

# **A case for including prisons and prisoners in disaster risk reduction**

**Fanny Navizet**

**Université de Grenoble, France**

**Email: [fanny.navizet@gmail.com](mailto:fanny.navizet@gmail.com)**

**JC Gaillard**

**The University of Auckland, NZ**

**Email: [jc.gaillard@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:jc.gaillard@auckland.ac.nz)**

## **Prisons, prisoners and disasters**

Prison devastated by the Dec. 2004 tsunami in Meulaboh, Aceh, Indonesia



- Sparse evidence indicates that prisons and prisoners are particularly vulnerable in facing natural hazards.
- There does not seem to be any comprehensive studies addressing prisons and prisoners in disasters.

## **Study site and methodology**

- Four prisons in Southern France, which exact location cannot be disclosed for ‘security’ and ‘social’ reasons.
- Interviews with key informants in and outside the prisons, i.e. prosecutors, warders, teachers, trainers, counsellors, nurses, but no prisoners.

## **Prisons are very vulnerable**

- Prisons are often in poor conditions, crowded and understaffed.
- Tight security measures and structures hinders access to prisons in the event of an emergency.
- Frequent rotation in leadership frequently precludes awareness of potential hazards.
- Prisons are poorly integrated within local communities.
- Prisons are seldom integrated into local disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies

## **Prisoners are very vulnerable**

- Prisoners cannot move freely and are dependent upon external resources.
- Many prisoners are in poor health condition or suffer from mental disorders.
- Many prisoners are illiterate in a context where information is often delivered in written documents.
- Many are said to be selfish and conflicts are frequent, thus potentially limiting social resources in time of disaster.
- All information regarding crisis management are kept away from the prisoners who are thus excluded from decision making.
- Prisoners are negatively considered within the society.



## **Few but essential capacities and resources**

- Warders very well know the prisoners and are trained for quick response intervention, including for fire.
- Internal warning systems for fire and riots.
- Remotely-located but skilled response teams ready to step into any emergency

## **Top-down DRR and crisis management procedures**

- Disaster risk reduction and crisis management follow a command-and-control, top-down, multi-level framework.
- Important decisions are taken beyond the prison community.
- Decision making is therefore often slow.
- Warders are facilitators and lack opportunities for initiatives.

## A case for including prisons and prisoners in DRR

# The 2003 flood disaster in Arles, France



Evacuation of prisoners during the 2003 floods in Arles, France  
(*Anonymous*)



Evacuation of prisoners during the 2003 floods in Arles, France (*Anonymous*)



## A case for including prisons and prisoners in DRR

# The 2010 flood disaster in Draguignan, France



Damage to the Draguignan prison, France, in June 2010 (*Anonymous*)

## **Conclusions**

- Prisons are very particular settings for DRR.
- Daily issues (e.g. fire, violence and suicide) prevail over natural hazards in policies.
- In France, recent events show that lessons are not learnt.
- There is a crucial need for hearing the voice of the first concerned, i.e. the prisoners.

# A case for including prisons and prisoners in DRR

**THE END**

**THANK YOU!**