



Bringing Disaster Risk Management to the Local Level



Chapter Brief

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Empowerment
Networks
Participation
Partnership

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Chapter Brief

- Risk management at the local level provides an environment for the community to put risk reduction actions into practice. It helps people to form an understanding of the risks that may occur in their community.
- Disaster risk management has traditionally been a responsibility assigned to national governments, but resources provided by the national governments are not always sufficient to meet the growing demand to make communities safe from disasters. It is important to appreciate the resources that people at the local-level bring to the disaster risk management process.
- Government decentralization presents an opportunity for transferring power and responsibilities to local level administrations and to forge new partnerships to address local needs and develop local capacity.
- Local governments must also establish links with key stakeholders to share resources and build on knowledge and information.
- Communities depend on cooperation among many stakeholders to become more secure and foster actions that support sustainable development.
- The approach of localizing disaster risk management increases the capacity of the local community to make decisions to make their community safer and more secure.
- Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) will bring out the dominant perceptions of risk in the community.
- The role of CBDRM will help create awareness amongst people to take responsibility, to advocate, and lobby for risk reduction activities, community mobilisation and decision making
- CBDRM is a powerful process to be used in conjunction with risk assessment, preparedness and mitigation processes

Introduction

Disaster risk management at the local-level helps people form an understanding of the risks that may occur in their community. Disaster risk management provides a step-by-step process to identify community risks, select appropriate preparedness and mitigation actions and establish mechanisms to put these actions into place. This process acknowledges that people at the local-level have diverse concerns that will affect the types of risk they will consider important. When making risk reduction choices, people need to have a clear vision of potential community risks and how those risks will affect their lives.

The objective of a local-level disaster risk management program is to provide an environment to initiate discussions about risks and find ways to put community risk reduction actions into practice. Some stakeholders will identify risks that apply to their unique situation and must be addressed outside of the community process.

Throughout this chapter, it is important to appreciate the resources that people at the local-level bring to the disaster risk management process. Over time, people build strong coping mechanisms that rely on relationships and kinship ties, local resources, and indigenous practices unique to their community. These coping mechanisms, local organizations and strategies are important for the survival of many communities.

Recent trends of government decentralization in Asia means that power and responsibilities are being transferred to local level administrations. Decentralization presents an opportunity to forge new partnerships to address local needs and develop local capacity. Involvement of members of the community with local government representatives and agencies establishes important links to political support and financial resources. This cooperative approach initiates a greater capacity to deal with disasters.



Bottom up disaster risk management strategies acknowledge the competence of local people without ignoring the responsibilities of governments to meet their needs. It is important to keep in mind that disaster risk management at the local level alone is not enough. There needs to be an integration of bottom up and top down approaches to support and compliment all efoorts. Disaster risk management needs to incorporate a broader perspective that links risk reduction actions to sustainable development. Establishing this link promotes long-term approaches to disaster risk reduction. A long-term approach must acknowledge and understand the link between disasters, poverty and sustainable development, and the direct affects these have on all elements of civil society, particularly marginalized groups.



Key Words

Community

In the context of disaster risk management, a community can be defined as people living in one geographical area, who are exposed to common hazards due to their location. They may have common experience in responding to hazards and disasters. However, they may have different perceptions of and exposure to risk. Groups within the locality will have a stake in risk reduction measures. (*Abarquez and Murshed 2004: 8*)

Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM)

A process of disaster risk management in which 'at risk' communities are actively engaged in the identification, analysis, treatment, monitoring and evaluation of disaster risks in order to reduce their vulnerabilities and enhance their capacities. This means that the people are at the heart of decision-making and implementation of disaster risk management activities. The involvement of the most vulnerable is paramount and the support of the least vulnerable is necessary. In CBDRM, local and national governments are involved and supportive. (*Abarquez and Murshed 2004: 9*)

Coping

In context of disaster management, 'coping is the manner in which people act using existing resources and a range of expectations to achieve a desired end. This can include the 'management of resources' and how it is done during unusual, abnormal or adverse situations. (*Blakie et al. 2001:62*)

Empowerment

To make a group of people in the community or society strengthened to be more confident or feel that they are in control of their lives, by self-actualization or external influence, with or without official authority/legal power.



Network

A large group established for the purpose of sharing information, consisting of many groups, especially in the context of different groups of people in a community or society, that are linked together to allow communication between or within the components and/or between the components and a central focal system.

