

A tsunami alert was issued 42 minutes after the February 6, 6.9 magnitude earthquake which struck Negros and Cebu islands amidst reports of unusual sea-level changes in the coastal areas. The alert was cancelled after two hours but the preparedness measures were well-executed, evacuations took place accompanied by information drives and it is clear that lessons are being applied from previous experiences of tsunamis in the Pacific Ocean. 51 people are reported to have died and some 60 people were missing in the earthquake which was followed by over 150 aftershocks, and landslides in several places

For more information, visit:  
<http://goo.gl/M9836>



United Nations  
International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

UNISDR  
9-11 Rue de Varembe  
CH1202, Geneva  
Switzerland  
ph +41 229178907-8  
fax +41 229178964  
isdr@un.org

<http://www.unisdr.org>  
<http://www.twitter.com/unisdr>  
<http://www.facebook.com/disaster.reduction>

## UNISDR CHIEF MEETS THAI GOVT

UNISDR Chief, Margareta Wahlström, met with Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Kittiratt Na-Ranong, to discuss new government proposals on risk management and to urge Government support for business continuity plans following the costliest disaster in the country's history. The cost of the severe floods which hit Bangkok in December is estimated at \$40 billion. More than 1,000 factories were shut down and 700,000 people were out of work. Over 800 people died in the floods. "I appreciate from my meetings with the Government, private business people and the Chamber of Commerce that the sheer scale of the economic losses provides an opportunity for a major re-think about the role of risk management and disaster risk reduction in preventing a recurrence of this type of disaster." **For more information, visit:** <http://goo.gl/pn108>

## MADAGASCAR TESTED

Cyclone Giovanna injected an unusual dose of reality into the work of an evaluation team from the UK's York University which arrived on the island a week before to assess the impact of UNICEF and the Ministry of Education's Disaster Risk Reduction, Preparedness and Response programme. "It's very interesting to see how the project has been implemented with a range of partners," said Dr. Sean Deely, Deputy Director of York University's Postwar Reconstruction and Development Unit (PRDU) who was at a school in Analangirofo, close to where the cyclone was expected to make landfall. "They are training Ministry of Education staff at national and district level and they in turn train the teachers in the schools and the teachers then pass on the key messages to the kids on disaster risk reduction and preparedness measures for tropical storms, floods, tsunamis, forest fires and other hazards. The children go home and pass the messages on to their parents... There's a good understanding of the key role that children can play as messengers in the community and, critically, there is a strong focus on how to get the children back to school quickly once it's safe even if it means re-starting classes under a tree." **For more information, visit:** <http://goo.gl/fqxEs>

## EUROPE ON FLOOD ALERT

UNISDR said the European Flood Alert System could soon be put to its greatest test since widespread flooding ten years ago led to its creation by the European Commission. In a statement, it said: "The thaw is now setting in along the Danube. While thousands of people remain snowbound from Serbia to Bulgaria, there are warning signs that destructive floods will add to the loss of life and economic assets particularly in places where there is an absence of flood management infrastructure such as dams and dikes. We do need to plan better. The unpredictability of severe weather events leads to high human and financial costs. More focus on winterisation planning will be a wise investment in the coming years." **For more information, visit:** <http://goo.gl/eUr3s>



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'Show Me the Money' - Oxfam **P.3**

First 2012 Tsunami Alert **P.4**

## BRAZIL TO OPEN DRR CENTRE

The Brazilian government has agreed to open a Centre of Excellence for Disaster Risk Reduction, one year after deadly landslides in the state of Rio de Janeiro prompted President Dilma Rousseff to devise plans to improve the country's disaster readiness.

"The establishment of a Centre of Excellence for Disaster Risk Reduction is the culmination of a consultation process that began in 2005 as part of a global effort to establish centres of excellence for disaster risk reduction focusing on building resilience," said Ricardo Mena, Head of UNISDR's Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean.

For more information, visit:  
<http://goo.gl/TKbG0>



From left: Senators Aquilino Pimentel III, Teofisto Guingona III, and Loren Legarda, UNISDR's United Nations Champion for Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation for Asia-Pacific (Photo: Joseph Vidal)

## POST-MORTEM ON TYPHOON SENDONG

UNISDR Chief, Margareta Wahlström, has congratulated three Philippines Senators for leading an in-depth, two-day post-mortem with local leaders into the devastating losses caused to Mindanao Island by Typhoon Sendong in December. The resulting Mindanao Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction Priorities with an eight-point plan of action was "a very honest and searching analysis of the man-made contributions to this disaster in which over 1,000 people lost their lives.

"It is very significant that this initiative has the support of three influential Senators, UNISDR's Regional Champion for Disaster Risk Reduction, Loren Legarda, Aquilino Pimentel III and Teofisio Guingona III. I would like to thank them for their efforts. It is important now to focus on recovery and ensure that Mindanao builds back better and that we take this opportunity to avoid re-creating the risks exposed by Typhoon Sendong. The priority now is to take care of the 4,981 families who have been left homeless. I met many of them on my visit last month and their views must be taken on board when it comes to implementing the Mindanao Declaration. Essentially, this declaration contains an eight-point plan of action which is an endorsement for the passage of laws which, if successfully implemented, will establish a permanent, independent disaster management and risk reduction agency and promote cooperation between local governments on these issues."

