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TIDAL SURGES DEVASATE VILLAGES IN PNG



Flooding caused by abnormally high tides and large sea swells has washed away hundreds of homes, caused at least one landslide in Papua New Guinea and displaced 75,000 people in the region.

The water level rose on Dec. 8, 2008, and the islands of New Ireland and Northern Provinces, Manus, East Sepik, West Sepik (Sandaun), Madang, Mur, Morobe, Milne Bay and the autonomous region of Bougainville were most affected. Unconfirmed reports stated that five people have been killed and more than 400 homes destroyed. A United Nations report estimates that upwards of 75,000 people are in immediate need of food, shelter and clean drinking water. The government of Papua New Guinea has declared the event a natural disaster and has released \$12 million for immediate aid.

Members of the Red Cross, Provincial Disaster Centre (PDC), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC), Save the Children and Oxfam International are among those working to distribute relief supplies. Commercial ships are delivering food and supplies to affected islands in Bougainville, Carteret Islands and Nuguria. Food and survival gear such as tarpaulins, water containers, water purification tablets and blankets are also being sent to other affected Provinces. Oxfam has identified drinking water as the main priority, given that underground sources have been polluted and there is a risk of the spread of water born diseases.

Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), Deutsche Presse Agentur (DPA), and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Read more:

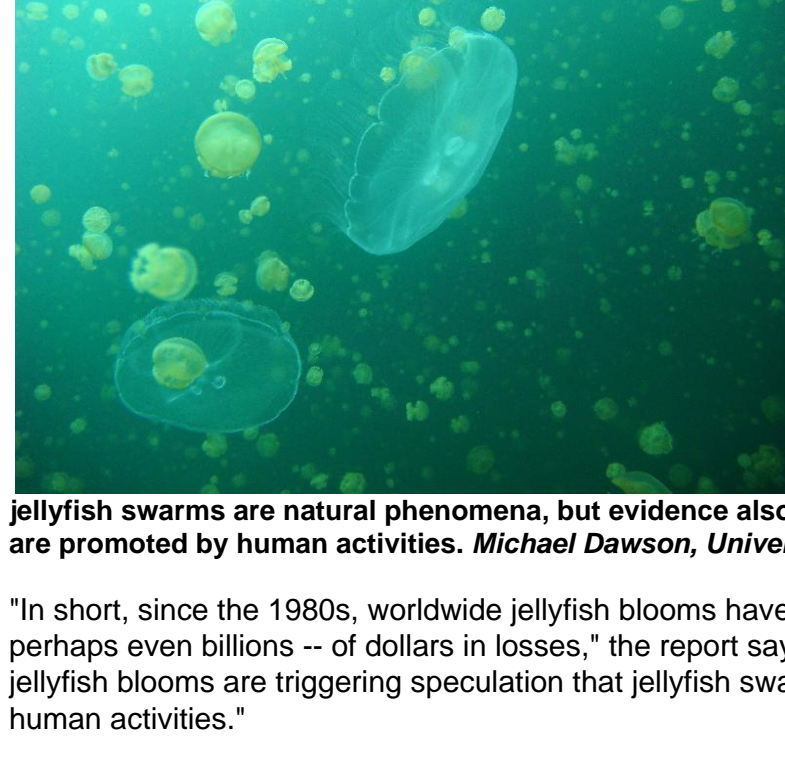
<http://ochaonline.un.org/>

<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/RMOI-7MHLEH?OpenDocument>

<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/MUMA-7MA2GW?OpenDocument>

JELLYFISH GONE WILD: INVASIONS ON THE RISE

Potentially fueled by human activity, massive jellyfish blooms in recent years have overrun some of the world's most important fisheries and tourist destinations, according to a new report from the U.S. National Science Foundation.



Scientists believe that some jellyfish swarms are natural phenomena, but evidence also shows that some jellyfish swarms are promoted by human activities. *Michael Dawson, University of California, Merced*

"In short, since the 1980s, worldwide jellyfish blooms have caused hundreds of millions -- or perhaps even billions -- of dollars in losses," the report says. "Worldwide reports of massive jellyfish blooms are triggering speculation that jellyfish swarms are increasing because of human activities."

