

## International conference of Cities on Volcanoes 5 in Shimabara 2007 – a challenge from a small city

# Matsushima Takeshi Secretariat of Cities on Volcanoes 5 Conference[1]

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<http://www.citiesonvolcanoes5.com/>

The fifth conference of Cities on Volcanoes 5 was held in Shimabara city, Japan in November 2007. This conference is the first meetings held in Asia area, and the past conferences were held in the metropolis and/or the tourist town around volcanoes. Shimabara city is one of small cities in Kyushu Island of Japan, with a population of around 50,000, and it was the first experience to hold such kind of the international conference. But, the conference ended with a great success in both academic and social meaning.

The main goal of this international conference is to bring together volcanologists, city planners, social scientists, disaster managers, the medical community, mass media, and so on, and to exchange and understand their experiences and knowledge in order to evaluate and improve prevention and mitigation measures, land-use planning, emergency management, all required to successfully confront volcanic crises in densely populated area and to recovery from the devastation. In order to attain this goal, large participation of city inhabitant into the conference was necessary.

Shimabara is the city that has developed on the foot of Unzen volcano. During the recent eruption of 1990-1995, pyroclastic flows cascaded from the summit dome of Unzen, killing forty-four people including Katia and Maurice Krafft and Harry Glicken, members of the mass media, and local residents. This tragic event ignited the current effort in volcanic disaster mitigation in Japan. Unzen is also the volcano whose sector-collapse generated a debris avalanche and resulting tsunami, causing 15,000 casualties in 1792. Therefore, community awareness for volcanic risk is very high in Shimabara citizen including elementary schoolchildren.

At the conference 600 scientists from 31 countries participated, and presented 551 articles. Among them, a medical doctor and a nurse living in Shimabara presented their experience during the disaster of the pyroclastic flows. Also a city official, and a high schoolteacher present their results of researches. In an open-poster presentation hall, high school students and many other local organizations present their researches and experiences about disaster of Unzen volcano.

At Intra-meeting excursions the participants visited the devastated area and looked around the ruins of the eruption. Local residents, Kataribe, who lost their houses and relatives, relate the disaster and their experiences, and their talks were translated into English by English-speaking citizen volunteers. The participants also learned about reconstruction works following the volcanic devastation, such as the ground mounding project in the Annaka area and several other lahar control projects. Moreover they visited an elementary school and looked at an activity relating the experiences of the volcanic disaster to younger generations. Citizens were able to enter the conference site without entrance fee; actuality 2100 people participated to the conference and forums, and enjoyed and had good friendship with foreigners.

Just after the conference, our secretariat office got many mails of thanks and celebration of the success of the meeting. This conference became one of unforgettable memories not only for foreign participants, but also for citizens and children. COV5 has attempted a new style of international conference, with participants not only from research, administrative and disaster management backgrounds, but also ordinary citizens themselves.