster Programs
 Warehousing and Florida State Coordination

We are also reaching out to two newer RAG's with whom we hope to develop working relationship through membership in our Advisory Board.

OTHER DNA-RAG NEWS

We will have a booth (#3135) in the House of Friendship at the Rotary International Convention in Seoul.

If attending the Convention please let us know and plan to stop by to visit, discuss future plans, and possibly help out. Please also suggest to other Rotarian's, club or district officers that you know are going to Seoul that they visit our booth and learn about our RAG.

Our Annual Meeting will take place at the 2016 Rotary Convention. The meeting is scheduled for June 1, from 14:30 (2:30 PM) to 16:00 (4:00 PM) in Room 209B in Kintex 1 (Exhibition Center 1). This meeting is open to all members. If attending the Convention please plan to attend. Your involvement is important to the growth and success of our RAG.

Information on RI Board guidance on RAG activities

Rotary is not a traditional "First Responder." However, Rotarian's and their clubs have helped with disaster response and recovery since the 1920's.

The need that our RAG is formed to address, is to communicate assistance and guidance regarding "**Preparedness, Response, and Recovery**." Hence the name Disaster Network of Assistance and the moto: "Disaster Assistance is in our DNA.":

Preparedness includes communicating training information on how to mitigate potential damage from likely disasters, guidance documents on individual – club – and district preparations.

Response includes communicating advice, guidance, distribution of information on assistance needed, and identification of how Rotarian's and their clubs and districts can assist.

Recovery is in two parts: communicating immediate and long term recovery needs, which is frequently forgotten because of lack of media coverage after the disaster.

All of these are communicated to our members via our website, the Newsletter, and as needed Flash and or Special Reports communicated in electronic form.

Basically we serve as a source of information and news regarding disasters. We work with clubs and districts to get them better able to withstand, respond or recover from, disasters...

Information on RI Board guidance on RAG activities (continued)

We also serve as a facilitator. Involvement of our membership, with their broad international and knowledge base, is very important in this regard. An example of this is the development of the Nepal Earthquake Recovery Donor Advised Fund which was spearheaded by our RAG and currently has members assisting with the effort on their advisory board.

While not traditional first responders, Rotarians find themselves impacted directly and / or indirectly by disasters.

We do not have Disaster Assistance Response Team's (DART's). We work and coordinate with existing Rotary based, or linked, groups such as Disaster Aid International and ShelterBox that do have well trained DART's.

We plan to assist clubs and districts that wish to have training programs to form local DART's to work with their local governments with guidance and a general plan of developing this capability. One aspect of this is our plan to re-establish REDI (Rotarian Emergency Disaster Initiative) Conferences. These are two to three day conferences for Rotarians on "how to" aspects of disaster preparedness and response.

New Guidance and Changes For RAG's from the RI Board

We received the item below (*see "italics" on next page*) from the RI Action Groups staff reporting changes and clarifications from the recent RI Board meeting. These items are very important and we have requested clarification on several items.

It is extremely important to recognize that **RAG's still may not solicit funds for their normal operation and must rely on membership dues and unsolicited donations for these costs.** However, the information contained in the communication (*see "italics" on next page*), specifies that we may serve as a conduit for obtaining and forwarding funds for clubs and districts for their disaster related projects. But until we get additional clarification we will not solicit any funds for our RAG other than dues.

It is our understanding that we can accept donations to DNA-RAG but that we may not solicit these. Until this issue is fully resolved we will continue to only identify Rotary club and district disaster funds that can receive them to help with local disasters...

New Guidance and Changes For RAG's from the RI Board (continued)

We are proceeding with application for 501c3 status which is important for transferring funds to other Rotary organizations (clubs, districts, and the RI Foundation) in support of their disaster related projects.

The information provided to us is as follows:

“Dear Rotarian Action Groups Officers:

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to provide updates from the RI Board of Director's recent meeting in San Diego.