Hard-hit areas include Hawaii, the Gulf of Mexico, the Bering Sea, Australia, and the Philippines and the Sea of Japan. For example, the report states, half a billion refrigerator-sized jellyfish, weighing approximately 450 pounds each, invade the Sea of Japan daily. In the Philippines, 20 to 40 people are killed annually from box jellyfish stings.

The report states that a number of environmental factors have led to increased jellies in the sea, including ballast water from ships, oxygen-depleted waters, climate change, overfishing, and other man-made construction such as dams and oil and gas exploration platforms. The report adds that scientists suspect the jellyfish invasions in Japan originally came from the China coast and that they could be related to the construction of the Three Gorges Dam and many other environmental stressors.

Source: U.S. National Science Foundation

Read more:

http://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/jellyfish/index.jsp

http://www.theregister.co.uk/2008/12/15/jellyfish_gone_wild/

SOCIOECONOMIC STUDY ON CORAL REEFS POINTS TO MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES

The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in December released the first-ever, 27-nation report on the social and economic impacts of coral reef health. The report concludes that one of the biggest obstacles to healthy reefs and communities is simply the implementation of regulations and conservation measures.

The research focused on three issues: fishing, the top three perceived threats to corals and how socio-economic data is being used in coral reef management. The editors repeatedly found three basic recommendations from resources users: the need to develop alternative livelihoods for fishers; the need to involve local community members in decision-making processes for coastal and resource management; and the need to improve education and awareness of the value of healthy coral ecosystems.



As reported in the NOAA social release, Christy Loper, the report's lead author and social science coordinator of NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program said, "None of these recommendations are new to coastal resource management," she notes. "However, the fact that they are still emerging as the most important recommendations by dozens of communities indicates that coastal management efforts have not yet been able to effectively implement these site level recommendations in many parts of the world."

A fish trader waits for fish to buy, Takaungu, Kenya. © Joshua Cinner/ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies/Marine Photobank

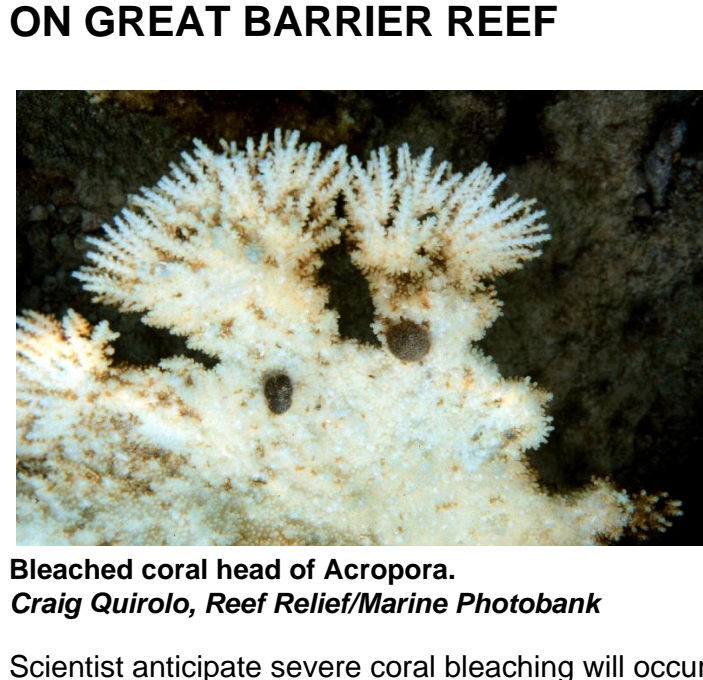
To complete the study, NOAA interviewed 14,000 household interviews spread across the Caribbean, Central America, the Pacific, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Western Indian Ocean

Source: NOAA Headquarters

Read more:

<http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/12/081210112806.htm>

MASSIVE CORAL BLEACHING PREDICTED ON GREAT BARRIER REEF



Bleached coral head of Acropora.
 Craig Quirolo, Reef Relief/Marine Photobank

Scientists anticipate severe coral bleaching will occur this summer on northern parts of the Great Barrier Reef and in parts of the Coral Sea and Coral Triangle. The Coral Triangle accounts for 75 percent of all known coral species in the world and extends from the Philippines to Malaysia and Papua New Guinea.

