



President's Newsletter

December 1, 2005

Dear Members and Friends of GHI,

These past 12 months can be considered as the Year of Natural Disasters: the tsunami and its aftermath in South Asia; Hurricanes Katrina, Rita and Wilma; heavy floods in Europe; and the Pakistan earthquake. For the moment, the whole world is very much aware of such threats. At GHI, we hope that this attention will lead to more opportunities for our message of preparedness, prevention and mitigation to be heard and acted upon. I'd like to inform you in this newsletter about some of the ways in which we are using this opportunity to promote risk reduction where it is needed most.

Post-tsunami Actions

We have continued our efforts to develop and apply tools for tsunami response and mitigation planning that threatened communities can customize and implement according to their own particular needs. Since the tsunami on December 26, 2004, there has been a well demonstrated interest and promise of funding to install and operate tsunami warning systems consisting of networks of buoys and seismometers to detect tsunamis in the Indian and Atlantic Oceans and the Caribbean Sea regions. However, there remains a need to build the capabilities of national emergency management offices and local communities, particularly in developing countries, to respond to tsunami warnings and to mitigate tsunami effects. A great deal of information and experience currently exists on how nations and communities could respond to tsunamis, but this information is scattered, inconsistent and usually applicable only to the needs of developed countries. Tsunami safety ultimately rests with the actions taken in tsunami-vulnerable communities *before* tsunamis occur.

To assist these communities to take these critical preparatory actions, GHI will prepare community-based response materials for use in threatened areas. We are grateful to have received initial support for this work from the National Research Council of the U.S. National Academies through a special tsunami relief and rebuilding fund. This fund was created with donations from employees and matching contributions from the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the Institute of Medicine. Preparing needed materials is the first step that will lead to a tsunami response plan for a pilot community, possibly in Indonesia. In December I will travel to Indonesia with Tom Tobin, GHI's Chief Operating Officer, for the purpose of planning work there that we are proposing with Kerry Sieh, Professor of Geology at Caltech. (As most of you will know, for over ten years Kerry has been studying the Sumatran plate boundary, where the December 26 earthquake-tsunami occurred.) We expect to meet with Teddy Boen, a member of GHI's Board of Advisors, in Jakarta, as well as with colleagues of Kerry and staff members of MercyCorps.

Pakistan

Since the Pakistan earthquake on October 8, we have been in close contact with colleagues in Pakistan (including Abid Shaban, a member of GHI's Advisory Board) and here in the United States regarding ways in which GHI might take action to help insure that the rebuilding of hard-hit areas is done in a way that will reduce losses in future earthquakes. Arietta Chakos (a long-standing GHI supporter and Assistant City Manager of the City of Berkeley) represented GHI at the November 13 meeting of the Organization of Pakistani Entrepreneurs of North America in Washington D.C. and described what we think needs to be done to help Pakistan. While awareness is still high, we hope to initiate programs to build safe schools in Pakistan. Our decision to focus on rebuilding schools rises from the assessment that 10,000 schools collapsed in this earthquake. The Associated Press has reported that 8,000 schools collapsed in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and 2,000 in Pakistan's less-populous Kashmir region. All of the schools in Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan-controlled Kashmir, collapsed. At least 17,000 children died in these school collapses. I have been invited to meet with Ministry of Education officials in Karachi on December 6 to propose that Pakistan participates in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development program to improve earthquake safety in schools (see below).

OECD Council Acts on School Earthquake Safety

In my last Newsletter, I reported on our ongoing work with the Program on Educational Building of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). On July 21, 2005, the OECD's governing council approved the *OECD Recommendation Concerning Guidelines on Earthquake Safety in Schools*. Now, under a new OECD peer review process, governments will assist each other in formulating and implementing policies for improved earthquake safety in schools and, most important, the OECD Council will regularly review member countries' progress in implementing sound school earthquake safety programs. To date, Mexico, Greece, Turkey, New Zealand, Canada, and Japan have expressed interest in joining the program.

Tom Tobin and I traveled in November to Turkey where we joined OECD's Hannah von Ahlefeld and Richard Yelland to plan the pilot project in Turkey. We met with Mustafa Erdik (GHI Advisory Board Member and Chairman of the Department of Earthquake Engineering at Bogaziçi University) in Istanbul and with Polat Gulkan (Professor at the Middle Eastern Technical University) in Ankara to confer with them about how to conduct this project. Our meeting with officials at Turkey's Ministry of National Education was encouraging, and we hope to receive official approval to start this project soon. While in Ankara, we also met with the person in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who handles relations between Turkey and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), which is, essentially, a "sister" organization to the OECD, comprising Turkey and countries immediately to the east, including Afghanistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Pakistan. We discussed the OECD school earthquake safety program and explored the possibility of expanding the program to the ECO countries. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs official was supportive of this idea and will try to organize a meeting in Istanbul of representatives of the ECO countries. We hope to inform them about the OECD program and how we could help establish school earthquake safety programs in their countries.

