RCC member countries

South Korea

Country Information

Region: East Asia
Population: Approximately 51.5 million
Capital: Seoul
GDP (US$): $1.531 trillion
Geography: South Korea is situated in the southern half of the Korean peninsula and can be divided into four general regions: an eastern region of high mountain ranges and narrow coastal plains; a western region of broad coastal plains, river basins, and rolling hills; a southwestern region of mountains and valleys; and a southeastern region dominated by the broad basin of the Nakdong River. The land is mountainous and most of it is not arable. Lowlands, located primarily in the west and southeast, constitute only 30% of the total land area.
General climate: The climate is relatively temperate, with precipitation heavier in the summer during a short rainy season called *jangma* and winters can be bitterly cold.
INFORM Risk Rating: 1.6

Risk Summary

- Korea is exposed to a wide range of hazards, including floods, epidemics, wildfires, storms, earthquakes, droughts, landslides and extreme temperatures.
- Due to its location in the western North Pacific, bordering the Pacific, Korea is exposed to typhoons and storms about three to four times a year.
- Statistics from 1970 onwards suggest that floods and storms are the most reoccurring hazards in the country, occasionally causing large-scale disasters.
- Floods are often associated with seasonal heavy precipitation and storm surges and they have considerably affected Korea, causing significant social and economic impact. The 1995 flood in Seoul resulted in $600 million in damages.
- Typhoons cause the most economic damage in the country, especially in the coastal regions and seaport cities.
- Korea is prone to heat and cold waves, most likely due to climate change. In 2018, a heatwave lead to 42 deaths, the highest temperature-related death toll on record.

Disaster Management System

National Level

- **President's office, the "Blue House"**

The Blue House is at the helm when it comes to disaster management. Development proposals and budget allocations submitted from subnational levels must be approved by the President's office before implementation.

- **Ministry of Interior and Safety (MOIS)**

MOIS is the main disaster management body in Korea. Its vision is to build proactive incident command systems at all levels, formulate and implement effective policies, implement effective field-oriented disaster response, raise public awareness on disasters, among others. The main commitments made to ensure the achievement of this vision include improving communication networks, building the private sector's resilience, age-specific education and training, and establishing holistic welfare systems for vulnerable populations.

- **Non-permanent Disaster Management Bodies**

Non-permanent bodies are required to be implemented at the national level after a large disaster to exercise control over the event, and to manage response and recovery. They are also established at the local level.

Sub-National Level

- **Local Governments**

Local administrators have some autonomy in disaster governance. They are required to design and update their own disaster management system and plans, and foster collaboration between relevant agencies at the local level. Local jurisdictions are also responsible for implementing their own disaster management initiatives such as vulnerability and capacity assessments, hiring personnel and infrastructure development. However, the budget for each jurisdiction is approved by the central government (as mentioned above).

Disclaimer: Korea's disaster management system is frequently innovated. The disaster management system mentioned above is based on research conducted in 2018. It is subject to change at a later date.

Helpful Links and Sources

Korea country profile:
https://data.worldbank.org/country/korea-rep

INFORM country risk profile:
http://www.inform-index.org/countries/country-profiles

Government of South Korea website:
http://www.southkoreagovernment.com/

ADPC, *DRM in the Republic of Korea* (to be published in 2019).