



1 **ASSESSING TSUNAMI RISK TO KARACHI PORT THROUGH**
2 **SIMULATION OF CURRENTS THAT WERE REPORTEDLY PRODUCED**
3 **THERE BY THE 1945 MAKRAN TSUNAMI**

4
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12

13 **Abstract**

14 A train of tsunami waves, by resembling a swift series of tides, can produce damaging currents even where wave
15 heights are modest. At Karachi Port, the 1945 Makran tsunami moved boats and damaged a rock groyne without
16 exceeding 3 m in height above ambient tide. A newspaper account mentions an ebb current of 4 to 5 knots. We obtained
17 ebb currents in this range by means of computer simulations with GeoClaw, an open-source code. The simulations, which
18 use bathymetry and shorelines mapped before 1945, presuppose for simplicity a purely tectonic source for the 1945
19 tsunami. The simulations were tested mainly against an incomplete marigram from the Karachi tide gauge. Runs with
20 modern bathymetry and shorelines show weaker currents, probably because of a post-1945 extension of a breakwater.
21 Using a damage index previously developed from tsunami-current measurements in other harbours, we asked whether
22 the currents simulated for 1945 were fast enough to cause the reported damage to the groyne. Those currents were found
23 fast enough to have caused damage termed “Minor/Moderate” in seaward parts of Karachi Harbour.

24

25 *Keywords: tsunami; current speeds; Makran; Karachi Port*

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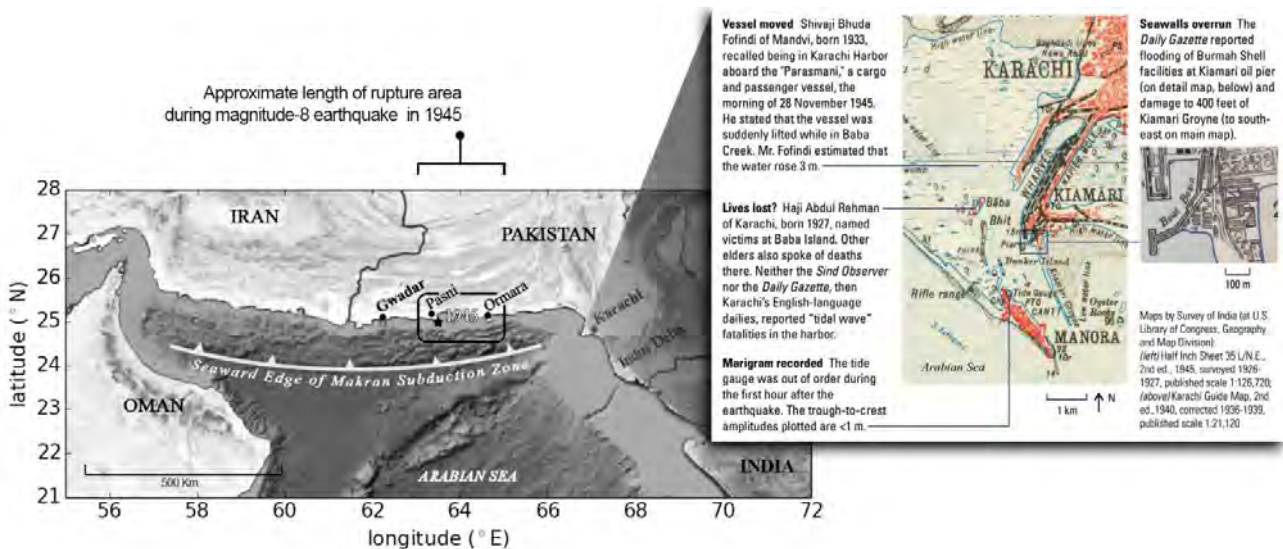
27 **1. Introduction**

28 Tsunami currents can cause damage in ports and harbours even without flooding the adjacent land. The
 29 currents may turn vessels and dockside cargo into battering rams, which may in turn damage docks and quay
 30 walls. Measurements of current velocities have been obtained for both near-field and far-field tsunami effects
 31 on maritime facilities worldwide, for use in modelling tsunami-induced currents, including eddies, in harbour
 32 basins [1]. Television footage showed large turbulent eddies during the 2011 Tohoku tsunami in northeast
 33 Japan. Ships in port were moved by far-field waves of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami in Salalah, Oman [2],
 34 and by near-field waves of a slide-induced tsunami in 1964 at Valdez, Alaska [3].

35 The main tsunami threat in Pakistan, as in Japan, is posed by waves generated nearby. The largest nearby
 36 source of tsunamis in Pakistan is an active fault at the boundary between two tectonic plates. This plate
 37 boundary fault is a gently inclined thrust, dipping northward, that extends 800 km east-west along the Makran
 38 Subduction Zone. The western part of the subduction thrust slants beneath southeast Iran and may present a
 39 tsunami hazard in nearby parts of Oman (see Fig. 1).

40 The largest earthquake unquestionably produced on the Makran subduction thrust took place just over
 41 70 years ago. The earthquake source area was a few hundred kilometres west of Karachi. The fault rupture
 42 began offshore Pasni early on November 28, 1945, Indian Standard Time (at 2156:55.2 UTC [4]). From that
 43 starting point (hypocenter) the fault rupture is believed to have spread 100-150 km eastward to the vicinity of
 44 Ormara. Byrne et al. [4] using Rayleigh waves, obtained moment magnitudes in the range 8.0–8.2, and reported
 45 8.1 as the best estimate.