At the Turkish Ministry of National Education I saw something very exciting. One of the big obstacles in achieving earthquake safety in developing countries is the difficulty, especially in rural settings, for their governments to enforce building codes. This is in large part due to the challenge of getting qualified inspectors to building sites on a regular basis. While visiting the Ministry of National Education, I learned that they monitor the construction of new schools using video cameras (located on the construction sites) that are connected to the Ministry by the internet. A person sitting in Ankara can control where the camera is pointed, and can zoom in on details. Just the presence of the camera on the work site might reduce sloppy or corrupt practice. This is a technique that needs to be developed and disseminated to other countries.

Central Asia

Our work to help develop a culture of community-based disaster mitigation in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan is now reaching conclusion. This 3-year project, funded by the USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA), has involved working with NGO partners there to improve disaster preparedness in schools, hospitals and the self-built housing sector. Video production funded by a \$10,000 grant from Risk Management Solutions (RMS) is nearing completion. The 10-part educational series will soon be broadcast on main television stations in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, in the Russian, Kazak, Uzbek and Tajik languages. The showing of these films, like the integration of the *Introduction to Community-Based Disaster Mitigation* course into the curriculum of four universities, will maintain a presence of our work in Central Asia. In early November I met in Kazakhstan with our regional NGO partners to review our work to date and plan future GHI projects in Central Asia.

India



Our USAID-funded project in India enables us to help strengthen the capacity of the Delhi Public Works Department through the retrofit of five buildings: the Delhi Secretariat, the Delhi Police Headquarters, the Guru Tegh Bahadur Hospital, the Ludlow Castle School, and the Office of the Divisional Commissioner. In early August, GHI hosted 14 guests from Delhi, India who came to Palo Alto for a full week. Participants in this Second Peer Review Meeting of *The Delhi Earthquake Safety Initiative for Lifeline Buildings* are shown in this photo taken between meeting sessions in Palo

Alto. The project in India involves the National Disaster Management Division, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India and the Delhi Disaster Management Authority, Office of the Divisional Commissioner, Government of Delhi. The group participated in site visits to retrofitted buildings in Berkeley, Oakland and San Francisco. They engaged in discussions with California earthquake engineers, building officials and policy makers who helped create the environment that made the Californian retrofits possible. Indian experts and members of engineering teams responsible for retrofitting the Delhi buildings presented analyses of their progress and challenges to date.

In India, considerable media attention has been directed to the project. Although not always cited by name, GHI is often behind such references as that in the October 15, 2005 *The Economist*:

“...A way has to be found to reduce the deadliness of quakes in the most vulnerable areas. Yet earthquakes cannot be predicted accurately enough to know when people should be evacuated. It is all the harder in the Himalayan region, with hidden underground faults that are poorly monitored by seismic instruments. That leaves two options, other than fatalism: to put up better buildings, and to improve planning for responding to disasters. Progress is slow. Key buildings in need of better earthquake-proofing have been identified in Delhi, and work is underway” (from “Earthquake science: Preparing for the unknowable”).

The Third Peer Review Meeting will take place December 5-9 in Delhi. At this time designs will be finalized. We hope that a USAID grant extension will enable us to continue our work in Delhi through completion of construction.

Strengthening GHI's Future

Throughout its first 14 years, GHI has attempted to demonstrate innovation, accomplishment and competence. We have met our goals and shown significant impact in fulfilling our mission. However, we are still in need of core funding and a larger organizational base to operate efficiently and with greater impact. In October we were pleased to receive a grant in the amount of \$25,000 from the Fbra Family Foundation in support of our organizational development. To strengthen GHI, we are taking two approaches:

- **Strategic Partnerships**—We are exploring the feasibility of partnerships with other nonprofit organizations that have missions complimentary to our own. The prospect of combining the capacity of our technical organization with that of well-positioned development agencies offers great promise. Such alliances could enable all organizations involved to make significant contributions to the field of natural risk management. We are looking to strengthen our capacity to secure projects in new regions.
- **Corporate Sponsorships**—We are also working to secure financial support from international corporations with interests aligned to ours, including major corporations in the reinsurance, construction, oil and tourist industries. We have developed a presentation to tell the GHI Story. Please send me any suggestions or contacts you might have regarding potential corporate sponsors for GHI.

The Katrina Disaster and Global Lessons

In the wake of the Hurricane Katrina disaster, we are especially mindful that natural disasters are everyone's problem. While Japan and the United States offer to share their expertise with other nations, it is clear that we also still have much to learn ourselves. Even with both a warning of the storm and a description of the probable results, the United States did not respond well to this natural disaster. This clarifies the challenge of preparing for earthquakes, which come without any warning, and often where planning scenarios have not been made. The fact that the weakness of levees in New Orleans was known but not remedied underscores the importance of GHI's advocacy role. While deeply saddened by the Katrina disaster, we also realize from it the extent to which our work to develop awareness and relevant skills is needed.

2006 Membership Campaign

As the year's end approaches, our membership support campaign for 2006 is just beginning. I hope that you will join or renew your association with us by returning the enclosed membership materials with your donation. Perhaps you know a friend or relative who would like to join us. Together, we can take the important steps required to reduce the risk of disasters from natural hazards in the most threatened and needy regions. I thank you for your support of our work, and wish you and your families a peaceful and safe holiday season.

Sincerely,



Brian Tucker, President

Enclosures: 2006 GHI Membership Support Card