Inclusive Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction

Guidance on Good Practice in the Ayeyarwaddy Delta, Myanmar

Myanmar Consortium for Community Resilience (MCCR)

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Inclusive Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction; Guidance on Good Practice in the Ayeyarwaddy Delta, Myanmar

This publication presents guidance on good practice from the Ayeyarwaddy Delta in Myanmar, outlining the key factors which contributed to the successful implementation and outcome of a range of community-based Disaster Risk Reduction initiatives implemented by the Myanmar Consortium for Community Resilience (MCCR).

The content was developed over a period of two months between November-December 2015, involving a desk review of MCCR project documents including impact studies, monitoring reports and newsletters. Field visits were undertaken to the Ayeyarwaddy Delta to document the perspectives of key stakeholders at community level, including a total of 93 adults (men and women) and 57 children (girls and boys) from eight communities targeted under the DIPECHO IX project. In addition, consultations were undertaken with five government officials from the Departments of General Administration, Rural Development and Relief and Resettlement at Township level in Labutta, Pyapon and Nga Yoke Kaung.

DIPECHO IX field staff from Labutta, Pyapon and Nga Yoke Kaung, as well as Project and Consortium Management staff, also provided inputs on what worked well and why, what challenges were faced, and what they felt to be areas of good practice worth documenting and sharing.

Acknowledgements

MCCR and the Independent Consultant would like to thank all Consortium project staff members from Labutta, Nga Yoke Kaung and Pyapon Townships; government officials from the Departments of General Administration and Rural Development in Labutta Township and from the Departments of General Administration, Rural Development and Relief and Resettlement in Pyapon Township; and all community members from Nga Yoke Kaung, Labutta and Pyapon Townships for their time and participation in one to one interviews and focus group discussions without whose cooperation, input and support this publication would not have been possible.

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Foreword

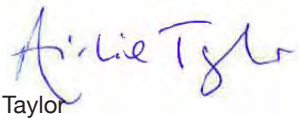
There can be no doubt that Myanmar has come a long way in building the resilience of vulnerable communities to disasters since 2008, when Cyclone Nargis swept across large parts of the Ayeyarwaddy Delta, killing 135,000 people and displacing nearly two and a half million. Thanks to the efforts of a range of actors, communities – particularly in the cyclone-prone Delta – are more aware of disasters and more able to prepare for, prevent and mitigate their negative impacts.

However, given Myanmar's high vulnerability to a range of natural hazards, including those exacerbated by the impacts of climate change, it is clear that there is a long way to go before all "at-risk" communities can be said to have the necessary knowledge, skills, capacities, linkages and resources to be able to adapt to, absorb the impacts of, and bounce back from, disasters – ie. to be resilient.

Actors such as the Myanmar Consortium for Community Resilience (MCCR) - led by ActionAid, with ACF, HelpAge, Oxfam, Plan and UN-Habitat in collaboration with one national and two local partner organizations and three technical partners[1] - have contributed significantly to disaster preparedness and resilience-building efforts over recent years. Leveraging the combined strengths of its members, the Consortium has achieved considerable success in helping communities understand how and why they are vulnerable to disasters and raising awareness of the roles that different stakeholders play in addressing disaster risk.

This publication identifies a number of good practices that have been employed by the Consortium. It is hoped that the documentation of these examples and their sharing through this publication will assist other DRR actors in Myanmar - including the government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, international and national NGOs, civil society organisations and communities themselves - to apply some of these successful practices to their own community-level DRR programmes.

I would like to acknowledge the significant efforts of all those who contributed to the development of this publication, particularly the Consortium members and partner organisations. I also extend my sincere thanks to the community members and other stakeholders who not only provided their perspectives for this report but who have worked tirelessly over recent months and years, together with the Consortium, to bring about positive change.



Airlie Taylor

Consortium Manager, MCCR
On behalf of the members of the Myanmar Consortium for Community Resilience

Acronyms

DIPECHO	Disaster Preparedness European Commision Humanitarian Aid Department
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ICBDRR	Inclusive Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction
MCCR	Myanmar Consortium for Community Resilience
RRD	Relief and Rehabilitation Department
SDMC	School Disaster Management Committee
SHG	Self Help Group
VDMC	Village Disaster Management Committee

Introduction

Myanmar is exposed to a range of natural hazards, including cyclones, floods, earthquakes, storm surges, landslides and droughts[2]. The Global Climate Risk Index 2015 cites the country as being - together with Honduras and Haiti – one of the nations hardest hit by natural hazards in the last two decades and where more disaster events are likely to occur in the near future[3].

Myanmar's vulnerability to hazards is compounded by socio-economic factors including widespread poverty, poor infrastructure and civil conflict. The combination of hazard vulnerability and low capacity makes Myanmar the "most at-risk country" in Asia-Pacific according to the InfoRM model.

By far the most devastating natural disaster in Myanmar's history, cyclone Nargis tore through the Delta region in May 2008, affecting 2.4 million people and claiming the lives of 135,000[4]. The disaster acted as a wake-up call, galvanising the government and other actors into taking measures to prevent, mitigate and prepare for disasters. Since then, a number of steps have been taken towards addressing the country's exposure to natural hazards.

Myanmar endorsed the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA)[5] in 2005 and its successor, the Sendai Framework for DRR 2015-2030, in 2015. The country is also a signatory to the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER)[6], 2009, the first legally-binding HFA-related instrument in the world.