46 The earthquake was followed by a tsunami of ambiguous origin that caused hundreds of confirmed
 47 fatalities and entered the Port of Karachi. The tsunami has been ascribed to vertical tectonic deformation of
 48 the ocean floor during the earthquake [5], but submarine slides may have also contributed to the waves [4,6,7].
 49 Nearly all the confirmed tsunami deaths were in what is now Pakistan, and about half were east of Karachi
 50 in the Indus River delta [8–11]. Flooding and damage in Karachi Harbour are known from contemporary
 51 newspaper reports and from recent interviews with eyewitnesses. Front-page articles in two of Karachi's
 52 dailies of the time, *The Sind Observer* and *The Daily Gazette*, described flooding of compounds of the port's
 53 oil installations at Keamari; damage to 400 feet of a groyne that was then under repair; and loss of a beacon
 54 light. The groyne damaged was a stone structure constructed in 1861-1863 [12]. Eyewitness interviewed in the
 55 past few years have told of flooding on low-lying Baba Island and Bhit Islands, and also the grounding of a
 56 Gujarati ship [11].



57 Fig. 1 – Approximate source of the 1945 Makran earthquake [4] and tsunami effects in Karachi [10]

58 We posit in this paper that these tsunami effects in the Karachi Harbour resulted from the tsunami
 59 currents rather than high water levels. Strong currents were reported in *The Times of India*, which on November
 60 30 told of "a strong ebbing current of 4 to 5 knots" in Karachi Harbour. The *Times* account, citing a news
 61 service (A.P.I.) as its source, mentions four waves in the harbour: the first at 5:30 am, the bigger second one
 62 at 7 am followed by the third at 7:50 am, and the fourth and highest at 8:15 am. This same sequence was

63 reiterated in official reports by Pendse [13,14]. Multiple waves are further evidenced by an incomplete
64 marigram from a float-type tide gauge that had been installed before 2nd January 1924 at a pier along the shore
65 of Manora Island. The marigram lacks data from the first 75 minutes after the earthquake [7], and the
66 amplitudes of the waves recorded are smaller than those evidenced by accounts of flooding and damage.

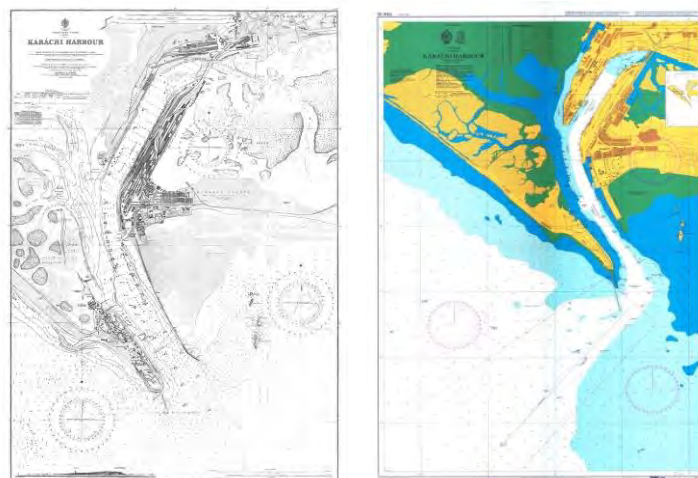
67 It is important to understand the currents of 1945 as guides to tsunami hazards in today's Port of Karachi.
68 This paper accordingly examines the 1945 tsunami at Karachi by simulating it with an open-source code,
69 GeoClaw, and by comparing the simulated wave train and currents with the observations summarized above.
70 The simulations incorporate debatable assumptions about sources for the 1945 tsunami. We compute current
71 speeds for two terrain models—one using bathymetry and shorelines surveyed before 1945, the other using
72 recent surveys. With the earlier terrain we ask whether the simulated current speeds could account for the
73 damage reported in 1945. With the newer terrain we apply a damage index previously developed from tsunami-
74 current measurements in harbours and ports worldwide [15], as a preliminary guide to tsunami risk to modern
75 maritime facilities at Karachi Port.

76 2. Numerical Model Setup

77 We simulated current speeds with an open-source code, GeoClaw [16], that was developed as part of Clawpack
78 [17]. The program uses a high-resolution shock capturing finite-volume method to solve the depth-averaged
79 two-dimensional nonlinear shallow water equations that are standard in modelling tsunami propagation and
80 inundation. Geoclaw improves on some other tsunami-modelling codes by allowing for efficient solution of
81 modelling problems through adaptive mesh refinement. In adaptive mesh refinement, fine computational grids
82 are used only where needed, such as when handling the inundation on land through wetting and drying
83 algorithms. Additional levels of refinement can be introduced in specific coastal regions as the wave arrives.
84 The code allows parallel processing to attain additional speed on multi-core computers and has the advantage
85 that the digital elevation models (DEMs) for bathymetry and topography can be provided arbitrarily at different
86 resolutions. Arbitrarily complex topography and shorelines can be incorporated without the need for mesh
87 generation since the computations are done on rectangular grid cells in longitude-latitude.

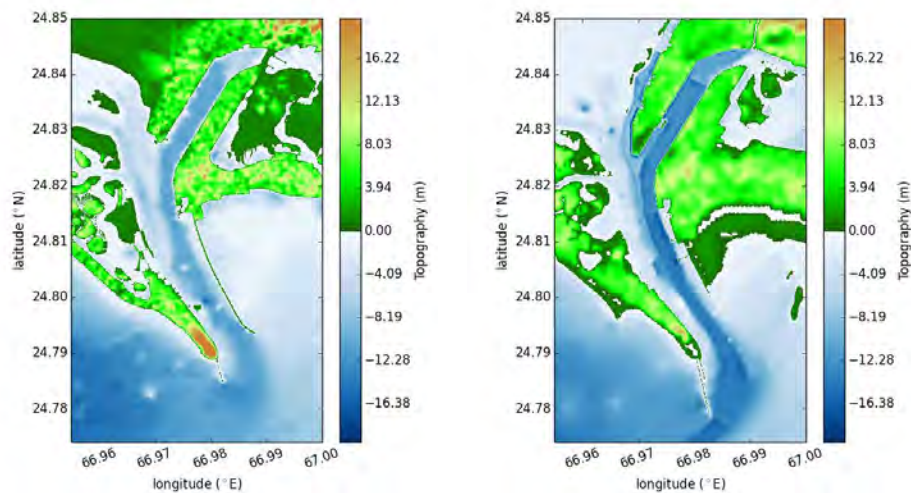
88 2.1 Digital Elevation Models (DEMs) for Karachi Port

