



Disaster Research 3

A review of the activities and interests of the Disaster Research Unit.

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Whilst the future for the Disaster Research Unit and its members remains undetermined, our attention during the past months has of necessity been concentrated on current activity concerned with our domestic affairs. Programmes and projects for the future have received much less than we would have liked of the considerable generation of enthusiasm to which we were able to refer in 'Disaster Research 2'. In consequence of what we sincerely hope is a temporary disability, this Newsheet is thin, by comparison. Meanwhile, we look forward to a more enthusiastic and optimistic 'Disaster Research 4'.

SOUTH PACIFIC

Earthquake, volcanic eruption, tsunami, hurricane, flood, drought and frost are the principal disaster occurrences in a region of the South Pacific which includes Fiji, the Cook Islands, the Gilbert Islands, Nauru, Niue, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Western Samoa. These ten countries, all now in various stages of self-government and members of the South Pacific Forum, have created the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation (SPEC) based in Suva, Fiji.

In a far-sighted and innovative attempt to counter the impact within the region from natural disaster, SPEC established a regional disaster fund initiated by a contribution from the Republic of Nauru and subsequent annual subscriptions from all member governments.

Financed by the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC), Commonwealth Secretariat, the Disaster Research Unit has undertaken a pilot study to advise on the management of the fund and a report by James Lewis has been submitted to CFTC and SPEC.

The two-month study involved 47,500 miles of air travel to and within the region, and visits to all the member countries of SPEC as well as Auckland and Canberra, and Honolulu to examine data on tsunami occurrence for the pilot study at the International Tsunami Information Center.

SOUTH PACIFIC SEMINAR

Partly as a result of the Pilot Study undertaken for the Commonwealth Secretariat in the South Pacific, a Seminar in Disaster Preparedness and Relief is being held in Suva, Fiji in September, jointly sponsored by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the League of Red Cross Societies in Geneva. James Lewis was appointed as a Consultant to the Commonwealth Secretariat to act as a Resource Person for the Seminar, together with Lt. Col. George Ritchie of the Department of Overseas Administrative Studies, University of Manchester.

THE BAHAMAS STUDY

A short third visit has been made to Nassau to follow-up interest by Bahamas Government and the Bahamas Red Cross in a programme of precautionary planning strategy. Co-ordinated activity in attention to the subject as a result of the study in pre-disaster planning undertaken by the Unit for the League of Red Cross Societies in 1974 is still very evident.

EARTHQUAKE

Representing DRU and the Ministry of Overseas Development, Ken Westgate presented a paper to the UNESCO Intergovernmental Conference on the Assessment and Mitigation of Earthquake Risk in Paris in February. The Conference set out to relate the sciences and social sciences, and work provided by each sector, as attention to the impact of earthquake occurrence.

DROUGHT

Phil O'Keefe attended a Conference in Dakar in April/May this year. This Conference (DRODAT) considered the relationship between drought, famine and development. Phil O'Keefe and Professor R. Kates of Clark University were the only participants from the developed countries. DRU's theoretical analysis was used as the basis of much of the discussion. Representatives from all Sahelian countries were at the meeting which concluded that there was a need for continuing dialogue across East/West Africa; that meetings should be organised at 8-monthly intervals; and that Ouagadougou, Mogadishu and Dar-es-Salaam should be centres for these meetings. In itself, the meeting did not come to any major research conclusion, but it pointed out immense need for such servicing units as DRU.

PUBLICATIONS

Three additions to the Unit's series of Occasional Papers are:

- a. A revised and re-organised 'Bibliography of Precautionary Planning' as Paper No. 12. (Forthcoming). Paper No. 1 is now discontinued.
- b. Paper No. 4, 'Some Definitions of Disaster' not only defines some of the terms we are using every day, but by so doing expresses some of the results of theoretical analysis of the concept of disaster that has been the pre-occupation of the Unit since its formation.
- c. Paper No. 5, 'A Philosophy of Planning', examines the role of pre-cautionary planning in a framework of development planning and relates the concept of long term strategies for mitigation and prevention of disaster occurrence to medium and short term strategies for preparedness and relief of disaster occurrence.