With the purpose of enhancing the performance of RAGs, encouraging measurable criteria to maintain status as a RAG, improving awareness of RAGs, and relaxing the restrictions on RAGs' financial activities, the Board amended the Rotary Code of Policies as shown in the attachment Exhibit C-8-b. A summary of the amendments follows below:

- The minimum number of newsletters RAGs are required distribute per Rotary year increased from one to three (Article 42.020.5)*
 - RAGs are required to demonstrate their involvement in at least three large-scale projects (Article 42.020.5)*
 - RAGs are not required to indicate a specific Rotary project when they solicit funds; solicited funds may still only support a Rotary club, district or multidistrict project; The Rotary Foundation; a separate implementing organization working with Rotary clubs on a project (Article 42is.020.11).*
 - The amount of funds RAGs may solicit and hold for Rotary club and district projects has increased from US\$25,000 to US\$50,000 (Article 42.020.11)”*
-

New Guidance and Changes For RAG's from the RI Board (continued)

The change from minimum of one issue of the DNA-RAG Newsletter to at least three issues per year is no problem as we plan to have at least six per year and several special reports. There are certainly enough significant disasters to fill a newsletter every month. The limitation is on having enough team members to assist with data collection and editing. We have an excellent editor but he is going to need some additional help from members. It is a big job.

The requirement to have involvement in at least three large scale projects per year is an increase. However, our continuing involvement with the DAF for the Nepal earthquake disaster, and efforts to help a district with their disaster plan will help meet this requirement. Assisting with the establishment of REDI Conferences, and/or with the development of new disaster committees or disaster plans for Rotary Districts, and specific direct disaster related aid for current disasters as well as to needed long term aid for past disasters also meet these requirements.



Tropical Cyclone Winston: Catastrophe in Fiji

Category 5, Cyclone Winston left more than "42 Fijians now confirmed dead; disaster officials continue to deploy teams to help those affected across Fiji," government spokesman Dan Gavidia tweeted.

The acting head of the Red Cross's Pacific office, Ahmad Sami, said more fatalities were coming to light as data came in from remote communities. "The numbers will continue to change as we have better access to information and establish communications,".

Severe TC (tropical cyclone) Winston with winds that reached over 184 mph, lashed the Pacific nation of over 600 small islands, packing wind gusts of 325 kilometers (202 miles) per hour and leaving a trail of destruction. The storm felled trees, knocked out power and caused heavy flooding before even making landfall.

Suva-based Qarase, said aerial photographs showed there were "probably a thousand houses destroyed" on the island. "I'm 75-years old and the damage I've seen, the extent of the damage, this must be the worst thing in living memory for Fiji," he told Radio New Zealand.

While humanitarian aid is pouring into the main island Viti Levu, some of the worst-hit villages were on remote islands, that relief workers have not yet been able to access. The Fijian government and international aid agencies began delivering much needed aid to the Pacific nation's remote islands and coastal villages devastated by the powerful cyclone. The archipelago is home to some 900,000 people.

Thousands of people are still sheltering in 274 evacuation centers, their homes destroyed by winds or flooded by **the most powerful storm ever recorded to strike a Pacific nation.**

"We don't know how many jetties are destroyed on the outer islands and whether ships carrying aid, can land," said Dylan Quinnell, a spokesman for Care Australia in Fiji's capital Suva.

The Fijian agriculture ministry told local media **the cyclone has completely destroyed crops across the island**, while charity Save The Children said **scores of schools have been destroyed or badly damaged.**

Aid workers have warned of potential outbreaks of the Zika and Dengue viruses, both carried by mosquitoes which could breed in the stagnant water left by the storm...



TC Winston: Catastrophe in Fiji_(continued)

From Rotary Club of Savusavu Fiji Islands:

Thank you to everyone for the outpouring of concern after TC Winston blew thru our island paradise and reduced much of it to rubble!

...We are still assessing the damage and what needs to be done. Many of our Rotarians suffered damage to their homes and properties as well and we are all a bit traumatized by the event.

Power, water and communications are still a bit dodgy and it may be some time before we are back to normal.

