



## **Calculating and communicating earthquake risk on a global scale is becoming reality**

*Participants of GEM Outreach Meeting 2010 agree on the need for Global Earthquake Model*

*Australia and New Zealand choose to be among GEM's participants*

More than 250 professionals from over 50 different countries attended the GEM (Global Earthquake Model) Outreach Meeting 2010 at the World Bank's headquarters in Washington from 3-4 June 2010. During the meeting preliminary global calculations for seismic risk assessment were presented.

Participants were able to see how far the GEM initiative has already come in the development of open-source software and tools that will produce reliable information on earthquake risk, which is indispensable for the support of earthquake risk reduction and mitigation.

Expectations have been exceeded. The prototype tools that were presented - mainly the fruit of the collaborative GEM1 pilot project - will not only cater for earthquake risk calculations allowing users to plug-in their own data, but are also centred around the idea of collaborative development and sharing of data and experiences between users through innovative web-based technologies. Participants were struck by the potential of the GEM and its applications, which should become available not later than 2013, with experimental versions being released as early as 2011.

During the meeting, both Australia and New Zealand formally adhered to GEM, hereby enlarging the number of public-private partners to 21. Their motivation for adhesion is not only to provide feedback from a country perspective, but also to actively support a regional programme that is being set up in South-East Asia and Oceania, which will contribute to increased knowledge on earthquake risk assessment in the region.

**Rui Pinho, GEM's Secretary General**, explained: *"We received much appreciation for what GEM has been able to achieve in less than 1.5 years; during the meeting we were able to demonstrate that we can calculate and also communicate earthquake risk on a global scale. GEM must now endeavour to release as soon as possible its community platform that will allow users to start contributing to the application, testing and development of GEM tools and databases, while at the same time the scientific community develops the standards and methods on hazard, exposure, vulnerability and socio-economic impact"*.

The GEM Outreach Meeting 2010 was intended for dialogue on how GEM should continue developments of the model and tools and many discussions were indeed held for instance on the mandate of Regional Programmes and on how GEM could serve the needs of users and their beneficiaries. *"GEM should continue to be as transparent and open as possible, giving the possibility to the community to take part on all discussions and decision-making processes"*, **Rui Pinho** commented.

Many of the discussions were inspired by the sessions of the Understanding Risk conference, which focused on the use of innovative technologies for disaster risk reduction and which preceded the Outreach Meeting. *"I thought it was a great idea to combine both events"*, says **Francis Ghesquiere, Disaster Risk Management Lead for the World Bank's Latin America and Caribbean Region**, *"because GEM is pushing the envelope when it comes to integrating such technologies for the greater good"*.

**David Applegate, Senior Science Advisor for Earthquake and Geological Hazards of the US Geological Survey** closed off the meeting by saying that *"GEM has much to offer to the world and the US"*, and that *"we must use this model to reach the people and we must demonstrate that it will save lives"*.



### **About GEM**

*The Global Earthquake Model (GEM) is a public-private initiative focused on the creation of a model that will establish a uniform, independent standard to calculate and communicate earthquake risk worldwide. Initiated by the Global Science Forum of the Organization for the Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), GEM currently has a number of private organisations, countries and major international organisations such as The World Bank and UNESCO as its partners. Experts and institutions across the entire globe are involved in the construction of GEM, so that by 2013 a full spectrum of users will have access to uniform, transparent and reliable information on earthquake hazard, risk and socio-economic impact worldwide. The entire globe, including the world's less developed areas, where risk models are currently inexistent or hardly accessible, will be covered by the model. The information produced by GEM will support risk awareness and the undertaking of mitigating action. Such information is therefore a critical puzzle-piece for minimizing loss of life, property damage and social and economic disruption due to earthquakes, by leading to better buildings codes and construction, land use planning for sustainable development, improved emergency response, protection of critical infrastructures and greater access to insurance.*

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