SOME DEFINITIONS

Taken from Paper No. 4, 'Some Definitions of Disaster' are the following:

1. Disaster Event. The manifestation of an interaction between extreme physical or natural phenomena and a vulnerable human group. The manifestation results in general disruption and destruction, loss of life and livelihood and injury.
2. Disaster Context. The sum total of the possibilities, probabilities and frequencies of the occurrence of various disaster events, including previous disaster histories, in any given location, which render the location vulnerable.
3. Disaster Environment. The combination of the disaster context and the social, political and economic conditions prevailing within any given location.
4. Disaster Process. The dynamic operation over time of the distinctive elements contained within the disaster environment and their inter-relationship.
5. Vulnerability. The degree to which a community is at risk from the occurrence of extreme physical or natural phenomena where risk refers to the perjorative probability of occurrence, and the degree to which socio-economic and socio-political factors affect the community's capacity to absorb and recover from extreme phenomena. The term should be applied to the disaster context, the disaster environment and the disaster process.
6. Marginalisation. The most extreme manifestation of vulnerability occurring on the margins of society and properly applied to the urban and rural poor of the underdeveloped countries with little or no absorptive capacity in the face of extreme phenomena.

POST-EXPERIENCE COURSE IN PRECAUTIONARY PLANNING

Preliminary arrangements have commenced towards launching the first post-experience course in Precautionary Planning, to be held at the University of Bradford possibly during the later months of 1977.

APPOINTMENTS

Phil O'Keefe has been appointed an Honorary Fellow of the Institute of African Affairs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

An omission from previous Newssheets has been to acknowledge the origin of the Disaster Research Unit logotype, the idea for which was taken from those suggested by Ricardo Scofidio, architect and graphics consultant, of the Hudson River Group, Croton-on-Hudson, New York.

THE DISASTER RESEARCH UNIT-IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BRADFORD

Barely any week passes without a reference to a quotation of 'the object of the University shall be the advancement of learning and knowledge and the application of knowledge to human welfare ...' and now this week is no exception. Its source of inspiration is infinite and it has clearly been no mere coincidence that the Disaster Research Unit should have been formed at Bradford.

The motive of the co-founders of the Unit was, simply, that whilst at that time (pre-1974) international attention to natural disaster was wholly directed towards relief after each disaster event, it was clear that attention to predisaster situations was probably more important and would probably be a more effective use of international and national resources. It was also clear that whilst some developed countries had been able to take steps to look after their own disaster problems, there was a considerable catching up to be undertaken in this respect as well as many others, amongst the less developed countries where losses from disaster occurrence appeared to be particularly high. Clearly in the work that the Unit set out to do, knowledge had to be first advanced before human welfare could be improved by its application.

But if application was to be a by-word then little advancement of knowledge could take place in the relative isolation and safety of Bradford - in the North of England, an island off the North coast of Europe - a comparatively disaster-free part of the developed world. The Unit had to increase its overseas experience. It had to increase its first-hand knowledge of disaster events and of less-developed countries, and it had to relate itself to international bodies, intergovernmental organisations and governments - in short, it had to promote its aims and ideas in a subject which it had created and which was, and still very often is, unknown and unheard of. We held no conceptual constraints except that of 'disaster' and the physical world and the world of ideas was 'our patch'. This has meant considerable absence from the University. Unlike many undertakings at Bradford we are obliged to go much further than our own doorstep to apply ourselves. There is much to be done to improve the lot of the Pakistani community in Bradford but our hope is to improve the lot of Pakistanis in Pakistan, or Bahamians in the Bahama Islands, or Gilbertese in the Gilbert Islands or Fijians in Fiji. Travel is our work, without it and the experiences it brings we could not work usefully in Bradford.

Such considerable attention to our overwhelming extra-mural commitment may have caused us to pay less attention than we would have preferred to our intramural activities and in-house affairs, particularly during the early part of the Unit's existence. We could do little more than rely on the University Newsletter to say what we were doing and at that perhaps not very fully. This is a situation which we have recognised and which, we hope, is improving, and we include the following summary of our activity in the University so far.

We are contributing to a course on the economics of production to Year 1, Industrial Technology and are responsible for a year's course to 2nd Year Science and Society students on natural hazards. In May we successfully produced and completed a week's intensive course to 1st year Science and Society students on disaster.

We have also undertaken to give four lectures in social studies and our other major teaching commitment is to the post-experience courses of the Project Planning Centre.