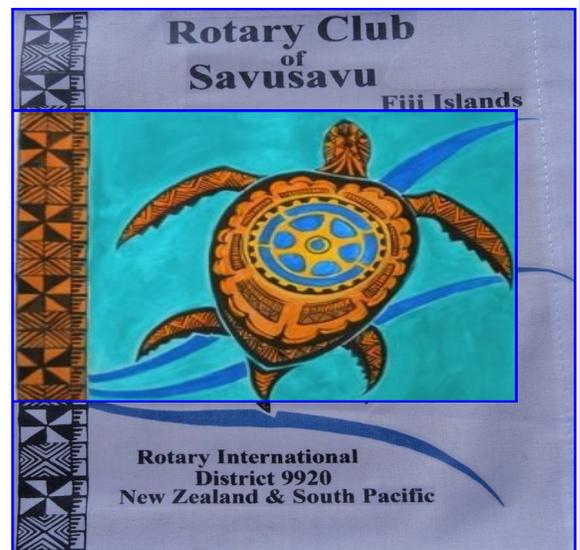
We received 49 ERK (Emergency Response Kits) that had been held in Labasa, and Sharad Solanki, along with Ron & Claire Voldeng, with Sgt. Sanaila, delivered 44 of them to homeowners that have been in evacuation centers at Savusavu Secondary School, Khemendra School and Naweni School. These were chosen under the recommendation of District Officers Bale and Dismac.

Through Rotary Labasa there are 125 -130 food packets that came down from Labasa and are in a Gulabdas Hardware container and Rotary Labasa is due to arrive to deliver them.

We are still waiting to deploy 10 of our Safe Water Stations to Nukubalavu village and find out what other needs we may be able to help with.

We are also considering setting up a "Go Fund Me" page on FaceBook for those folks who would like to help by making donations for the recovery effort.

(Please see how to support, through Disaster Aid USA, on next page.)





TC Winston: Catastrophe in Fiji_(continued)

Disaster Aid USA, together with its international Rotary club partners, Disaster Aid Australia, Disaster Aid UK and Ireland, Disaster Aid Malaysia and Disaster Aid New Zealand, are working to provide desperately needed aid to Fijians after the cyclone's massive devastation. That includes liaising with our Rotary contacts and agencies in Fiji.

Aid groups and government authorities are now racing to deal with the critical need for clean water, health supplies and emergency accommodations.

Your donation will help Disaster Aid USA and its international partners in their response with Family Survival Packs, Home Repair Kits and, most importantly SkyHydrant water purification systems and "Sawyer" water filters.

You can help during these times of desperate need. Donations large or small make a difference to someone or a family in despair. **Please Consider; Donate!**

Disaster Aid USA - 9817 Lanham Severn Road - Lanham MD20706

Disaster Aid USA is a 501c3 organization.

Mark the donation as 'Fiji Cyclone Winston relief'.



Drought across Africa

Africa: A million Children Severely Malnourished-UN

JOHANNESBURG FEBRUARY 19, 2016(CISA) – Nearly one million children across eastern and southern Africa are suffering from “severe acute malnutrition” after two years of drought and the strongest El Nino in 50 years, UNICEF Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa Leila Gharagozloo-Pakkala has said.

“The El Nino weather phenomenon will wane, but the cost to children — many who were already living hand-to-mouth — will be felt for years to come,” AFP quoted Gharagozloo-Pakkala as saying, February 17.

“Governments are responding with available resources, but this is an unprecedented situation. Children’s survival is dependent on action taken today,” she added.

The agency is running humanitarian appeals calling for \$87 million for Ethiopia, \$26 million for Angola and \$15 million for Somalia.

Lesotho, Zimbabwe, and most of South Africa have declared drought emergencies, while in Ethiopia, the number of people in need of food assistance is expected to increase from 10 million to 18 million this year.

Last month the UN’s World Food Programme (WFP) said 14 million people across southern Africa faced going hungry after the prolonged drought wrecked harvests.

The WFP said the cost of maize, also called corn, in Malawi was 73 percent higher than average.

South Africa will import half its average maize crop after 2015 was declared the driest year in more than a century...



Drought across Africa (continued . . .)

AFRICA/ANGOLA - Drought alarm: nearly 2 million people at risk of hunger, of whom 500,000 are children.

Luanda (Agenzia Fides) - Some 500,000 Angolan children are at risk of hunger due to the drought that has hit the Country.