Participation

To be involved in activities of a group of people in the community or society, either with or without membership, sharing the work and contributing inputs to achieve the group objectives.

Partnership

Relationship resembling a legal partnership and usually involving close cooperation between parties having specified and joint rights and responsibilities.

Concepts of Local Level

Building a culture of safety

The rate of occurrence and the nature of disaster impacts influence how people perceive disaster risk. It is difficult to maintain a state of heightened disaster awareness when the majority of disasters occur infrequently. This is true even if the affects are devastating. Catastrophic earthquakes may only happen once or twice in a lifetime, but may potentially kill thousands of people and destroy buildings, roads and other community elements necessary for survival. Severe annual flooding may destroy property and cause the evacuation of thousands of people. However, they are necessary for the production of critical food supplies, such as rice. Such differences alter perceptions of risk among members of local communities. Each individual is influenced by their personal experience, their ability to perceive the potential effects of rarely occurring disasters and their understanding of the benefits that accompany some disaster events. Each person will determine a unique level of acceptable risk based on these and other characteristics of disaster events.

It is this very personal and individual perception of risk that needs to be discussed and explored in order to build a culture of safety. Perceptions can change, and when they do, the level of acceptable risk may also change. Some people may become less “risk tolerant” while others may be willing to tolerate a higher level of risk to sustain activities necessary for immediate survival. These changes may depend on experience, education or even misinformation. Integrating individual needs into disaster risk reduction actions needs to account for these issues in order to be effective.



see chapter 6

Public awareness and education is the key to building a culture of safety

Better management of disasters in the community requires the development of a culture of safety. A culture of safety incorporates risk reduction into the everyday actions of people and contributes to a safe and secure future. Achieving a culture of safety at the local level is the key to building safer, disaster resilient communities. Developing management practices that involve the participation of members of the community is the first step.



Participation and Sustainable Development

'The involvement of the most vulnerable is paramount
and the support of the least vulnerable is necessary'

- Zubair Murshed 2004

Why is Participation Important?

- Promotes commitment to decisions made
- Ensures that all alternatives are reviewed so that the local problem is addressed by the most appropriate and cost-effective solution
- Ensures that activities are coordinated with each other and with other community goals and activities
- Prevents conflicts and reduces the costs of implementation
- Educates communities and other local stakeholders on available resources and capacities for protecting themselves against disaster risks
- Builds support and ownership of risk reduction projects, increasing the potential sustainability of interventions after projects end

National level direction or 'top-down' approaches may fail to recognize the context of the local environment and may overlook specific local level needs. Engagement with the national level is necessary, but certain measures need to be initiated and implemented at this level.

Addressing disaster risk management at the local level has become an important aspect of an holistic disaster risk management approach. Local level initiatives are in line with current development practice. Establishing disaster risk management at the local level allows the local community to participate in decision-making to identify risk reduction measures and to manage potential disasters that may affect their lives. Members of the community become active participants establishing responsibility and ownership.

Local people understand their situation best. They have knowledge of their history, first hand experience with local risks, an understanding of their environment, and experience with coping mechanisms that have worked well in the past. No one has a greater stake in creating a safe community than the people that live and work there. The experience and know-how of community members needs to be understood, respected and applied to support the development of a sustainable community.

Role of local government

Effective disaster risk management stems from good governance practices. The historical political culture in Asia is only now emerging from a non-participatory, centralized approach to planning and decision-making. The recent climate of decentralization and devolution of powers makes room for greater participation in risk management choices and enhances good government practices.

Local government entities are often better placed to develop, manage and implement disaster risk management processes than state and central governments. They have power to mandate measures and can access local financial and technical resources. The role of local government is to be an active leader to mobilize the community into considering actions that will assist in disaster preparedness and mitigation. Local governments need a framework that includes authority to lead, incentive to act, policies and plans to guide, financial resources for capacity building and implementing initiatives, and mechanisms of accountability to ensure mechanisms are binding and that processes will last. This commitment contributes to a sustainable culture of safety.

