

## United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Sri Lanka

<b>Title of initiative:</b>	Strengthening Early Warning Systems in Sri Lanka
<b>Countries primarily supported:</b>	Sri Lanka
<b>Duration:</b>	From 01 November 2005 to 31 December 2007

### Objectives

This initiative aimed to address the environmental factors related to tsunami risk through building national capacity to integrate environmental assessment and management with national and regional early warning systems and efforts at disaster risk reduction. The initiative specifically addressed the following areas:

- Institutionalize early warning system (national, intermediate and local) and strengthen capacities for observation, detection, and prediction;
- Utilize existing IG Command emergency communication system for warning dissemination;
- Generate public awareness;
- Build and sustain community-based volunteer groups for providing early warning messages.

The expected outcomes were:

- Institutionalization of early warning system (particularly, tsunami, landslides and floods);
- Community-based flood and landslide monitoring system and early warning dissemination mechanism;
- Strengthening dissemination of early warning mechanisms to communities;
- Local level action and overall coordination;
- Post disaster support.

### Achievements

#### ➤ Institutionalization of early warning system

- A workshop was held to develop a National Strategy for Early Warning. At the workshop, roles and responsibilities were clarified for forecasting, generation of early warning bulletins and dissemination of early warnings to mass media, police and communities.

#### ➤ Community-based flood and landslide monitoring system and early warning dissemination mechanism

- A pilot, integrated model for real-time landslide monitoring was established. Five rain gauges have been manufactured, and are currently being installed in five DS Divisions in Ratnapura District.<sup>51</sup> Once they are installed, the model can be tested for forecasting accuracy.
- Training of three scientists from the National Building and Research Organization (NBRO) was completed in November 2006 in landslide simulation modeling and development of a real-time landslide simulation model. Hardware (computers) and applications (GIS and others) were provided to NBRO for this purpose.

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<sup>51</sup> The five Divisions are Eaipatha, Nivithigala, Kalawana, Pelmadulla and Kahawatha.

➤ **Strengthening dissemination of early warning mechanisms to communities**

- A total of more than 15 Public Address Systems were provided to police stations along the coastline in the landslides prone districts of Kalutara, Galle, Matara and Hambantota and in Ratnapura for the dissemination of early warning information.
- Police were trained in Ratnapura along with the communities in October 2006 on standard operating procedures (SOPs) which were developed under the initiative. The police are expected to play a key role in disseminating warnings.

➤ **Local level action and overall coordination**

- A training of trainers in community-based hazard mapping took place in a pilot site in the district of Hambantota on 24-25 June 2006. Forty DMC staff and UN volunteers were trained.
- The exercise developed a community hazard map, marked evacuation paths, demographic data for each household in the hazard prone area. An evacuation drill was carried out with over 200 community members from the village after the dissemination of information to the community.
- The same training was implemented with five communities in the district of Ratnapura in the five landslides prone Divisions where the rain gauges were installed.
- Draft SOPs have been developed for testing through national simulation drills.

➤ **Post disaster support**

- For the purpose of documentation of best practices, two video documentaries were produced capturing the implementation of community based early warning activities in Hambantota and Ratnapura.



**Photo 4**

*Representatives from the community from Kudawella developed their hazard map, marked evacuation paths, collected demographic data for each household in the hazard prone area and then briefed each household on the evacuation paths and the safe areas closest to them. A drill was carried out the following day. The police issued a warning, and drove around the area with the sound of siren. Community members from the village followed the evacuation sign boards to the safe location, carrying with them valuable legal documents. Over 200 people evacuated to the safe area. At the end of the exercise, 80% of the villagers arrived there within 20 minutes after the issuance of the early warning.*



**Photo 5**

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