Senator Legarda said: "Leaders have the capacity to protect our people and secure future generations. The important starting point is political commitment, and our measure for success is more disaster-resilient development investments and, fundamentally, better and greater quality of life for our long-suffering people." The Mindanao Declaration expresses particular concern that "logging, mining, unsustainable agriculture, and other similar land-use activities increase the vulnerability of many ecosystems and communities in our island."

For more information, visit: <http://goo.gl/O38D4>

## DELHI'S FIRST QUAKE DRILL

More than 40,000 people took part in a mass earthquake drill in Delhi on February 15 to check the alertness and preparedness of the 16.7 million people living in the Indian capital in the event of a high intensity earthquake of 7.2 on the Richter scale. Experts have long questioned Delhi's ability to withstand a major earthquake due to lack of safety standards, illegal buildings and poor enforcement of building codes despite its classification as a high-risk seismic zone.

UNISDR Chief, Margareta Wahlström, welcomed the initiative by the National Disaster Management Authority and the Delhi Disaster Management Authority which was the culmination of the country's first-ever State-wide earthquake preparedness exercise which got underway last December.

For more information, visit: <http://goo.gl/hsLAI>

## 'INFORMATION SAVES LIVES'

UNISDR Chief, Margareta Wahlström, has welcomed the World Meteorological Organization's (WMO) new Weather and Climate Information System "as a major contribution towards life-saving efforts at community level." She said: "This is a significant boost for disaster risk reduction and will have many practical benefits for communities which suffer from weather-related disasters. For the first time, national disaster management offices and other responders will have free and direct access in real-time to weather observations and forecasts including tsunami alerts, tropical cyclone and storm warnings. Time and information save lives and this will make early warning systems more effective." For more information, visit: <http://goo.gl/qJqhM>

## 'SHOW ME THE MONEY' - OXFAM

A new briefing paper from Oxfam identifies "the limited investment in building resilience and disaster risk reduction (DRR), despite rhetoric to the contrary" as one of main failures of humanitarian aid in recent times. A key theme of *Crises in a New World Order: Challenging the humanitarian project* is capacity building of states and civil society: "The combination of an effective state and active civil society is too often absent in countries vulnerable to crises. Meeting the challenge to build both is essential for effective emergency response and for increasing communities' resilience to disasters, violence, and other shocks." While acknowledging that some donors do have a long-term commitment to DRR including DFID, ECHO and USAID, the report states: "In 2009, only 0.5% of total aid was devoted to DRR. In 2011, the East Africa crisis was testament to this lack of priority. When donors did fund preparedness, it tended to be after rather than before the crisis." For more information, visit: <http://goo.gl/E7uK2>



Vice-President of the National Assembly of Panama, Rony Araúz, with Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, Margareta Wahlström (see p.2)



Prior to meeting Philippines Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Margareta Wahlström meets with Iligan Mayor Lawrence Lluç Cruz on her three-day visit to the Philippines. (Photo: Jerry Velasquez)

## UNISDR CHIEF VISITS MINDANAO

UNISDR Chief, Margareta Wahlström, met with the Philippines Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Albert F. Del Rosario, following a three-day visit to the typhoon-devastated coastal cities of Iligan and Cagayan de Oro in Mindanao. Ms. Wahlström told Secretary Del Rosario: "What I have seen in Kalakala in Cagayan de Oro reminds me of the impacts made by major tsunamis such as the one which hit Japan last year or the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004. In Kalakala you really feel the magnitude of the disaster and the force of the water which took so many lives, uprooted trees and swept away houses."

She discussed with Secretary Del Rosario the need for social mobilisation to be linked to early flood warnings to ensure timely evacuations. They also discussed the combination of environmental factors which contributed to the disaster including illegal logging; the need to develop risk-sensitive comprehensive land use plans and the need for greater cooperation between the public and private sectors to reduce risk. Typhoon Sendong claimed 1,430 lives after it struck in the middle of the night on December 16. For more information, visit: <http://goo.gl/jsdfg>

## PANAMA'S NEW DRR ADVOCATE

The dynamic new Vice-President of the National Assembly of Panama, Rony Araúz, is emerging as a leading advocate of disaster risk reduction in Central America following a career monitoring the passage of hazardous materials through the Panama Canal. He sees the introduction of a model Disaster Risk Management Law in Panama as key to re-assuring people concerned about the passage of hazardous materials, including shipments of nuclear waste, through the country. He also wants to convene a meeting of representatives from all countries in Central America to discuss issues of common concern.

For more information, visit: <http://goo.gl/Kv08a>

## FLOODS ACROSS GLOBE

Floods that began in January have heaped misery on communities in Africa, the Americas, Australia and the Pacific and are in keeping with long-term disaster trends which show that floods are the most dominant disaster category when it comes to the numbers affected. Over the last ten years annual averages of 106 million people have had their lives disrupted by floods.

"The frequency and impact of the storms and floods last month should encourage local governments in coastal and riverside areas to put in place the budgeting and infrastructure necessary to reduce the impact of floods and prevent the significant loss of life and livelihoods which comes with them", said UNISDR Head, Margareta Wahlström.

For more information, visit: <http://goo.gl/UWELJ>