There are many government level stakeholders who should be involved in the development and maintenance of disaster risk reduction measures. Numerous ministerial sectors such as public works, health care, planning, agriculture, forestry, natural resources and coastal and marine departments are an integral part of this stakeholders group. Disaster risk management training, including an introduction to risk, hazard specific information, nature of disasters, impact on livelihoods, risk assessment, planning and action, is an effective and vital component to enhancing local government disaster risk management leadership. Training will build the technical capacity of local government stakeholders and is a strategy employed to build awareness and sustainability in local disaster risk management planning. See Case Study of Thailand and Bangladesh, which highlights the positive outcomes of such engagement.



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It is important to remember that disaster risk management at the state, provincial, district, municipal, city, kampong, tambon, or village level should never entirely rely upon local government policies and programs, nor solely depend on community bottom up strategies. The two must work together.



The importance of links: networks and partnerships among key stakeholders

Throughout this Primer there has been considerable discussion of the importance of forming partnerships, networks, links, collaborations and coalitions. It is a key strategy for incorporating multi-stakeholder opinions, resources, ideas, and perceptions into the disaster risk management process. It enables greater involvement and facilitates participation of all those affected by disaster events. These partnerships contribute to DRM development, planning and activities, and foster ownership and sustainability.

Building partnerships and networks can help reduce redundancy and conserve limited resources. Evidence shows that an increasing number of projects cover the same areas and generate the same information. Forming networks and partnerships, and working in collaboration, promotes the sharing of information and knowledge so people can avoid unnecessary effort, maximize resources and work towards a common goal.

Local government departments, private sector representatives and organizations NGOs, CBOs, community representatives, religious leaders, neighborhood networks, are stakeholders in the disaster risk management process. Among the contributions they can make to the disaster risk management process are

- NGOs and CBOs can catalyze and facilitate participation, helping local communities become partners instead of only being recipients or beneficiaries of outside assistance.
- Key stakeholders can form committees to provide a crucial link to the larger community
- Organising community meetings and training workshops can provide a good platform for people to share their ideas and stimulate action.
- There needs to be a common mandate, aim or objective to establish a common goal.
- Building networks and partnerships fostering participatory approaches fosters diverse opinions and expands the number of options available. Multiple points of view provides a way to understand the cross cutting issues contributing to increasing vulnerability.
- Disaster management training can become a platform for key stakeholders to meet and discuss the issues affecting them. This environment can facilitate the formation of linkages, networks and partnerships.

KEY STAKE HOLDERS

- **Local government/Municipalities:** Works/Engineering, town planning, health and sanitation, community development, environment and natural resources, agriculture, fisheries, education
- **Private sector:** Builders, contractors, engineers, hospitals, clinics, schools, financial institutions, private land owners, business owners, shop keepers
- **Public sector departments in the locality:** Public works, town planning, education, health and sanitation, community development, environment and natural resources, agriculture, fisheries, coastal protection
- **Other:** NGOs; CBOs; religious leaders (imams, priests, monks, nuns, bishops); community representatives (community leaders, village chiefs, district officials, academics, women's groups, girl guides and boy scouts)

Securing Resources

The community's capacity to manage risks is largely dependent on available resources. The level of risk that a community is willing to accept may depend on the resources available to initiate risk reduction actions. The level of acceptable risk may be lower (e.g. tolerate less risk) when more resources are available to identify and implement risk reduction actions. The community may be willing to accept higher levels of risk (e.g. tolerate more risk) when resources are severely limited. Limited resources are typically directed to more immediate concerns.

Resources can have a broad definition and are not limited to financial resources. Community resources may include knowledge, coping strategies and mechanisms, information and networks. These resources can be used to develop a disaster risk management plan.



The following is a list of potential resources that can be found at the community level.

- **Individuals** - skills, time, materials, labor or cash contributions
- **Organizations** - community groups, existing or planned arrangements or activities
- **Informal Social Networks and Communications** - How do people learn about important developments in the community? How can these be used as a resource in the implementation of the preparedness and mitigation activities?
- **Local Institutions** - NGOs, businesses, schools, health centers, etc.
- What are each institution's assets? What services do they contribute to the community? How can these assets and services contribute to community risk management plans and activities?
- Local government - Are there government legislations, policies and programs which cover or compliment the objectives and activities of a community risk management plan? How can these be activated?
- Physical Characteristics/Resources - land and natural resources, open spaces, transportation, infrastructure, roads etc. What resources are available in terms of renewable or underutilized resources with characteristics suitable to be

Resources can also be hidden. For example, funds can be re-directed from local government budgets. An example of this proactive decision is illustrated by the Case Study from the Municipality of Dumungas, Philippines. External funding from donor agencies can also be utilized to make big changes in a community. See Case Study from Bangladesh, which illustrates the use of outside funds for small scale structural mitigation at the community level.



see Bangladesh case study

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Process of Localising Disaster Risk Management

In localizing DRM a proven process is Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM).



