

President's Newsletter

December 11, 2006

Dear Members and Friends of GHI,

The close of the year is a good opportunity to look back on the many events in 2006 that involved GHI. It is with genuine pleasure and pride that I recall our achievements, undertaken — I am happy to say—with your support. There was also one event that brought all of us in GHI profound sadness.

The Passing of Mr. Satoru Ohya, the Chairman of GHI's Board of Trustees



Satoru Ohya
1932-2006

It was with great shock and sorrow that we learned of the death of GHI's Board Chairman, Satoru Ohya, on November 13, 2006, due to a traffic accident in Tokyo. I knew Mr. Ohya for more than 20 years, even before GHI was established. In fact, it was because of the friendship and trust that we developed, along with the founding President of OYO Corporation, the late Dr. Kunio Suyama, that we discovered a shared desire to help developing countries cope with natural disasters. After long discussions of the possibility of helping people in these countries by creating a nonprofit organization dedicated to reducing the consequences of the natural disasters they face, Mr. Ohya and Dr. Suyama said to me "we'll provide the funding to help you get started, if you will do the work." Over the years, they provided much more funding and advice than we originally envisioned. The critical elements of our partnership were trust and shared values. I thought of this when many people wrote to me recently about Mr. Ohya's death and expressed their condolences. I realized they were aware of the generosity that Mr. Ohya had extended to me and GHI, in terms of

both the time he spent and the funding he either contributed himself or helped raise. But many people probably don't know Mr. Ohya's most important contribution to GHI: his ethics. No organization — for profit or non profit, governmental or non-governmental, domestic or international — has much of a future unless it is ethical, but certainly a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization with GHI's mission cannot survive without being transparent in its motivation. It is natural to suspect the motivation of an organization that says "we want to help you," especially a US-based organization working in developing countries. Mr. Ohya transmitted his ethics by example. Over the two decades I knew him, we worked together under many different circumstances around the world: in our respective offices, in our homes, in big hotels and small restaurants, at international trade conferences, and on earthquake faults in Mongolia and California. He was always the same sincere, inquisitive, direct, generous, and honest man. Through his efforts over the 15 years of GHI's existence, Mr. Ohya helped establish a financial base for GHI by his personal donations and by attracting generous gifts from others, and he established an ethical base for GHI by his personal behavior and advice. We will now continue on our own, building on the foundations he helped create and toward the vision he helped define. All of this is critical for GHI as an institution, but for my GHI associates and me, Mr. Ohya's death also means the loss of a close friend.

GHI Sponsors Bay Area Visit of Jean-François Rischard



We will begin the new year by sponsoring the January 8-11 San Francisco Bay Area visit of global economist Jean-François Rischard, former World Bank Vice President for Europe (1998-2005). Mr. Rischard, who serves on several corporate boards and as an advisor to heads of state, has agreed to join GHI's Board of Advisors. We have invited him to the Bay Area so that the GHI community can get to know him and his ideas, and so that he can get to know us. In his best-seller *High Noon: 20 Global Problems and 20 Years to Solve Them* (Basic Books, New York, 2002), he discusses the need for new global governance mechanisms in an increasingly complex and inter-linked world. During his visit to the Bay Area, he will share his unique perspectives on current global problems (including natural disasters) and suggest new ways to solve them. If you would like to attend his lecture and discussion on *The Urgent Need for New Approaches to*

Global Problem-Solving at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, January 9 in Palo Alto, please contact GHI at (650) 614 9050 for information on the location.

Tsunami Preparedness Guidebook

In a project funded by personal contributions of the staff of the National Research Council and by matching funds from the National Academy of Science, the National Academy of Engineering, and the Institute of Medicine, GHI has assembled an all-star multi-disciplinary group to review GHI's *Tsunami Preparedness Guidebook* that will be used to improve tsunami safety in developing countries. Joining GHI staff led by Laura Samant, the review team met in Palo Alto for an all-day workshop on November 30.



GHI Staff and the Project Review Team (*Kneeling, l to r*) Kerry Sieh, Bill Anderson, Hari Kumar, Brian Tucker, and Richard Eisner: (*standing, l to r*) Tom Tobin, Laura Samant, Corinne Shefner-Rogers, Lori Dengler, Eddie Bernard, Lori Peek, James Goltz, Michael Lindell, Dennis Mileti, George Crawford, Costas Synolaki, and Janise Rodgers (not pictured, Laura Kong).

The team explored how their collective knowledge and experience from a variety of disciplines could be combined to help local non-technical people—tsunami safety advocates—prepare their communities for tsunamis. Team members are collaborating on a manual that includes the best available earth science, social science and emergency preparedness information for use around the world.

The manual will assist people who want to organize and lead local tsunami preparedness campaigns, whether individuals, government officials or staff at non-government organizations. After review by some of the intended users, the guidebook will be available online without charge at www.geohaz.org and other websites, and will be shared with interested organizations in electronic format. Only a limited number of hard copies will be made. Lutheran World Relief has expressed interest in translating it into Indonesian. It will be used next year in a workshop to build “Tsunami Resilient Communities” in the Indian Ocean.