89 We made two DEMs for Karachi Port: one to approximate conditions in 1945, the other to represent the
90 present-day situation. For both we drew on nautical charts for Karachi Port. Bathymetry surveyed before 1945
91 is available in a British Admiralty Chart published in 1935 with small corrections in 1939 [18] (see Fig. 2).
92 Notes on the chart state that it is based on surveys of the outer soundings and the parts in hairline conducted
93 by Navigating Lieutenant T.C. Pascoe under supervision of Commander L.S. Dawson from Royal Navy in
94 1883, and on further surveys by the Karachi Port Engineers to 1933, with small corrections in the years 1935,
95 1936, 1937 and 1939. For present-day conditions we used the 2012 edition [19] of a nautical chart that was
96 first published in 1997. We are uncertain when the soundings used in this map were obtained. The chart
97 mentions Notices to Mariners for years 2013 and 2014 but is not clear whether those notices refer to
98 corrections.



99 Fig. 2 - Nautical charts from 1939 [18] (left panel) and 2012 [19] (right panel)

100 Comparison between the two charts reflects expansion of Karachi Port since 1945. The changes include
101 port protection structures and bathymetry in seaward parts of the harbour. The channel has been dredged deeper
102 and the island just inside the channel has most likely been removed to make way for larger ships. These changes
103 with time would have surely affected the alignment of the shoreline and wave dynamics inside the port
104 including wave-generated currents. To capture these effects, two separate digital elevation models (DEMs)
105 were developed—one with the bathymetric data compiled in 1939, the other with the 2012 chart. The earlier
106 DEM also incorporates shoreline and topographic data from the 1944 edition on the Karachi Guide Map, by
107 the Survey of India. The 1939 nautical chart shows a training groynes that we neglected because it is not seen
108 in the guide map (see zoomed image of Karachi Port in Fig. 1). The nautical charts of 1939 and 2012 were
109 digitised separately and mosaicked with the SRTM 30m topographic data (see Fig. 3). For offshore data other
110 than Karachi Port, GEBCO bathymetric data was used together with nearshore bathymetric charts by US
111 Defense Mapping Agency from the period 1994 to 2001.



112 Fig. 3 – Digital Elevation Model for Karachi port using Nautical Charts for the years 1939 (left panel) and
113 2012 (right panel)

114 2.2 Previously Inferred Sources of the Great Makran Earthquake of 1945

115 The source of the great 1945 earthquake has been reported as a hypocenter and as a fault-rupture area.
116 The fault rupture began at the hypocenter. The distinction is important in modelling of the 1945 tsunami,
117 because the tsunami source, if purely from tectonic deformation, would be the warping of the ocean floor by
118 tectonic deformation from coseismic slip wherever the fault broke.

119 Both the hypocenter and the fault-rupture area were evaluated by Byrne et al. [4]. Their Table 1, citing
120 previous work, located the hypocenter offshore Pasni (lat. 24.15 N, long. 63.48 W) and gave its depth as 27
121 km. They reported a hypocenter and a nodal plane striking northeast-southwest (246°) and a slip direction
122 nearly perpendicular to this strike (rake 89°). In their text, Byrne et al. [4] proceeded to derive estimates of the
123 fault-rupture area and of the coseismic slip that occurred on it. Their Figure 6 sketches the long dimension of
124 the rupture area (see Fig. 1) as parallel to the roughly east-west strike of the subduction thrust [4]. They inferred
125 that the fault rupture area extended beneath Ormara, to account for reports that a shoreline there was raised
126 about 2 m during the earthquake [20]. They recognized that subsidence reported from Pasni was probably
127 induced by a landslide, but they extended the inferred fault-rupture area beneath Pasni as well. They concluded
128 (p. 466–468) that the fault rupture extended 100-150 km along a plane dipping 5° north, that most of this area
129 was east of Pasni, and that the rupture extended as much as 100 km down the gentle northward dip of the fault
130 plane.

131 These estimates of hypocenter and fault-rupture area are conflated in some of the subsequent attempts
132 to simulate the 1945 tsunami, ours included. The most recent of the simulations have been calibrated to tide-
133 gauge data from marigrams in Karachi and Bombay [5,7]. In the most comprehensive modelling, by
134 Heidarzadeh and Satake [5], the tide-gauge data were found to be consistent with an earthquake source
135 represented by four rectangular segments, each with its own average slip (see Table 1). Each segment was



136 assumed to strike 246°, in agreement with the hypocentral solution in [4], but not with the more nearly east-
 137 west fault-rupture area inferred in [4]. Reference [9] describes each segment as having the same depth to its
 138 up-dip edge. It is not clear to us how to project these segments onto a subduction thrust that strikes close to
 139 270°.