Work has also been undertaken within the current 'Issues' programme and with the University of Bradford Drama Group.

We continue to be grateful for the co-operation of the University Information Office whose services we have relied upon heavily in the past. We would like to take this opportunity of expressing thanks to the many other University services that, by the perhaps unusual nature of some of our expectations and requests we have abruptly confronted rather than gently introduced the presence and activities of DRU. The Staff of the Finance Office deserve special mention here, as do the Union Travel Office even though they are perhaps more accustomed to the kinds of demands we have made. Educational services have provided us with an excellent photographic service (for which we have not paid directly) and Printing Services have undertaken our newsheets, reports and Occasional Papers (for which we have paid). The Cartography Unit save us endless time in excellent map production. To all we express our gratitude and our hope to be of continuing custom/nuisance in the future.

PS. It is often implied, directly or indirectly, that the worldwide travelling undertaken by members of the Disaster Research Unit is something of a 'perk'. In fact, travel is undertaken so that we may simply do the job required of us. In the past two-and-a-half years the three members of the Unit have travelled a total of 110,000 miles outside the United Kingdom and by the end of the year the total will be 160,000 miles. Rushing through or waiting endlessly in crowded airports, absences from home and family sometimes for long periods, and tiring journeys are, however, extremely wearing on us and our belongings and equipment. Clearly we would not be doing this kind of work if we did not usually enjoy travel, but we feel the need to point out that travel of this kind and to this extent is not a 'perk'.

OCCASIONAL PAPERS PRICE INDEX *

	Inc. domestic or overseas surface postage		Inc. airmail overseas postage		Student Rate domestic/surface / airmail	
	£	₡	£	₡		
1. Bibliography of Disaster Reference Material (January 1975)	DISCONTINUED (See Paper No. 12)					
2. Disaster Management with Special Reference to Pre-disaster Planning. (January 1975)	0.70	1.40	1.20	2.40	£0.60 ₡1.20	£1.00 ₡2.00
3. Proposals for a Working Method of Indigenous Resource Co-ordination as a Part of a Pre-disaster Plan. (January 1975)	0.70	1.40	1.20	2.40	£0.60 ₡1.20	£1.00 ₡2.00
4. Some Definitions of Disaster (June 1976)	1.50	3.00	2.50	5.00	£1.25 ₡2.50	£2.00 ₡4.00
5. A Philosophy of Planning (June 1976)	0.65	1.30	1.00	2.00	£0.55 ₡1.10	£0.85 ₡1.70
6. Gakarara - A Study in the Development of Underdevelopment (January 1975)	0.70	1.40	1.20	2.40	£0.60 ₡1.20	£1.00 ₡2.00
7. Flixborough - the Human Response (January 1975)	0.70	1.40	1.20	2.40	£0.60 ₡1.20	£1.00 ₡2.00
8. African Drought - A Review (January 1975)	0.70	1.40	1.20	2.40	£0.60 ₡1.20	£1.00 ₡2.00

	Inc. domestic or overseas surface postage		Inc. airmail overseas postage		Student Rate	
	£	₡	£	₡	domestic/ surface	airmail
9. Report of Mission to Assess the Hurricane Factor for Planning Purposes in Fiji. (January 1975)	0.70	1.40	1.20	2.40	£0.60 ₡1.20	£1.00 ₡2.00
**10. A Study in Pre-disaster Planning (June 1975)	4.00	8.00	7.00	14.00	£3.00 ₡6.00	£ 6.00 ₡12.00
11. Towards an Explanation and Reduction of Disaster Prone-ness. (August 1975)	0.70	1.40	1.20	2.40	£0.60 ₡1.20	£1.00 ₡2.00
***12. A Bibliography of Precautionary Planning	FORTHCOMING					

The above prices are operative as and from 1st September, 1976.

* It is regretted that some increases in prices have been necessary due to further increases in postal charges.

** Published jointly with the League of Red Cross Societies

*** Pre-publication orders are now being accepted for Paper No. 12.

NB. Please make cheques payable to 'University of Bradford' and send orders to: Disaster Research Unit, University of Bradford, Bradford BD7 1DP, West Yorkshire, England. (Tele: Bradford (0274) 33466, Ext. 8287).

August, 1976