

Tulane aids Sri Lanka with disaster relief

January 20, 2015 11:00 AM Barri Bronston

bbronst@tulane.edu



Sri Lankan tsunami survivor children attend a Buddhist religious ritual procession as they pray for tsunami victims to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Boxing Day tsunami on Dec. 26, 2004, in Paraliya, Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka was one of the worst hit countries of a 9.1 magnitude quake with 35,000 deaths. It was one of the deadliest natural disasters in recorded history. (Photo by Buddhika Weerasinghe/Getty Images)

Sri Lanka recently commemorated the 10th anniversary of the catastrophic Indian Ocean tsunami, and among those present were representatives of the [Disaster Resilience Leadership Academy](#) (DRLA) at Tulane University.

"It was a tremendous honor and an incredible opportunity to see how far Sri Lanka has progressed in their recovery since the tsunami," said [Ky Luu](#), the DRLA's

executive director, who is a clinical associate professor of social work at Tulane.

For the past three years, the DRLA, with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, has been working in Sri Lanka to train leaders in disaster risk management through its Strengthening Leadership in Disaster Resilience Program.

The program aims to reduce disaster risk in vulnerable communities through executive short course trainings, interdisciplinary graduate education and the creation of a global network of professional and academic leaders to facilitate the sharing of ideas and best practices.

Because of their impact in Sri Lanka, the DRLA and the Gates Foundation were invited to participate in the country's National Safety Day, an annual event marking the anniversary of the tsunami on Dec. 26, which left nearly a quarter of a million people dead, including 35,000 in Sri Lanka.

"Significant progress has been achieved in disaster recovery, reconstruction, preparedness and risk mitigation by the government, private sector, academies, civil society organizations and others to enhance community resilience," Luu said.

As part of the ceremony, Luu joined government officials in presenting 10 National Leadership Awards for Disaster Resilience to individuals for their "exemplary leadership and remarkable individual contributions" promoting disaster resilience since the tsunami.

"To recognize the 10 Sri Lankan disaster-resilient leaders who have made Sri Lanka safer and stronger was an incredibly humbling and rewarding experience," Luu said.

The commemoration also featured an exhibit highlighting Sri Lanka's robust participation in the Strengthening Leadership in Disaster Resilience Program, with nearly 200 fellows and faculty participating in executive short course training, faculty development workshops and the program's Global Network.

"To recognize the 10 Sri Lankan disaster-resilient leaders who have made Sri Lanka safer and stronger was an incredibly humbling and rewarding experience."

Ky Luu, Disaster Resilience Leadership Academy