140

141 Table 1 – Source parameters for the Great Makran Earthquake of 1945 inferred from recent tsunami
 142 modelling [5]

Scenario		South-east corner		Fault Length (km)	Fault Width (km)	Upper Depth (km)	Slip (m)	Strike (°)	Rake (°)	Dip (°)	Mw
		Long. (° E)	Lat. (° N)								
Four segment fault	A	63.22	24.17	55	70	27	10.0	246	89	7	
	B	63.72	24.38	55	70	27	10.0	246	89	7	
	C	64.22	24.59	55	70	27	0.0	246	89	7	
	D	64.72	24.80	55	70	27	4.3	246	89	7	
Total/Average				220	70	27	6.1	246	89	7	8.28

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144 2.3 Scenarios used in this report

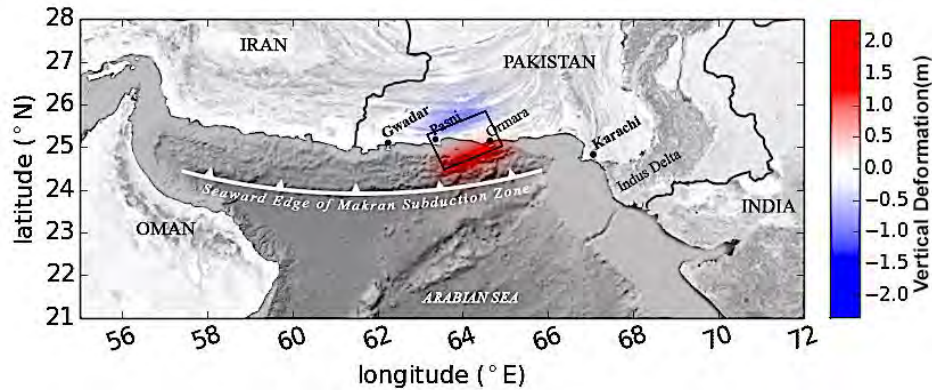
145 Our preliminary simulations use two hypothetical sources. In both of these scenarios the fault rupture strikes
 146 246°, oblique to the subduction thrust. Scenario 1 adapts the fault-rupture area of Byrne et al. [4] to this strike
 147 by rotating the strike about 25° counterclockwise. Scenario 2 follows the preferred fault rupture of Heidarzadeh
 148 and Satake [5], the four-segment hypothesis summarized above in Table 1. Both scenarios appear to require
 149 about twice as much seismic moment as was estimated by Byrne et al. [4]. The 246° strike yields vertical
 150 tectonic deformation consistent with the reports that uplift occurred at Ormara and not at Pasni (Fig. 4). Neither
 151 scenario allows for the deformation pattern to be modified by splay faulting or by submarine slope failures.

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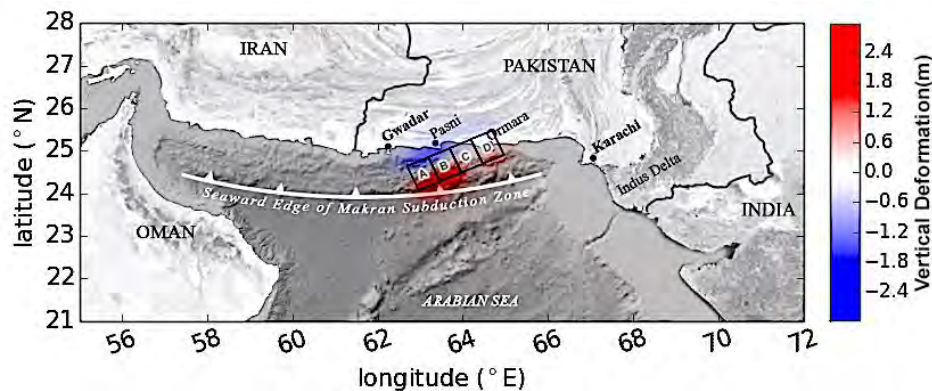
153 Table 2 – Scenarios used in this report to simulate the 1945 Makran tsunami

Scenario		Top center Coordinates		Fault Length (km)	Fault Width (km)	Depth (km)	Slip (m)	Strike (°)	Rake (°)	Dip (°)	Mw
		Long. (° E)	Lat. (° N)								
1		64.25	24.75	150	100	27	7	246	89	7	8.38
2	Fault Segment										
	A	63.22	24.17	55	70	27	10.0	246	89	7	
	B	63.72	24.38	55	70	27	10.0	246	89	7	
	C	64.22	24.59	55	70	27	0.0	246	89	7	
	D	64.72	24.80	55	70	27	4.3	246	89	7	
Total/Average				220	70	27	6.1	246	89	7	

154



(a) Scenario 1 based on Byrne et al. (1992) [4] but with oblique strike



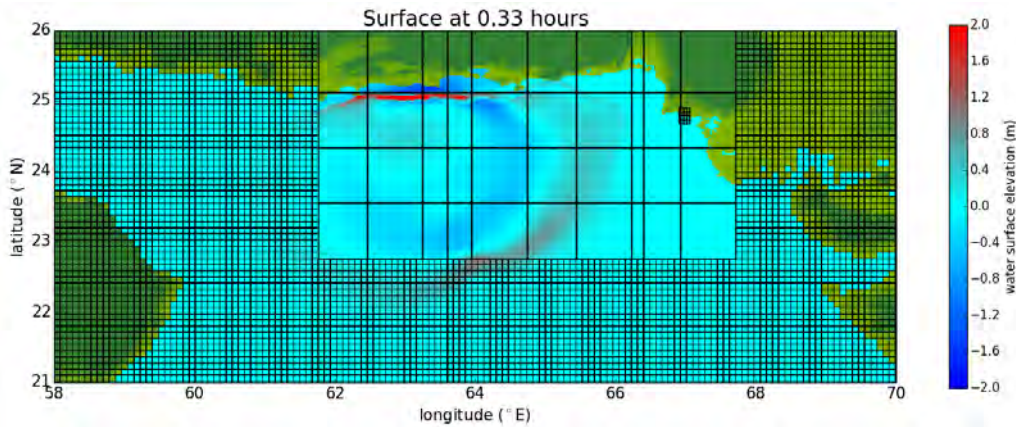
(b) Scenario 2 based on Heidarzadeh and Satake (2014) [5]

