

United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS)

Title of initiative:	Strengthening Early Warning Systems in Sri Lanka
Countries primarily supported:	Sri Lanka
Duration:	From 1 February 2005 to 31 December 2006

Objectives

The initiative targeted its efforts specifically in Sri Lanka. The proposed goals were:

- Strengthening capacities on early warning at the national level and promoting the execution of efforts to ensure the link from the national to the local level regarding early warning;
- Contributing to the efforts to strengthen people-centred early warning capacities in the coastal city of Galle;
- Development and testing of methodologies to assess vulnerability associated with tsunamis, focusing on the cities of Galle and Batticaloa;
- Strengthening the capacities of UN/ISDR-PPEW regarding information management via the development of a user-friendly, internet-based database;
- Contributing to other efforts as requested by UN/ISDR-PPEW;
- Strengthening the role of local universities in disaster risk reduction and the promotion of disaster resilience as well as effective early warning.

Achievements

The UNU-EHS-coordinated initiative was executed with the support of government agencies and universities in Germany and Sri Lanka. As a pilot project, the initiative extended support to the recently established Disaster Management Centre (DMC) and provided an opportunity for the Sri Lankan Technical Committee for Disaster Early Warning (TCDEW) to view and incorporate the advantages of an “end-to-end” early warning system linking the international monitoring efforts within the Indian Ocean to the anticipated response at the local level.

- **Strengthening capacities of the Technical Committee on Disaster Early Warning**
 - Technical assistance and policy-relevant advice was provided to the TCDEW in relation to people-centred, efficient early warning, and risk management.
 - A laptop computer and a beamer were provided to the TCDEW.
 - Posters and leaflets were provided to the TCDEW and DMC to support their awareness-raising campaigns in 11 districts in Sri Lanka, including Galle.
 - UNU-EHS facilitated the involvement of TCDEW in the scope of the German-Indonesian Tsunami Early Warning Project.
- **Strengthening “people-centred” early warning capacities in Galle**
 - A tsunami drill was coordinated and executed in conjunction with the TCDEW and GSMB in the C.W.W. Kannangara School in Galle, which is a vulnerable facility (in terms of children) located in a high-exposure area next to the ocean (October 2005).
 - A national workshop was conducted by UNU-EHS on 26-27 January 2006 in Colombo to discuss results of the vulnerability assessment in Galle involving universities, national, and international agencies.
 - Local workshops were conducted in Galle targeting the staff of the District-level Disaster Management Committee and the Tourism and Hotel Sector of Galle. The activities of other UN agencies (Humanitarian Information Center of UNOCHA) were linked with the work of TCDEW.

➤ **Other capacity building activities**

- UNU-EHS provided technical assistance to the Technical Early Warning Committee in Galle by providing two Laptop computers.
- UNU-EHS and UNEP promoted the elaboration of training kits for institutions devoted to disaster reduction using the APELL⁶² approach.

➤ **Rapid vulnerability assessment methodologies were developed and tested**

- Rapid vulnerability assessments were developed and conducted jointly with Sri Lankan scientists in the cities of Galle and Batticaloa, Sri Lanka. The research results and the new methodologies to measure social, economic and environmental vulnerability were discussed in a national workshop in Sri Lanka (January 2006) and in three international conferences (Montpellier (April 2006), New York (April 2006), Bangkok (June 2006)).
- Publication of the results in scientific journals and a book.

➤ **Other activities**

- A user-friendly, internet-based database, Tsunami Early Warning Information System (TEWIS),⁶³ was developed
- Exchange and invitation of Sri Lankan scientists to important events in Germany.
- The UNU-EHS assisted the professionals from Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and China to participate in international conferences in Thailand (UNESCO/IOC International Conference, February 2006) and in Germany (EWC III, March 2006). Prior to the EWC III, UNU-EHS facilitated the participation of the members of the TCDEW and the local authorities of Hambantota in the Mayors' Conference on Early Warning in Bonn.
- The UNU-EHS supported the execution of a regional workshop organized by UNESCO/IOC WESTPAC on Post-Tsunami Impacts and Recovery of Coastal Ecosystems and Communities in the Indian Ocean.
- The results of the initiative of the UNU-EHS were also presented in other conferences (Second NEAMS⁶⁴ Conference, May 2006), WMO Early Warning Conference, May 2006), UNITAR/UNU/ISDR seminar (New York, 2006), UNU/CRED/ISDR Regional Workshop on the Human Impact of Tsunami and Disaster Risk Reduction (Bangkok, June 2006); GTZ/IFRC/UNDP/USAID regional workshop (Padang, 2006).
- Presentation of UNU/EHS's achievements in UN/ISDR Informs, Asia and Pacific (2006).
- The results of the initiative of the UNU-EHS have been transferred to local authorities and to the local emergency committee of the city of Padang.
- A document outlining an approach to elaborate scenarios of impacts in case of tsunamis for different sectors of development in cities has been elaborated.

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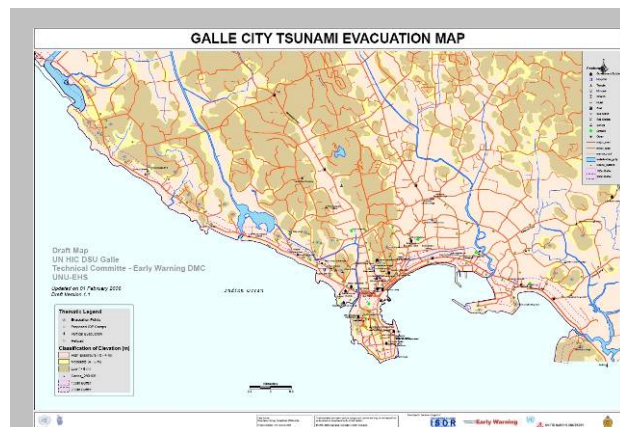


Figure 5: Tsunami evacuation map, Source: UNU-EHS

⁶² APELL (Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at Local Level) is a programme of UNEP. More information is available at: http://www.unep.fr/pc/apell/process/what_is_apell.html.

⁶³ <http://www.unisdr-earlywarning.org/>

⁶⁴ NEAMS: North Eastern Atlantic and Mediterranean Seas