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CBDRM directly involves the community at every step. Members of the community are active participants. Their experiences, knowledge and understanding becomes vital to preparing a disaster risk management plan. The community is both the key resource and main beneficiary. CBDRM is a dynamic process that is shaped by long-term practice and experience.

The process, methodology, tools and techniques will evolve as experience grows. Each community is unique so CBDRM is constantly challenged and enriched each time it is used. Monitoring and evaluation is an essential feedback loop that allows practitioners to learn from good practices and analyze outcomes.

It is important to note that CBDRM will bring out the dominant perceptions of risk in the community. As perceptions are shaped by experience, memory and culture, apathy concerning risk reduction activities may dominate the community's views of disaster. The role of CBDRM is also concerned with changing apathetic perceptions of risk by creating awareness amongst active agents to take responsibility to advocate and lobby for activities to reduce risk, mobilize the community, and become informed decision makers.



see chapters 3, 4 & 5

CBDRM is not an alternative, nor the preferred process for managing risk. It is a to be used in conjunction with risk assessment, preparedness and mitigation processes and measures as described in chapters 3, 4 and 5. It can provide qualitative information and make a significant contribution to the holistic approach of disaster risk management.



The Seven Step Process for implementing a DRM plan within the community

(Adapted from CBDRM Course 12, Philippines 2004 and Field Practitioners Handbook)

Multiple stakeholders and actors involved in CBDRM.

They form two groups classified as:

Insiders - those located inside the community such as individuals, households, businesses, community organizations, local NGOs.

Outsiders - international and regional NGOs, sector organizations, and private sector consultants used to enhance the capacity of the community.

Multiple sectors and disciplines are involved in CBDRM. As communities are diverse, so also will be the participation of those affected by disasters. Different economic, education, religious, social, local municipal, environment sectors will have a vested interest in how they can reduce their susceptibility and build resilience to the risk of disasters.

In the multiple hazard contexts as emphasized in previous chapters, it is important to address disaster risk management from a multi-hazard approach to cover all potential risks the community may face.

1. Selecting the Community

There are factors influencing the selection of a community. The organization/NGO generally has a mandate to prioritize the poorest and most marginal communities. Costs and available resources play a major role in selection. Profiles of communities will indicate needs specific to the organization/NGO mandate. Personal interests also contribute to the selection process.

Establishing criteria for inclusion can assist in the selection process. Criteria may include: vulnerability, potential hazards, beneficiaries, community readiness to participate, accessibility and security.

2. Building Trust and Understanding the Community

Trust is the most important ingredient to conducting successful CBDRM. Without trust, people are reluctant to participate and

unwilling to accept or motivate change, especially from the 'outsider'. It is important to acknowledge, respect and work with local traditions, norms and practices; understand the community way of life; be transparent in organization and planning; have confidence in people's abilities; and most of all LISTEN (*Chambers, R*). CBDRM is as much about learning and sharing as it is about meeting objectives.

This is where partnerships, collaborations and associations with local community organizations help establish links to the local people. Using an already trusted organization or individual inside the community to partner with or build the capacity of, can be the most effective activity.

3. Participatory Disaster Risk Assessment (PDRA)

This step involves the collection of information and data related to disaster risks. The community is the focus of this risk assessment process. Indicators measured include the determination of people, their capacity, and available resources. The information and data is both qualitative and quantitative in nature and subject to perception and interpretation. It is wise to keep an open mind as what may seem to be unimportant to the outsider may be a valuable resource to the insider.

PDRA consists of consistent and continued dialogue and negotiation involving all stakeholders. The steps described in Risk Assessment Chapter 3 are adapted to PDRA and applied at community level.

E.g., identify hazards and location; map hazards, vulnerable areas, critical infrastructures; identify and assess vulnerabilities and capabilities of people;

Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) tools are applied in this step to collect information and build a scenario. Here is a list of PRA tools that are useful to create a before and after scenario.