155 Fig. 4 - Sea floor deformation for the two scenarios presented in Table 2. Positive values represent uplift and
156 negative subsidence

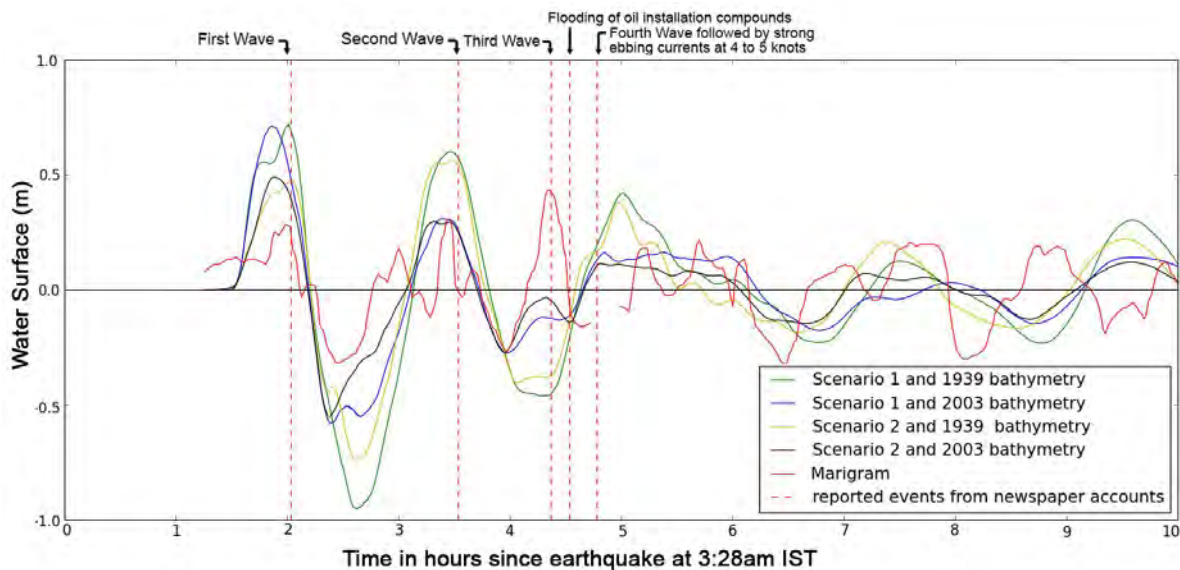
157 **3. Results**

158 The grid resolution needed for modelling the tsunami waves within the regional computational domain is both
159 spatially and temporally dependent [21]. Hence for efficient modelling to determine current speeds within
160 Karachi Port, we make use of the adaptive mesh refinement (AMR) in GeoClaw. Following previous studies
161 such as that in [21] the domain was resolved over 5 level grids. An example of the GeoClaw simulation for
162 the 1945 Makran tsunami at a particular time for the first two levels can be seen in Fig. 1. The coarse level-1
163 grid had a resolution of 154 km, which was used for the full simulation domain. To capture the propagating
164 waves, the level-2 grids were refined by a factor of 16 to give a resolution of about 9.63 km. Like inundation
165 modelling, determining precise current speeds also requires fine resolution. As the wave approached the shores
166 of Karachi, the grids were further refined by additional factors of 4, 15 and 8 within Karachi Port area. This
167 gave corresponding resolutions for level-3, 4 and 5 grids that were approximately 2.4 km, 160m and 20m
168 respectively.

169 Waves were simulated for 10 hrs for the two DEMs and earthquake sources considered in sections 2.1
170 and 2.2, and was compared against data that was observed by a float-type tide gauge at Karachi Port. According
171 to Neetu et al. (2011) the tide gauge had malfunctioned due to the tsunami and was repaired, thus kept recording
172 the surface elevation during the event. The observation of the water surface elevation in Fig. 6 clearly shows
173 the time the tide gauge malfunctioned i.e. the period where no data has been recorded just before 5 hours.
174 Results show the initial wave at Karachi having an arrival time and wavelength similar to observations,
175 although later waves do not seem to be well captured by the model. Moreover, amplitudes of the initial waves
176 are almost double those observed. The recent bathymetry and the one closer to the event show almost similar
177 pattern for scenarios 1 and 2. The marigram shows the third wave as the highest as opposed to the fourth
178 according newspaper accounts. Further this is also not the case for the model runs where the first wave is the
179 largest. For the single fault source, the third wave has the same wave height as the observed fourth wave
180 although it arrives later.



181 Fig. 5 – A time snapshot of a GeoClaw simulation for the 1945 Makran tsunami showing level-1 grid cells
 182 and only grid patches for higher level grids; each patch is up to 60x60 grid cells. Level-2 patches cover part
 183 of the Arabian Sea and finer grid patches are also visible only near Karachi.