The alarm was raised by the Angolan government, according to which "10 of the 18 provinces of the Country are experiencing a serious food crisis, which threatens at least 500,000 children."

"To cope with this situation, the Government of Angola, along with several international partners (including the UN) has launched a program to combat child malnutrition," said a government source, quoted by the daily Catholic Apostolate.

The program covers the provinces of Zaire, Bie, Huambo, Kwanza-Sul, Cunene, Huila, Bengo, Benguela, Moxico and Namibe.

According to the same source, the initiative aims to "build health centers and train more than two thousand community health workers, who will work with approximately 350 000 households in the four most affected provinces: Kwanza-Sul, Zaire, Huambo and Bie."

In the last year there has been a 60% decrease of the rains in Angola.

Agricultural production has been reduced by more than 400,000 tons compared to the previous harvest and 1 million and 800,000 people are in a situation of food insecurity. (L.M.) (Agenzia Fides 08/11/2012)



Earthquake in Ecuador

News from an Ecuadorian Rotarian—Paul Beaulieu

I just received that email from my friend Bill Staumbaugh from Bahia de Caraquez RC. Bill is our primary contact on the water project under realization in Puerto Nuevo in the City limits of Pedernales. The message [below] is describing in which conditions people are actually living in...

It was a really strong quake and destroyed many homes and condo towers. Several will be condemned. People are living in the streets, parks, schools, churches. **Many still require some shade or tent.** Fortunately it hasn't rained, yet. **Emergency shelters such as tents are needed all along the north coast.** Rotary is partnering with the Shelter Box program to send emergency containers.

I am working with Rotarians and friends to help how we can. Help is now arriving from the outside and the army and police are in force. **There is no electricity yet, running water, nor Internet.** I rode my bike to get to this source in the next town.

Bahia de Caraquez is a disaster. Its people are coming around from the shock and doing things to survive, evacuate, rehabilitate and rebuild.

My upstairs apartment survived very well, so I continue to use it but I am eating with groups of neighbors camping across the street on the malecón. Hauling water and washing underwear in a bucket is living.

Communications has been virtually non existent, but with the first wifi connection, it looks promising.

Rotary District 4400, Quito, Ecuador, established a service fund to raise money for relief efforts, per Rotary International:

We know that Clubs, Districts and friends abroad want to make financial contributions. **For this purpose, we will use the same account:**

Bank of Guayaquil

Swift: GUAYCEG

Beneficiary Account: No. 41233184

Beneficiary Name: Rotary International District 4400

I am at your disposal for any information or consultation,

Manuel Nieto J., Governor District 4400



Earthquake in Japan

A summary of the April 2016 earthquake(s) and aftershocks in Japan:

At least 48 people are dead, according to CBS News, USA.

At least 1,500 people are injured, Japanese government spokesman Yoshihide Suga says.

At least 100,000 people are homeless or evacuated, from over a dozen communities.

At least 380,000 households are without water.

At least 200,000 households are without electricity.

Troops were setting up tents for evacuees and water trucks were being sent to the area.

"Nothing is more important than human life and it's a race against time," Japanese Prime Minister Shizo Abe said.

In Japan, District 2720 created a disaster relief fund after two major quakes hit southwestern Japan, causing landslides and killing dozens.

Contact District Governor-elect Masami Maeda to learn how to donate—
"<https://www.rotary.org/myrotary/en/news-media/rotary-districts-mobilize-support-survivors-ecuador-japan-quakes>" - 19April2016



Earthquake in Indonesia

Aftershocks rock Indonesia after massive quake, calls for calm—Thu, Mar 03
By Kanupriya Kapoor

PADANG, Indonesia (Reuters) - Strong aftershocks rocked Indonesia early on Thursday after a massive undersea earthquake sparked fears of a region-wide disaster.

There were no reports of deaths or damage to buildings from Wednesday night's 7.8 magnitude quake, which caused panic in the Sumatran island port of Padang as people tried to reach higher ground when a tsunami warning was issued: thankfully, no tsunami occurred.

Daily life resumed as normal at daybreak in Padang, a city of around 1 million people, and there were few visible signs of damage.