- Transect Walks
- Hazard Maps
- Time line and historical mapping
- Seasonal Calendars
- Disaster Ranking
- Venn Diagram
- Focus Group Meetings
- Discussion Groups
- Questionnaires and Surveys
- Interviews



4. Participatory Planning

Planning needs a vision, a goal to get to, and an ideal situation to reach. Using the results of the PDRA, a community disaster risk management plan can be devised. Members of the community as groups, households, businesses or individuals can be invited to submit their own plans or partial plans specific to their needs. Meetings can be held for discussions and airing of ideas. Marginal groups need to be targeted for their opinion by holding special meetings or interviews.

There may be consensus or a myriad of options presented. One needs to be open to these differences.

5. Building a Community Organization

Delegating the role of disaster management to an appointed community organization is an important measure. Community members feel a sense of responsibility and ownership of any plans or activities devised. It also increases the possibility that actions taken now will be sustainable in the future.

To build a community organization, there first needs to be a vision/principle(s) to work by; functions, roles and responsibilities need to be established and formalized; funds allocated to the running of the organization; formalized training in disaster risk management; and members who are willing, able, trusted and committed.

6. Implementation

As a result of participatory planning, a community disaster risk management plan should be developed using a consensus process. This plan will include planning objectives and key risk reduction activities to be conducted over a specified time frame. The role of the delegated community organization will be to implement, manage and generally oversee the operation and maintenance of the plan. This will also include delegating tasks, mobilizing and encouraging the community, building awareness, sourcing and directing community resources, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation and reviewing the plan as the environment changes.

7. Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E)

Mechanisms for feedback are important for the community. It provides an opportunity to review work in progress and work that has been completed. Feedback enables the community to learn from successes and failures, and act upon the outcomes to generate future initiatives. PM&E encourages flexibility in community plans so change can occur in accordance with observed outcomes. It is an ongoing process involving all stakeholders.

Monitoring is ongoing and routinely conducted throughout the entire process. Information is collected about the progress of activities and how they were carried out. The relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of activities can be assessed. This can come in the form of periodic reports, documented meetings or interviews with members of the community organization and participants in planned activities. The benefit of monitoring is to:

- understand the change occurring in the community
- identify problems and priorities in the project needing action
- determine what is happening
- promote transparency
- learn from previous actions

Evaluation is conducted to see to what extent the objectives have been achieved. Information is collected for both qualitative and quantitative measures. The most effective way to measure change in the community is to use a baseline study to create a scenario of 'before' and then use PRA tools to draw a scenario of 'after' to assess the change.



see chapters 8

For more information see Chapter 8: Project Evaluation, Monitoring and Evaluation - Project Cycle

Also consider the following issues when developing a plan and conducting CBDRM activities.

Develop a strategy for citizen participation

- Involve the community in the entire risk disaster management process from risk assessment to planning and implementation. This ensures that their needs are heard, available resources are considered, and increases the likelihood that problems will be addressed with cost-effective and sustainable interventions.
- Initiate actions that take timing into account
- Provide compensation for work and encourage commitment.
- Provide incentives for involvement and participation.
- Involve key community stakeholders and formalizing networks
- Be aware of diversity in communities includes class, gender, religion, ethnicity, age and interest group. Attention needs to be paid to this diversity, and how to ensure their participation in activities and decision-making.



Case Studies

Bangladesh

Supporting indigenous practices with external funds



Bangladesh

In Bangladesh river-bed mud has been used to raise homesteads above annual flood levels. People are encouraged to plant trees around their homesteads to prevent erosion and secure the mud. This small-scale, structural mitigation measure has been used by the community to make their homesteads flood resistant for many years and is unique to the region.

The Asian Urban Disaster Mitigation Program (AUDMP) together with CARE Bangladesh have encouraged and supported the continued use of this flood mitigation measure in the municipalities of Tongi and Gaibandha. The project initiated the partnership of local organisations and the municipal disaster management committee. Participation of key stakeholders and community leaders, and members of the community was a vital component of developing a DRM plan. The community was engaged to determine their vulnerability with the use of PRA tools. This information was then used to develop a community DRM plan. Mitigation and preparedness activities were identified and implemented in the community. A public awareness campaign was used to inform people of simple household measures they can employ to prepare for annual flooding.