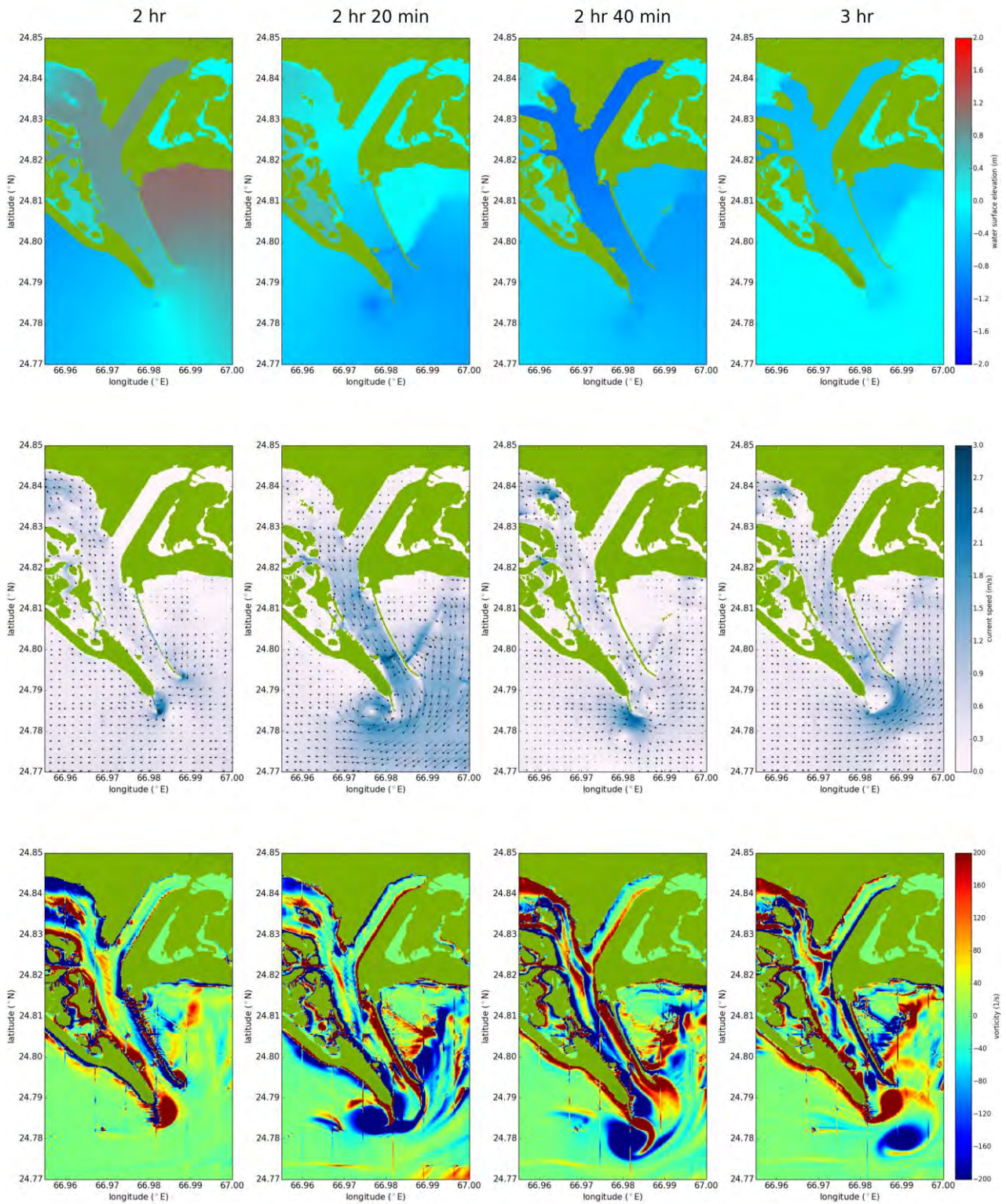
184 Fig. 6 – Comparison of the observed water surface elevation and the simulated scenarios at Karachi Port for
 185 the 1945 Makran tsunami. The dashed red lines give the approximate times of waves and flooding reported
 186 in newspaper accounts of the tsunami (details in text).

187 3.1 Water Surface Elevation, Current Speeds, Velocity Field and Vorticity

188 Considering the single fault earthquake source, Fig. 7 and Fig. 8 depict four time frames for corresponding
 189 water surface elevation, current speeds (overlaid by the velocity field) and the vorticity from 2hrs after the
 190 earthquake to 3hrs during which the recession is greatest. The modelling in Fig. 7 uses bathymetry from 1939
 191 charts whereas Fig. 8 uses bathymetric charts from 2012. The figures show that the strongest currents have
 192 been calculated when the water is receding and the wave surface elevation is at its lowest. Moreover, it is the
 193 1939 bathymetry over which the strongest currents occur and are between 1.8 to 3 m s⁻¹. This model result
 194 corresponds to reports which mention that the strong ebbing currents were between 4-5 knots (2-2.6 ms⁻¹),
 195 except the speeds were thought to be a result of the highest wave generated [13]. The receding wave mentioned
 196 in Pendse [13,14] was reported to have caused damage within the Karachi harbour. These estimates are
 197 important and can then be used to understand the cause of damage in the harbour.

198 The corresponding velocity field shows huge gyres forming just outside the entrance near the breakwater
 199 on the West. The intensity of these circulations can be judged by the vorticity, which is very large over the
 200 bathymetry on the 2012 chart. The extension of the breakwater seems to protect the modern day Karachi Port.
 201 Moreover, one can observe vortex shedding which can be dangerous. Although the Karachi Port area has been
 202 resolved to 20 m this is not enough as seen in the vorticity plots where the boundaries of the patches for
 203 vorticity are quite evident. This can be corrected by increasing the resolution to 5m.