The National Meteorological Agency said there were six aftershocks during the night, but called for calm as they were diminishing in strength. "We do not believe that there will be an earthquake of greater strength," it said on its Twitter account. "And so residents are urged to keep calm and not be taken in by rumors."

Sutopo Purwo Nugroho, spokesman for the National Disaster Mitigation Agency said there had been no tsunami, casualties or damage along the coast, and people had returned to their homes.

Fears ran high on Wednesday evening when it was reported that the tremor had [incorrectly] measured 8.2 and authorities issued evacuation alerts on loudspeakers, radio and TV. Patients at hospitals in Padang were evacuated and there were traffic jams as panicking residents tried to leave.

USGS said the epicenter was 808 km (502 miles) southwest of Padang...



Earthquake in Indonesia continued

"The traffic jams were caused by the fact that there are not enough evacuation routes or shelters at this point," said Zulfiatno, the head of disaster management agency in Padang, adding that shelters could only hold around 200,000 people in a city of nearly 1 million.

"But the situation has improved from previous years. People have started to understand how to evacuate safely."

Indonesia straddles the so-called "Pacific Ring of Fire", a highly seismically active zone, where different plates on the earth's crust meet and create a large number of earthquakes and volcanoes. (Additional reporting by Eveline Danubrata and Bernadette Christina Munthe in Jakarta; Writing by John Chalmers; Editing by Michael Perry)





Volcano Eruption in Indonesia - March 02 2016

School activities in Karo regency, North Sumatra, have been disrupted due to Mount Sinabung's increasing volcanic activity.

The Karo Disaster Mitigation Agency (BPBD) head Natanail Perangin-angin said that Mt. Sinabung, which is currently on the highest alert level, had been spewing ash clouds.

"Almost all the schools in Tiganderket and Payung subdistricts were covered by volcanic ash. We've cleaned the ash by spraying water after the principals asked for our help," Natanail said. He added that the schools that had been damaged were mostly located within a 7-kilometer radius from the volcano. Natanail said that students whose schools were affected by the eruption had been moved to other schools close to their shelters.

"There are hundreds of students who live in the shelters."



Men with ash-covered faces streamed down the scorched slopes on motorcycles, followed by truckloads of women and children, many crying. Officials barked out orders on megaphones as rocks and debris rained from the sky.

Picture: Ulet Ifansasti/Getty Images



Wild Fire in Bhutan - March 01 2016

... A forest fire consumed more than 100 acres of chirpine vegetation across Chenari, Kheri, Rangsikhar, Norzinthang and Phongshing areas.

The fire ... is believed to be the continuation of another minor forest fire that occurred in Chenari, about seven kilometers from Trashigang.

An electric spark following a short circuit of a Bhutan Power Corporation's transformer is suspected to have started the forest fire, according to forestry officials.

"It seems the forest fire was not completely extinguished in some inaccessible areas. Strong winds could have reignited the flame," Sr. Forester Tandin Jamtsho said.

Panic set in as the fire came very close to burning down the fuel depot...movement of vehicles along the highway was suspended for safety reasons. The fire was spreading towards the town.

Hundreds of people including forest officials, police, civil servants, dessups and local volunteers were seen fighting the fire from all directions. Fire fighters were deployed, fire lines were created and people were manually slapping the fire with tree branches.

Later, the priority was shifted to stop the fire that was headed towards Trashigang Dzong. The fire had then started spreading in all directions. "We couldn't even start backfires to stop the fire towards the dzong side since the wind was blowing in the same direction. The only option was to create fire lines," Tandin Jamtsho said.

As the fire affected areas that hadn't experienced forest fires for more than five years, the fire was spreading at a rapid pace. "Fueled by the strong winds, the crown fires were rapidly spreading from ridge to ridge.

Given the steep terrain, forestry officials said it became difficult to control the fire spreading towards the town.

...No casualties were reported so far.



Flooding in Asia-Pacific

As a 'most disaster-prone region', Asia-Pacific needs risk-sensitive development - UN News Center

10 March 2016 – The Asia-Pacific region continued to be the world's most disaster-prone region in 2015, requiring a paradigm shift from a response-recovery governance, to a risk-sensitive development approach, according to a new United Nations report.

