



NDYS in Action, Newsletter

Natural Disaster Youth Summit Monthly News

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The VOICE of YOUTH is NEEDED!

Editor: Daniel Paz,
Salta, Argentina



Topics

Disaster Reduction and Climate Change

Thailand is under water.

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Nine southern Thai provinces have been hit by downpours, leading to 21 deaths and affecting some 700,000 people. The affected areas include Narathiwat, Surat Thani, Songkhla, Yala, Phatthalung and Pattani Provinces.

People had to park vehicles on high ground, save all important papers and some departments had to operate from the second floor. The police officers have to use boats to travel from their residences to work and local residents have to use boats to report complaints to the police stations.

Three schools in Raman district suspended classes, bringing to 10 the number of schools closed in Yala Province alone. In Narathiwat Province, almost 209 villages have been flooded, farmland is under water, many local roads inundated and villagers forced to travel by boat. The floods also caused the closure of schools and state agencies in Sungai-Kolok district.

Even though the heavy downpours have stopped in some areas and the water levels have started to recede, the Thai Meteorological Department is still urging people to be prepared since more heavy rains are expected.



The southern provinces which were affected.

According to the Thai Public Health Ministry, some medical staff had treated more than 20,000 people injured or infected by the flood-waters. They sent out over 20,000 first-aid kits to flood-affected residents in Songkhla, 10,000 kits to Phatthalung and gave out 5,000 pairs of boots to prevent infection from Leptospirosis (an infection caused by animal waste in the water).

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Wisdom in the world on Disaster Reduction

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This climate change conference is aimed in discussing an international response to climate change.

The Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), a coalition of island and low-lying coastal countries that share similar development and environmental concerns, especially their vulnerability to the effects of climate change, led the groups lobbying to ensure that insurance would become part of any deal on adaptation.

None of the affected poor countries - often the hardest hit by natural disasters - can afford the losses caused by the intensifying impact of climate change: more frequent and more intense tropical cyclones, flooding rains and longer droughts.

Munich Re, one of the world's largest reinsurance companies, announced in Poznan that in the past 25 years, over 95 percent of deaths from natural disasters occurred in developing countries, and direct economic losses in the last decade averaged US\$100 billion per annum. In low-income countries the losses in relation to national income were more than double those of high-income countries.

A preliminary assessment of the costs and impacts of some key natural disasters, compiled by Munich Re, showed that the most costly event of 2008 was the earthquake in China in May 2008.

The Poznan conference, which drew 11,600 participants, was at the half-way mark in negotiations on an international response to climate change, to be agreed in Copenhagen at the end of 2009 and to take effect in 2013, the year after the first phase of the Kyoto Protocol expires. Yvo de Boer, executive secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which hosted the conference, told reporters that countries were considering including climate risk insurance in the Copenhagen deal.

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Most proposals on possible climate risk insurance architecture emphasise prevention and insurance, but the AOSIS proposal also had a rehabilitation component. "The AOSIS proposal ... has a better chance of acceptance," noted Koko Warner, head of Social Vulnerability and Environmental Migration department at the UN University Institute for Environment and Human Security Section (UNU-EHS), who also presented the other big insurance proposal at the conference on behalf of the Munich Climate Insurance Initiative (MCII). The MCII was set up in 2005 by UNU-EHS, Germanwatch, a North-South watchdog initiative, IIASA, the Munich Re Foundation, the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, which researches ecological, geophysical and socioeconomic aspects of worldwide climatic change, the European Climate Forum, a platform for joint science-based climate change studies, the Tyndall Centre, which researches sustainable responses to climate change, The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), focusing on sustainable energy development, the World Bank and independent experts.

The Prevention Pillar of the MCII proposal makes reducing human and economic losses its top priorities, and includes carefully designed incentives for preventing or reducing risk. The proposal calls for comprehensive risk assessments across vulnerable countries, which could uncover unforeseen possibilities for risk reduction and help lay the groundwork for risk transfer systems.

The Insurance pillar has two tiers: first, a Climate Insurance Pool that would absorb a pre-defined proportion of high-level risk of disaster loss among the vulnerable; second, a Climate Insurance Assistance Facility that would provide technical support and other forms of assistance, allowing public-private insurance systems to provide cover for the middle layers of risk in these countries.

The AOSIS proposal suggested that rich countries pay for the insurance from the Adaptation Fund. The Fund, which has yet to become operational, is expected to raise money from a levy of about two percent on credits generated by the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), set up under the Kyoto Protocol.

The mechanism allows industrialised countries to earn and trade emissions credits by implementing projects in either developed countries or developing ones, and put the credits towards meeting their greenhouse gas emission targets.

The MCII proposal suggested that vulnerable countries pool their risks, which would cost them less.

As the conference reached its last day, there was still dissatisfaction over the Adaptation Fund: developing countries were unhappy with the management of disbursement and the amount of money available, while sympathetic rich countries like Germany said current resources for the Adaptation Fund were inadequate.

The UN has said that \$86 billion per year will be needed by 2015 for poor countries to adapt to climate change, but according to some estimates the Adaptation Fund will only reach \$900 million by 2012.

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Cold winds and lack of shelter are threatening Pakistan.

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The 6.4 magnitude quake has been followed by a spate of aftershocks and many houses were damaged, but people had to move indoors, even when their houses have suffered only slight damage. This is because temperature in Ziarat town is under zero degree. Some families had to move to Quetta, which is the capital of the Balochistan Province.

People don't want to return their houses because they feel unsafe, and they sleep in their backyards. Some 3,100 winterised tents and about 300 shelters (consisting of corrugated iron sheets to set up a single room) have been distributed. The shelters offers much better protection from cold and wind than tents and can house 10-12 people each.



This is how does many streets look in Quetta district and produce a shock to citizens.

The UN World Health Organization, which initiated a Disease Early Warning System soon after the quake, and has been monitoring the situation in Pishin and Ziarat, has noted that acute respiratory infections are responsible for nearly 50 percent of medical consultations in the area - no higher than in the "peak season" in previous years.

Adequate supplies of food also seem to have reached victims, with families saying "we suffered no shortages after the earliest days". However, post-quake water shortages have added to the difficulties of people in an area where fruit growing is a key means of livelihood.

Pakistan's National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), which is coordinating the relief effort, said 710 houses were completely destroyed, another 4,524 were badly damaged and over 4,600 suffered minor damage.

NDMA said 218 villages were affected and 7,000-10,000 people displaced, and has confirmed 163 deaths, although other estimates say the figure could be nearer 300. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) has put the number of people rendered homeless at 10,000-15,000.



Comments: I am really excited for knowing about the climate change conference in Poland. I think these are the things we have to trust in and give all our support and predisposition. As I always say, "exchanging opinions, dialoguing, taking participation... working as a group is the best way". I believe this is a wonderful opportunity to update the situation of several affected countries.

I wish Thailand and Pakistan people my best for their recovering time.

By Sergio Daniel Paz
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