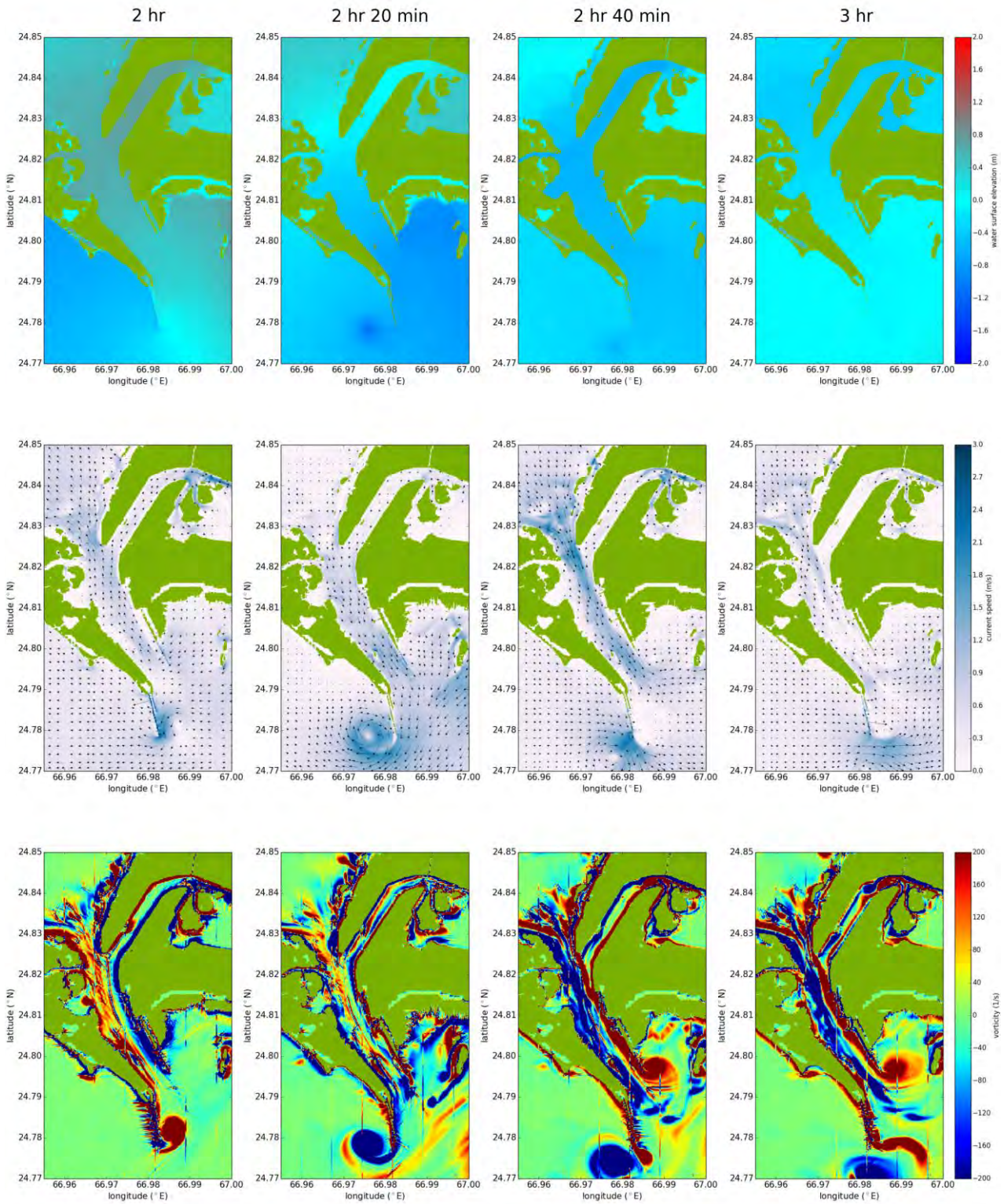
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Fig. 7 – Simulated water surface elevation (top row), current speed and velocity field (middle), and vorticity (bottom row) at different times 2 hrs after the earthquake in Karachi Port for bathymetry on a 1939 nautical chart.

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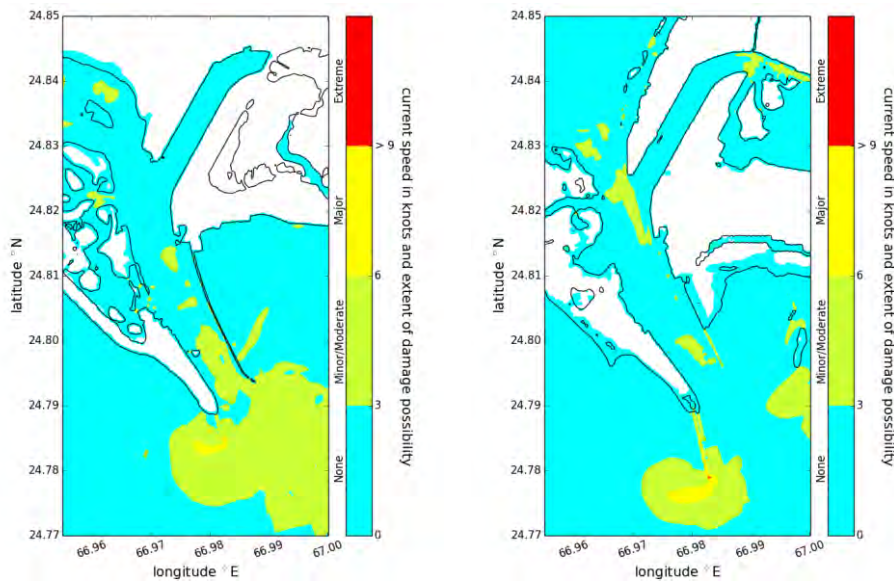
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Fig. 8 - Simulated water surface elevation (top row), current speed and velocity field (middle), and vorticity (bottom row) at different times 2 hrs after the earthquake in Karachi Port for bathymetry on a 2012 nautical chart.