Retrofit in Tibetan Exile Community in Dharamsala, India

Funded by the Flora Family Foundation and by GHI's own resources, a team from GHI conducted an initial assessment of earthquake vulnerabilities facing the Tibetan community in Dharamsala, India. From September 2-5, 2006 the team visited Upper Dharamsala (McLeod Ganj, the Central Tibetan Administration area, Forsyth Ganj, and Bhagsunag) and focused on two groups of buildings with cultural importance, the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives campus and the Tsuglag Khang (Main Temple) complex. These buildings contain collections of significant manuscripts, bronzes, and *thangkas* (scroll paintings) brought out of Tibet by refugees. Team members also observed the geology, the seismic vulnerability of other buildings important to the community, and construction practices in Upper Dharamsala.



Bill Holmes assesses seismic vulnerabilities of a building in the Tibetan Children's Village in Dharamsala.



Attention is drawn to poor connections between buildings too closely built.

Observations and conclusions of the team—comprised of GHI staff members, earthquake engineering experts Mel Green and Bill Holmes, and geologist William Cotton—are presented in a report (*A Culture at Risk: An Initial Assessment of Seismic Vulnerabilities in Upper Dharamsala, India*), now available online at <http://www.geohaz.org/contents/news/onlinepub2.html>. We are grateful to the Flora Family Foundation for awarding GHI a grant to engage in follow-up action that will include developing actual retrofit designs.

While we are delighted to improve the earthquake-resistance of these particular structures, our primary motivation for undertaking this project is the additional, far-reaching benefit this project affords to raise awareness among the greater, dispersed Tibetan exile community of its earthquake risk and options to reduce it through preparation and mitigation efforts.

Exploring an Alliance with Mercy Corps

The logic of aligning an organization that focuses on preparing communities for natural disasters (e.g., GHI) with an organization that focuses on responding to natural and man-made disasters (e.g., Mercy Corps, www.mercycorps.org) to work together is compelling. We therefore asked the Flora Family Foundation to support our exploring the feasibility of creating some form of alliance between GHI and Mercy Corps. In June, they awarded us a generous grant for this purpose. To launch our exploration of possibilities, long-standing GHI volunteer structural engineering Professor Carlos Ventura of the University of British Columbia and GHI's Tom Tobin will accompany Susan Romanski, Mercy Corps' Director of Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Risk Reduction, to Guatemala in December. Their objective is to assess opportunities for improving local natural risk management and then to define projects that Mercy Corps and GHI could carry out together in Guatemala.

Building Safer Schools in Pakistan

One of the most tragic aspects of the October 8, 2005 Pakistan earthquake was the disastrous performance of schools. Over 8,000 schools were destroyed or damaged beyond repair, resulting in the death of more than 17,000 school children and the serious injury (including amputations) of more than 20,000 other children. Now GHI and the Aga Khan Development Network are designing a program to build local capacity to strengthen ("retrofit") existing schools and to construct earthquake-resilient new schools in Northern Pakistan.

While in Pakistan during early November to work on this program, I visited the remote and almost totally destroyed village of Balakot. I went with Sikander Ajam Khan, an architect who had driven up to the earthquake area immediately after learning about the destruction there in order to distribute food and clothing. It is hard to summarize our day-long, non-stop conversation. Even just *hearing* of what he saw during the days immediately following the earthquake, and not actually experiencing it in person, was shocking. For example, he told me of watching people using wheelbarrows to take their injured relatives, who had been extracted from the ruins (some with crushed or even amputated legs), to a doctor. Today's Balakot, a year after the earthquake, looks like it had been bombed. Most of the original buildings are gone, replaced by lean-to shacks of corrugated iron. I asked many people about how much ground acceleration they experienced during the earthquake, and several told me that things (including themselves) flew into the air at the time of the earthquake. My initial response, on learning and seeing the extent of the damage, was one of despair: I couldn't see how any construction methods we might recommend could stand up against this level of shaking.



However, soon, we found evidence that some structures in downtown Balakot did survive the earthquake. One was a home on a hill; all the other homes on this hill, on the edge of the hanging wall of the fault, collapsed. The one home that remains is damaged beyond repair, but it remains standing (see photo at left). We inspected the joints that were exposed and found them to be compliant with normal practice (e.g., overlap of rebar). The other impressive surviving structure is a two-story market. It has no visible damage. Because there was no cracking, we could not inspect the quality of the concrete or joints. It is a regular shaped building with nice flanges wherever beams met columns. In general, it just seemed like a well built, well designed and well maintained structure.

There was more good news evident in how new houses were being rebuilt in the outskirts of Balakot. We stopped and asked the owners of some of these new homes about their design, which had been provided by the Pakistani government. Based on our random sampling, these designs are better than what was used in the past; they include specification for rebar detailing. Further, it seems that these designs are being carefully followed, voluntarily. I asked one owner how much more expensive construction following this new design is over what it would have cost using the former practice: about 30%. I asked him why he was willing to do this, and was told that his old house had collapsed during the earthquake. Fortunately, he and his family were able to escape from the house before it collapsed. I left the town heartened: it is clear that well constructed buildings can survive even extremely strong ground shaking, and it is clear that, as a result of this earthquake, some Pakistanis want to and know how to build earthquake-resistant homes.

2007 Membership Campaign

This past year has brought change and loss, but also new beginnings, resources and lessons to GHI. The continued support of our members and friends is, as always, vital. We look forward to moving into a newly seismically retrofitted office early next year and we hope that many of you will attend the opening celebration that we will announce soon. I hope that you will join or renew your association with us by returning the enclosed membership form with your donation to help us work together 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,

Handwritten signature of Brian Tucker.

Brian Tucker, President

Enclosures: 2007 GHI Membership Support Materials