Demonstration homesteads were made flood resistant using the technique of house raising with financial assistance from the project and community contributions. The community also decided to use external funds to construct drains, raise the school and use it as an evacuation facility, and raise the roads leading to the school.

To date, this project has been replicated in an additional 4 municipalities around northern Bangladesh. Other organisations also promote and support the use of this indigenous technique in Bangladesh.

(Safer Cities 7 and 2)



Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka **Indigenous techniques revisited**

Sri Lanka not only experiences flood and landslide, but also drought. A prolonged drought has been affecting southern Sri Lanka for the past five years. Despite an indigenous tradition of rainwater harvesting and irrigation systems going back to the third century BC, decision-makers have overlooked the value of such technologies, until recently.

As a result, government and some non-government organizations have installed water-collection tanks free of charge for selected households. However, many villagers did not have a good understanding of how to work and maintain the tanks.

Realizing that the provision of water-collection tanks is not sufficient, the Intermediate Technology Development Group South Asia took a different approach by building up the capacity of local builders and users of the tanks, and creating systems so that villagers can manage their own rainwater harvesting schemes.

(IFRC, 2002:20) (ITDG - Mihir R. Bhat)



Philippines

Philippines **An active local government - Dumangas**

Situated in a flood prone area, the municipality of Dumangas has taken steps towards improving their disaster management by mobilizing their development fund for community level preparedness and mitigation activities. The current municipal mayor uses the development fund to support disaster management activities in selected sectors such as rehabilitation of roads and drainage systems to infrastructure sector appropriation, and medical missions from the health sector.

Dumangas Municipality also appropriates funds for disaster management from private sector donations, and government and non-government organizations such as the Philippines Red Cross.

The municipal mayor is also the MDCC Chair and issues the official warning to alert people of hazard onset so they can put preparedness planning into action. A total disaster management



systems approach has been put in place in Dumangas Municipality. In November 1998, Typhoon ‘Loling’ catalysed the establishment of a disaster response system. MDCC staff received disaster management training, volunteers were trained in search and rescue, agencies were delegated monitoring and response tasks, and a local NGO radio group was formed to monitor hazards and emergencies and provide communications links between authorities and the community.

The mayor decided to invest in developing an early warning system that is fed information from different sources.....This warning system in conjunction with a municipal level disaster management plan reduced the cost of relief efforts during subsequent hazard events.

Table 7.1
Municipal fund for disaster preparedness, mitigation and response

	2001	2002	2003
Calamity Fund	2,041,684 ↑	2,282,171 ↑	
Development Fund	3,320,000 ↑	3,361,684 ↑	6,383,856 ↑

The current Mayor admits that although a lot has been achieved, there is still room for improvement. As disaster risk is a continuous threat, management planning needs to build upon the experiences of previous disasters to refine the system.

(ADPC, 2003)

Thailand

Community based approaches and establishing CBO's.

The devastating flood in November 2001 initiated a multi-million baht special budget allocated by the National Thai Government to implement large- scale structural mitigation measures in the city of Had Yai, Songkhla Province. A by-pass channel to the east of the city and retarding ponds are some of the structures now in place.

Yet, these structures are not enough to keep the city of Had Yai safe. Through the Asian Urban Disaster Mitigation Program of



Thailand



ADPC, a proposal was put forth to develop community based planning. The aim was to target key community stakeholders in vulnerable municipalities to form committees to develop a disaster management plan.

Government officials and community leaders were targeted to participate in disaster management training. Locally based CBO's and NGO's were invited to participate in specified training in search and rescue, first aid and fire fighting. A multi-hazard approach was followed for training to combat more potential risks. A public awareness campaign was implemented and included an art and essay competition for school children, and a disaster day rally coinciding with International Disaster Day 2004.



To date, the community committees are holding regular meetings with volunteers and developing their own disaster management plan. The committee members feel a sense of responsibility to keep the people in their communities safe and have discussed many issues with local officials. Because they now have access to local government for assistance, they have been able to work together to improve their preparedness planning.

(TUDMP)



India

India

The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), an opportunity lost

The 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments in 1993 were a turning point for the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) or local government bodies. These amendments laid down guidelines for the structure of these self- government institutions, their composition, powers, functions, devolution of finances, and the importance of regular elections and reservation of seats for previously excluded members of society, including women. They have the potential to effectively reduce disaster risks.