Reports released from the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) predicts bleaching events will impact tourism, food supplies and livelihoods in Australia and South East Asia.

WWF's climate change expert Richard Leck said, "The bleaching, predicted to occur between now and February, could have a devastating impact on coral reef ecosystems, killing coral and destroying food chains."

Leck adds, "In the Pacific many of the Small Island Developing States, such as the Solomon Islands, rely largely on the coast and coastal environments such as coral reefs for food supply. This is a region where alternative sources of income and food are limited." He estimates more than 120 million people rely on coral reefs for marine resources.

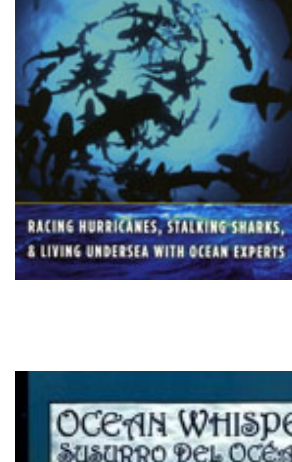
Source: Global News Wire

Read more:

<http://www.thewest.com.au/default.aspx?MenuID=28&ContentID=113910>

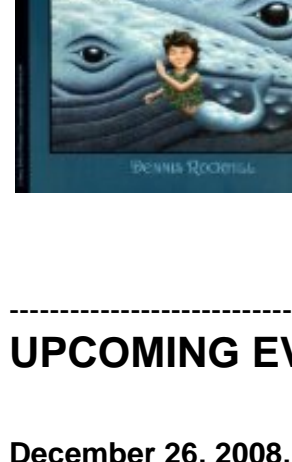
<http://envydevmalaysia.wordpress.com/2008/12/19/scientists-predict-coral-destruction/>

MEDIA REVIEWS



Chasing Science at Sea: Racing Hurricanes, Stalking Sharks, and Living Undersea with Ocean Experts by Ellen Prager, 2008

As the chief scientist of Aquarius and undersea research laboratory of the Florida Keys, Ellen Prager is adept at explaining the nuances and thrilling excitement ocean science. She offers insightful anecdotes from marine biologist, engineers, geologists and oceanographers and a striking comparison to what we spend on the space program versus underwater research. A must-read for anyone who has worked in the field or is thinking about going into research.



Ocean Whisper/Susurro del Oceano by Dennis Rockhill, 2008

This gorgeous bilingual children's book will take you into an underwater world of imagination and beauty. Dennis Rockhill draws his vibrant color-pencil sketches on high-quality drawing paper to create depth and stunning imagery in this book that will be appreciated by young and old.

UPCOMING EVENTS

December 26, 2008, to March 29, 2009. The Gray Whale Watching Season Begins in California. These magnificent marine mammals depend on a healthy ocean for their survival. Plan a trip to California's Birch Aquarium at Scripps to view these ocean giants up close with a certified naturalist. Kayak or boat tours are available the entire season. For more information, please go to <http://aquarium.ucsd.edu>.

February 13, 2009. "Under the Sea 3D" opens in IMAX theatres worldwide on February 13. World-renowned underwater filmmakers Howard and Michele Hall, who brought you "Deep Sea 3D," offer their newest IMAX 3D film, "Under the Sea 3D." It opens in select IMAX theatres worldwide this February. For more information, please go to <http://www.imax.com>.

February 24, 2009. The Natural History Museum in London will host "Coral Reefs: Rich Realms of the Sea," a talk by Linda Pitkin, biologist, author and award-winning underwater photographer from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. For more information, please see <http://network.nature.com/hubs/london/events/4682>.

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