The region accounted for over half the world's 344 disasters in 2015, resulting in over 16,000 deaths with 59 million people affected, and the cost of economic damage was more than US\$45 billion, excluding indirect losses, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) said, in a news release.

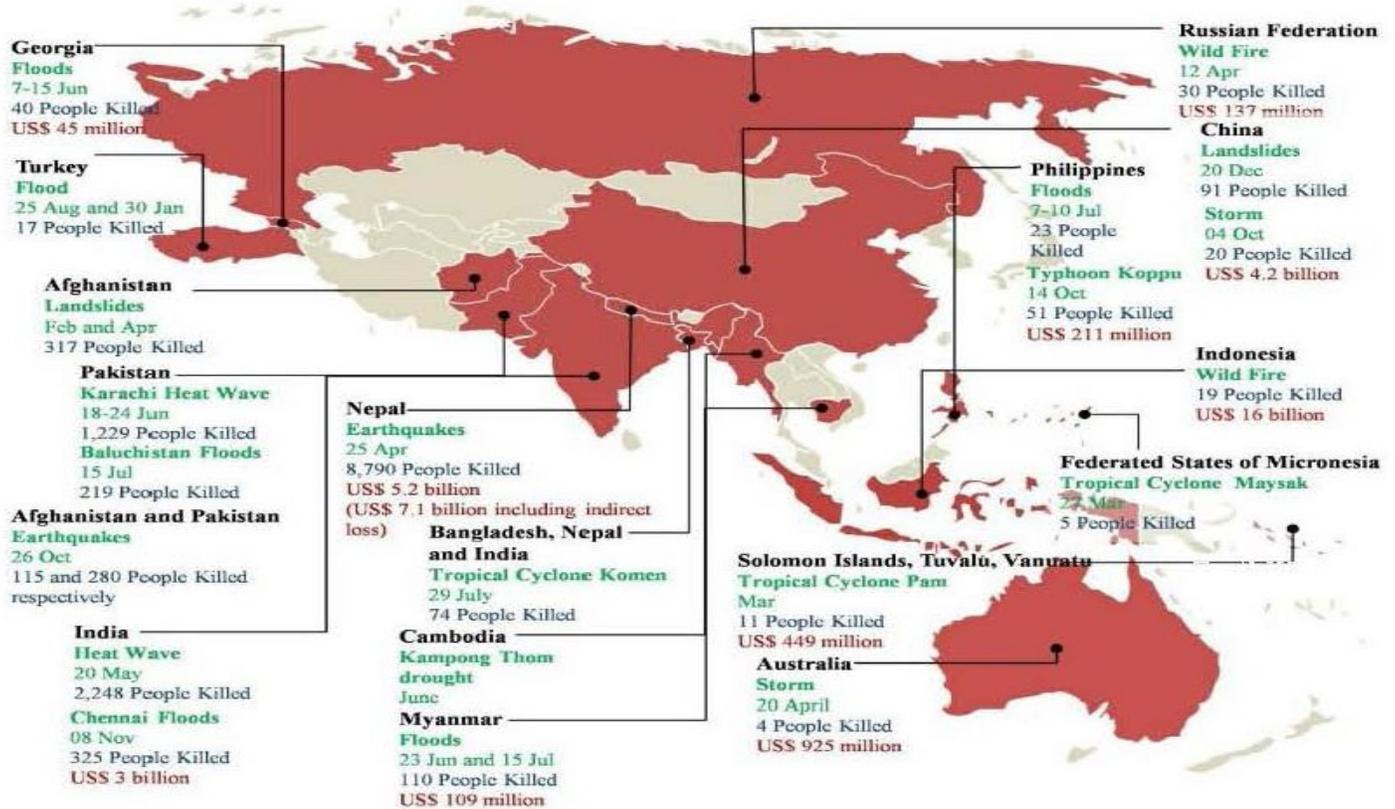
South Asia was the hardest hit, recording 52 disasters and more than 14,000 deaths, with most deaths attributed to the 7.6 magnitude earthquake that hit Nepal last April. Titled "Disasters in Asia and the Pacific: 2015 Year in Review," the report warns that the region's burgeoning cities may not be adequately equipped to tackle urban disasters that occur more frequently and with greater intensity. Over 700 million people in the region live in cities at 'extreme' or 'high' disaster risk, and by 2030 this number could reach one billion.

