

Hazard and Resilience: The Case of The Maldives

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Abstract

Among other objectives, the MSRI intends to stimulate economic integration and promote infrastructural development. In the Maldives, the inauguration of the bridge connecting the capital Malé can be seen as a symbol of the “everlasting friendship” between Maldives and China. Risk Assessment Reports identified storm surges, monsoonal flooding, swell waves, tsunamis and climate change as sea-induced natural hazards experienced in the Maldives: no island could be considered “safe” in the Maldives. In 2004 the country was directly affected by the tsunami, with nearly 12,000 people displaced and another 8,500 temporarily relocated within their islands. The country urgently needs a policy for substantial improvements in tsunami forecasting capabilities, education, and development of tsunami-resilient communities. The Maldives government is working hard to implement the Sendai Framework, linked with the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on climate change. Working on disaster risk reduction and becoming more resilient is essential for the country in its efforts to achieve sustainable development and deal with the challenge of climate change. In the presentation, we consider the cases of two islands of Dhaalu Atoll in the Maldives affected by the tsunami in 2004. In the two islands social and economic resilience produced two different development models. The island of Meedhoo is the most inhabited island in the Dhaalu Atoll (population: 1400). The main economic activity is fishing. The 2004 tsunami severely hit Meedhoo, two people died. The people have recovered quickly, and the island is fast developing. The main threat to the development of the island is its size and soil erosion. To prevent this problem an area of about 50 feet was reclaimed around the island in 2006, and new land reclamation projects have been started. Land reclamation on the reef flat, especially on the oceanward side can alter the natural defensive mechanisms of the islands and the drainage systems. Ribudhoo island (population: 545), the island of the jewelers, has been badly affected by the tsunami in 2004; here also there were two casualties and many infrastructural damages, forcing many people to migrate. The recovery of the island was based on their specific historical and cultural heritage and the revival of traditional handicraft and the art of jewelry, involving young people. On the island there were not implemented governmental plans of land reclamation, and storied houses as a mean of protection are planned for the increasing population. Two islands two different stories of resilience.

Keywords: Hazard; Resilience; SIDS; Maldives; Land reclamation