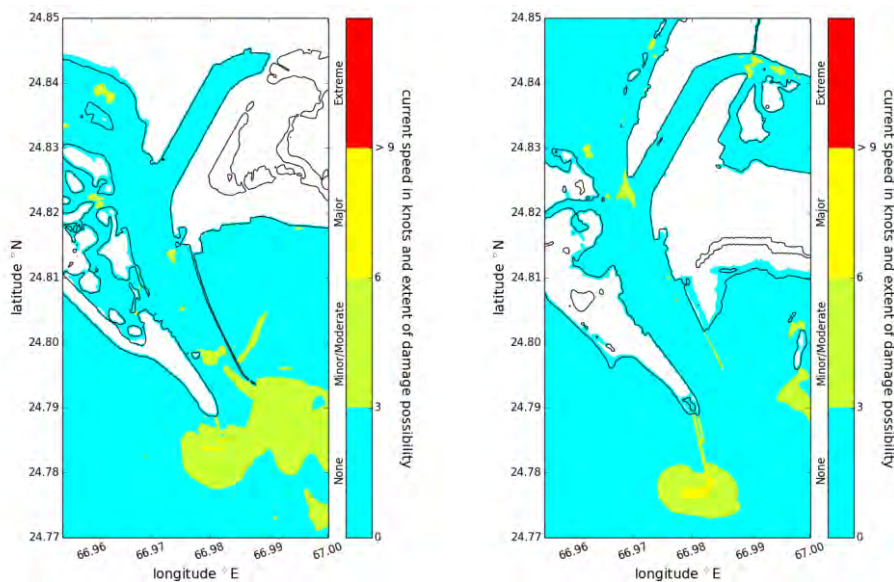
214 3.2 Damage Index

215 Maximum current speeds in knots and the possibility of damage were derived from GeoClaw output (see Fig.
 216 9 and Fig. 10). The possibility of damage shown in the figures was determined through the application of a
 217 damage index developed from tsunami-current measurements in harbours and ports worldwide by Lynett et
 218 al. (2012) [15]. What can be assessed from the figures is that the single fault and the 1939 bathymetry in the
 219 left panel of Fig. 9 shows quite extensive Minor/Moderate damage possibility around the entrance.

220 The damage index corresponding to Minor/Moderate damage can result in damage to docks/small boats
 221 or large buoys moved. Moreover, it could result in < 25% moderate damage to docks/vessels and/or midsized
 222 vessels breaking off their mooring [15]. This result is important as it seems to suggest that the under-repair
 223 groyne on the East side of the entrance could have been washed away as reported in newspaper accounts. For
 224 the modern bathymetry the damage seems to be contained more around the extended breakwater with the inner
 225 harbour being protected. For Fig. 10 where the source consists of four subfaults, the damage seems to be
 226 contained.



227 Fig. 9 – Damage index for 1939 (left panel) and 2012 (right panel) charts for a single fault scenario 1.



228 Fig. 10 - Damage index for 1939 (left panel) and 2012 (right panel) charts for a subfault scenario 2.



229 **4. Uncertainties**

230 Section 2.2 simplifies the modeling by excluding submarine landslides as tsunami sources. Submarine mass
231 movements during or soon after the great 1945 Makran earthquake are indicated by reported breaks in a
232 submarine telegraph cable between Karachi and Muscat [8], and the wave train recorded by the Karachi
233 marigram contains short-period waves that are difficult to explain by a simple tectonic source [5–7, 22]. Future
234 research could consider the possible effect of submarine landslides, although there is no indication of exactly
235 where the cable breaks occurred.

236 Additional uncertainties arise from calibration and bathymetric data. The marigram contains gaps. The
237 tide gauge design did not necessarily ensure full and quick recording of rapid changes in water level.
238 Eyewitness accounts of the tsunami at Karachi [11] contain large discrepancies. Digitizing of nautical charts
239 yielded cells without data, and interpolation into these cells may exaggerate or suppress certain seabed and
240 shoreline features. All these uncertainties may contribute to differences in Fig. 6 between the recorded
241 marigram and the synthetic tide gauge results.

242 **5. Conclusions**

243 The open-source code GeoClaw was used to simulate tsunami arrivals and currents in Karachi Port for
244 comparison with observations of the 1945 Makran tsunami. The comparison incorporated bathymetric data
245 from surveys before 1945. Additional modelling, using newer bathymetry, explored potential effects on
246 today's Karachi Port.

247 The simulations incorporate simplifying assumptions about sources for the 1945 tsunami. The modelled
248 sources are purely tectonic, and as in other Makran tsunami simulations the fault planes strike obliquely to the
249 likely plane of the Makran subduction thrust. The modelled sources do not include submarine slides or splay
250 faults.

251 Results show the initial wave at Karachi having an arrival time and wavelength similar to observations.
252 Subsequent waves are not as well captured by the model, but there are also discrepancies between a marigram
253 and newspaper accounts in the time and relative size of the fourth wave. Amplitudes of the initial waves in the
254 simulations are almost double those observed.

255 Further, results showed the strongest of the currents existed when the water is receding and the wave
256 surface elevation is at its lowest. Moreover, it is the 1939 bathymetry over which the strongest currents occur
257 and are between 1.8 to 3 m s⁻¹. This observation corresponds to reports which mention that the strong ebbing
258 currents were between 4-5 knots (2-2.6 ms⁻¹), except the speeds were thought to be as a result of the highest
259 wave generated [13]. The receding wave is reported to have caused damage within the Karachi harbour.

260 The simulated velocity field shows huge gyres forming just outside the entrance near the breakwater on
261 the West. The intensity of these circulations can be judged by the vorticity, which is very large over the 2012
262 bathymetry. The extension of the breakwater seems to protect the modern day Karachi Port. Moreover, one
263 can observe vortex shedding which can be dangerous to structures. Although the Karachi Port area has been
264 resolved to 20 m this is not enough as seen in the vorticity plots, where the boundaries of the patches for
265 vorticity are quite evident. This can be corrected by increasing the resolution to 5 m.

266 We also examined whether the current speeds were high enough to cause the kind of damage that was
267 done within Karachi port. Application of a damage index previously developed from tsunami-current
268 measurements in harbours and ports worldwide [15] helped establish that for a single fault source and the 1939
269 bathymetry the Minor/Moderate damage was extensive, suggesting the under repair groyne could have washed
270 away. Further, the extension of the breakwaters limits the damage outside, especially in the vicinity of the
271 breakwater.

272 **6. Acknowledgements**

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276 UNESCO Makran projects; Oxfam GB; and USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance. The support has
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