In many big cities in Asia-Pacific, much of the infrastructure is outdated and built without adequate attention to disaster resilience, the report notes.

Last year, the urban centers of Bangladesh, India, Indonesia and Japan were affected by severe floods, while Nepal's capital city, Kathmandu, bore the brunt of the economic damage from the April earthquake.

Ecological buffers depleted by unplanned urbanization

Widespread floods in Chennai, India in December 2015 illustrate the common challenges faced by many big cities. With the ecological buffers depleted over time by rapid, unplanned urbanization, the floods inundated critical infrastructure, disrupted power networks and waterlogged major city roads. Economic damage and loss from the floods have been estimated at more than US\$10 billion...



Flooding in Asia-Pacific continued

According to the report, a prolonged El Niño phenomenon last year drew attention to neglected and often forgotten slow-onset disasters, by severely exacerbating effects of heat waves, forest fires, haze, and droughts. Last year was the hottest on record, with Pakistan and India reporting more than 3,400 fatalities from a searing heatwave.

Drought caused serious water and food shortages in much of South and South-East Asia and several fatalities in the Pacific. Rather than dealing with the drought only when it becomes an emergency, it should be addressed from a long-term perspective to protect livelihoods.

Use of drones for disaster management

To build a resilient Asia-Pacific, the report further calls for increased focus on risk-sensitive development, and stronger regional cooperation for managing trans-boundary disasters. It advocates capitalizing on emerging technologies such as unmanned aerial vehicles for disaster management but stresses the need to establish regulatory standards for effective use of these technologies.

The report, commending the **“Zero Casualty” policy implemented in Philippines** as a regional good practice, concludes that disaster risk reduction cannot be achieved without political will and effective leadership at all levels of government.



Flooding in Namibia

Flood in Namibia wreaks havoc at Komsberg farm—by Luqman Cloete
@namibian.com.na

RESIDENTS of Komsberg farm near Ariams-vlei in the South had to scramble to safety after a flash flood caused by torrential rain in the area turned a dry riverbed into a raging river, flooding their reed houses.

The flood swept away at least 60 reed houses which were situated in the dry riverbed, leaving a total of 304 people homeless.

The flood victims, most of whom are employed by the grape companies Desert Fruit and Komsberg Farming, lost all their belongings.

“We were able to get to safety after people (who were on safe ground) managed to pull us out with water pipes they had thrown into the river,” said Telagia, adding that other people had to hold onto trees until they were pulled out with water pipes and ropes to safety.





Tornados/Wind Damage in Virginia, USA

A **tornado tore through Appomattox County Virginia, USA**, which damaged or destroyed 200 homes and displaced 375 people, State Coordinator Jeffrey Stern with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management, said Saturday, February 27.

Stern was in the county for a first-hand assessment of damage and recovery efforts, meeting with local officials and residents coping with the aftermath of the tornado, which he said ripped a 16-mile path of destruction through the county.

The Appomattox tornado was one of eight that touched down in Virginia on Wednesday, February 24, resulting in four deaths, including one in the Evergreen community. Stern said he believes the overall cost of damage from the storm statewide could top \$10 billion.

Residents were getting help in unexpected ways as well. Evergreen resident Brenda Murphy was reunited with her high school diploma on Saturday, thanks to the Appomattox Tornado Lost & Found Facebook page. Terri Hadden said the diploma was found by her brother near their home in Toga, in Buckingham County, about 20 miles away.

Volunteers have been working to gather as many personal belongings as they can, bringing in garbage bags full of items they've collected during cleanup into the lost-and-found station of Evergreen Baptist Church. Officials said they have been sorting the items to see what should be saved.

The water supply in Appomattox mainly comes from private wells powered by electricity. Consequently, the power outages have left thousands in the county without both electricity and water.

Mercy Chefs was on site at Evergreen Baptist Church serving breakfast, lunch, dinner and water to the victims of this terrible disaster.