PRIs took the lead in organizing rescue and relief operations in the first 48 hours after the Gujarat earthquake in January 2001. They organized community kitchens even before rations and relief supplies reached them from outside. They were the first to make arrangements for the cremation of the dead and attend to the injured. Where they were allowed to function, they proved a very



effective coordination agency, bringing together the efforts of government, NGO and external agencies and making sure that relief reached the most needy.

But in the aftermath of the earthquake, the panchayat was sidelined in the rehabilitation effort. Parallel organizations were established (some by state and central governments). Each village had different groups handling programs of different organizations. An opportunity was lost by not working with PRIs.

(Palakudiyil & Todd, 2003: 14)

Cambodia

Empowering communities to mitigate flood risk

Recognizing that providing relief to communities after a flood disaster is not sufficient, the Cambodian Red Cross (CRC) initiated a Community-Based Disaster Preparedness Program (CBDP) to strengthen communities' capacity to protect themselves from future floods.

Trained CRC staff and the expansive network of Red Cross Volunteers (RCVs) worked with communities in assessing risks, building capacity, mobilizing resources, and identifying and implementing risk reduction measures. The CBDP started in 1996 as a pilot project in 23 villages in collaboration with the Federation, ADPC and Pact Cambodia. After six years, the CBDP has impacted countless villages in seven flood-prone provinces. Valuable lessons were learned from implementing these projects.

Villagers of Boeng Psauth agreed to construct a new bridge as its flood mitigation priority. Seasonal flood had caused the previous wooden bridge to regularly fall into disrepair and become dangerous to traverse.

At a village meeting 75 per cent of those in attendance agreed to contribute financially and assist in the renovation of the existing wooden bridge. After PACT assisted the villagers in submitting a proposal to the NGO for funding support, floodwaters in 1999 washed away the remaining wooden frame of the bridge. A local ferry company agreed to replace the bridge with a new one, and as a result, the Community Based Disaster Management Committee (CBDMC) itself decided to build a cement bridge in another location.



Cambodia

The combination of inexperience in proposal presentation and a rush to submit the project proposal without thorough consultation with other community members resulted in the CBDMC's unrealistic cost estimates that were 23 per cent less than the actual. The fund shortage was eventually covered by the Cambodian Red Cross.

During project implementation, further complications arose. Firstly, the cost of transporting materials was not taken into account in the proposal. Secondly, the project started at the height of the harvest season. The busy schedule of the villagers during the harvest made it difficult to mobilize people. Thirdly, the lack of technical skills among the villagers in working with cement led to the added expense of hiring a skilled person.

(Sources: Apikul, 2002a; Apikul, 2002b)



Checklist: the role of NGOs



- Raise Awareness. Include an element of public awareness in every activity. Local demand for disaster risk reduction can be created by raising awareness.
- Act as facilitator and catalyst. Transfer ownership to the community as soon as possible. Ownership of an initiative captures interest and meets needs.
- Withdraw physical presence as soon as possible. Let the communities help themselves. Suggest ideas, resources and persons outside one's own organization to broaden outreach and increase possibilities.
- Facilitate community-based organization and government relationships.
- Set the scene for positive change but do not impose change.
- Provide technical assistance and support in community organizing and fund raising. Encourage and facilitate links, cooperation, multi-stakeholder partnerships and establishment of committees or centers to lead and coordinate disaster risk reduction activities.
- Involve all current and potential stakeholders in organized activities. In particular, involve key people to gain credibility.
- Take every opportunity to invite local authorities and respected individuals in the community. Raise their awareness. Their support and participation will ease resources mobilization.
- Involve the media. Always inform and involve the media for greater outreach beyond the community level.
- Work with existing social structures in the community.



Lessons Learned

- Communities consist of diverse groups representing various class, caste, gender, religion, economic activity and a host of other interest groups. Adequate attention needs to be paid to their diversity and questions such as who participates, in what areas of decision-making and to what extent become important.
- Capacities are required to deal with conflicting interests. Sometimes a local community may be dominated by a few leaders or by a domineering NGO.
- Poor timing of project implementation may result in a lack of commitment. It is important to ensure sensitivity to work patterns, religious rites and festivals in communities.
- When communities are contributing to the project, it may be necessary to provide some form of remuneration for the time away from their work and employment. Cash and food-for-work are common approaches.
- The community needs to be active participants in disaster risk management planning.
- Forging partnerships with NGOs, businesses and communities can be beneficial. They could contribute knowledge, skills and resources, pre-and post-disaster, in risk assessment, planning and implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- Sustainability is enhanced through the presence of organizational mechanisms (in the form of committee, assembly, cadre or team) to see the risk reduction process through.
- It has been proven useful to provide technical assistance in CBDRM tools and techniques to local government officials so they can begin with participatory practices.
- Communities are not victims awaiting assistance but are capable people who can reduce their own risks.
- Indigenous community coping mechanisms need to be harnessed and respected.



- By involving the communities in the entire disaster risk management process from risk assessment to planning to implementation, their needs as well as inherent resources are considered. Therefore, there is a greater likelihood that problems will be addressed with cost-effective and sustainable interventions.
- Local government bodies are often better placed to manage and implement response and recovery processes than state and central governments.
- Recognizing and building on existing social structures like the PRIs may be more effective than establishing new ones.
- Legislation for decentralization needs to be matched by the operational transfer of power, resources and skills.
- Local institutions alone cannot effectively reduce risk. It will take concerted efforts at different levels and across different sectors to improve our understanding of the linkages and to devise effective mechanisms for disaster risk reduction.
- Local institutions including local government agencies, NGOs, CBOs, the private sector and community representatives are stakeholders in the disaster risk reduction process.



Discussion Questions

- Is there a government department, community organization or other group in your community focusing on disaster risk management?
- Who is participating in that group?
- Should the group be expanded? If so, who should be added to provide a broader perspective of the issues that will need to be addressed in the disaster risk management plan?
- If no group exists, what actions do you think you could take to start one? Who would you enlist to help you out? What resources would you need?
- Are there opportunities to move ahead with local planning - local disasters? Disasters in another country?
- Are there elders in your community who could be interviewed to obtain information on past disasters?
- Are there myths or stories that may have roots in past disaster impacts?



Challenges

- The gradual shift from a top-down relief and response approach to a more inter-sectoral risk management approach has begun to influence the way disaster risk reduction programs are now being planned and implemented. Many high-level policymakers from the government sector and international agencies are recognizing the importance of the participation of local government, NGOs, CBOs and communities in development.
- The British Government's Department for International Development (DFID) developed a livelihood framework which views people as operating in a context of vulnerability. The Disaster Preparedness - European Community Humanitarian Office (DIPECHO) developed an Action Plan for South East Asia in 1999 which identified the need to provide an institutional arrangement in targeted countries for training of national,



provincial and local governmental and non-governmental institutions to enable them to incorporate community based disaster risk management in their programs.

- Despite policy initiative to decentralize and incorporate disaster risk reduction in development, this is not necessarily a guarantee of real commitment or demonstrated practical abilities on the ground. In many cases, the national government retains the authority for disaster risk reduction programs which continue to focus largely on relief and recovery after disasters in the absence of local participation.
- Moreover, during a disaster, local governments are immediately confronted with the responsibility of providing relief but often do not have the means nor adequate legislative authority to mobilize these resources. Local governments also have difficulty in accessing mitigation funds because funding and relief agencies typically work directly with the national government. These are some of the challenges that cannot be tackled at the local level alone but require concerted commitment and efforts from all levels.
- *“...weakness of decentralization is that it puts responsibility for implementation on those who can only address local level causes of vulnerability. Local government does not have the jurisdiction or political power to address the deeper political, social and economic forces that put people at risk. Under local government direction, disaster reduction can easily become fragmented into a series of small-scale initiatives, focusing on individual hazard events and artificially separated from the surrounding vulnerability context.” (Twigg, 2004: 69).* There needs to be a move toward integrating local bottom up initiatives with top down direction and support.
- Throughout Asia, there have been many successful community-based disaster risk reduction initiatives, largely managed and implemented by NGOs and CBOs. Here are some challenges:
 - How can the successful local-level initiatives be sustained after the project ends?
 - How can successful local-level initiatives be replicated so that their benefits are spread to other vulnerable groups?
 - How can successful local-level initiatives be scaled-up from a community-based initiative to a system (at district, municipal, provincial, national levels) large enough to protect all those living in areas of risk?



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