In 2009, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement (MSWRR) published the Myanmar Action Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction 2009-2015 (MAPDRR)[7], outlining 65 projects intended 'to make Myanmar Safer and more Resilient against Natural Hazards, thus Protecting Lives, Livelihood and Developmental Gains'. The Action Plan is currently in the process of being revised to align with the commitments of the Sendai Framework. The Natural Disaster Management Law was adopted in July 2013, with the accompanying Disaster Management Rules endorsed in July 2015.

Despite these steps, significant challenges remain in ensuring communities are resilient to disasters. The Views from the Frontline (VFL) 2013[8] survey process, designed to ascertain local level perceptions of progress on the HFA, highlighted limited awareness of and training on disasters and disaster risk of government, communities and civil society organizations as a major barrier.

Additional impediments included limited resources (financial, human, material) for disaster risk reduction, weak infrastructure (mainly transportation and communication systems), insufficient resources for information dissemination, weak coordination among civil society organizations and between civil society organzations and govern-

ment, and limited trust and conflicting interests of key stakeholders.

A number of these challenges were brought into sharp focus during 2015, when floods and landslides swept across large parts of the country, critically affecting up to 1.6m people and causing estimated economic losses and damage of USD 1.51bn.[9]

To go some way to helping to address some of these challenges, multiple actors in Myanmar – including the government, UN, international and national NGOs, the Myanmar Red Cross Society and civil society organisations – have been working to scale up community-based DRR and resilience initiatives.

The Myanmar Consortium for Community Resilience (MCCR) is one such actor. With funding from the European Commission, the Consortium has been working to strengthen community and institutional-level disaster preparedness since 2012[10].

The most recent project (DIPECHO IX), implemented between May 2014-December 2015, aimed to increase the resilience of coastal and urban communities by institutionalising an inclusive community-based DRR approach. To this end, the Consortium supported DRR initiatives in 94 communities and 26 schools across five Townships in the Ayeyarwaddy Delta (Pathein, Nga Pu Daw, Labutta and Pyapon) and Rakhine State (Sittwe).

This publication aims to provide guidance on good practice relating to inclusive community-based disaster risk reduction, drawing on MCCR's experience under the most recent project as well as under previous projects. It seeks to showcase selected examples of how some of these good practices have been employed in the context of the Ayeyarwaddy Delta, and how they have been successful in strengthening the resilience of the most vulnerable.

The recommendations and examples are based on an analysis of project documentation and inputs on what worked well and why, some of the challenges faced and good practice recommendations from over 180 community members, government officials and project staff consulted.

They are categorized into four key sections:

Section A: Enhancing awareness, knowledge and understanding

Section B: Promoting and facilitating inclusion in decision-making and other processes

Section C: Promoting collaboration and cooperation among and between stakeholders

Section D: Ensuring sustainability of project outcomes

It is hoped that this publication will inspire other DRR practitioners working on DRR and resilience building initiatives in Myanmar to adapt and apply these practices to their own community-level disaster risk reduction programmes.

Section A: Enhancing Awareness, Knowledge and Understanding

Awareness, knowledge and understanding of disasters and how to reduce risks posed to communities is essential to reducing vulnerability and increasing community resilience. As such, enhancing awareness, knowledge and understanding is a critical component of any inclusive community-based disaster risk reduction programme.

Enhancing awareness, knowledge and understanding can be done through a range of activities and initiatives. These include, but are not limited to, trainings and workshops; awareness-raising sessions; simulation exercises; through assessments and subsequent planning processes; through plays and other performances; through posters, leaflets and other information education and communications materials; showing or making videos; and/or through TV and/or radio programmes.

> *Practical activities are better. Pamphlets wouldn't be useful for someone who can't read or see.... You can't explain how to tie a knot in a pamphlet- it is better to learn by doing*
>
> Male VDMC member, Yae Saing Village, Pyapon

Good practice recommendations for enhancing awareness, knowledge and understanding of disasters and disaster management include:

- Invest time and resources in ensuring that all project staff understand disasters and how to reduce risks posed to communities, and how disaster management links to sustainable development
- If not already done as part of the project planning process, conduct a stakeholder mapping/survey - to include government stakeholders - to understand the awareness-raising needs of different groups of people. This will help ensure that key people or groups are not inadvertently excluded
- Undertake a mapping exercise to identify key people or groups of people best placed to disseminate information within the community
- Conduct a mapping exercise on the existing community mechanisms and systems for communicating with each other, for obtaining and disseminating information and for sharing knowledge, to help determine the most appropriate channels and formats for reaching different groups of people. Utilize and strengthen these community mechanisms and systems wherever possible, rather than developing additional

mechanisms which may duplicate or undermine long-established and useful processes

- Discuss and agree with the community what the most suitable time of day (or year) would be to conduct awareness-raising activities, to ensure activities do not conflict with livelihood and other community commitments. Additionally, for cost-efficiency purposes and to encourage greater participation, seek to combine initiatives with other planned community events as appropriate, such as cultural/religious festivals
- Keep disaster-related messages and guidance simple and easy to understand and avoid using jargon and complex terminology that may cause confusion
- Apply, wherever possible, fun, practical, 'learn by doing' approaches that better allow theory to be translated into practice and for concepts and messages to be more readily applied to the context
- Apply participatory approaches that facilitate two-way communication and that encourage discussion amongst participants during and after activities for further learning and knowledge-sharing
- Avoid proposing approaches, methodologies or systems that go beyond what can be replicated or maintained at the community level without external financial or other support
- Make necessary provision for those who cannot read, write, see and/or hear and those who have intellectual and/or physical impairments, to ensure equitable access to information

> ***The Edutainment programme is about combining knowledge with fun!***
>
> Male VDMC member, Kaing Thaung Village, Laputta

1. Examples of good practice

The Consortium supported a number of initiatives that were designed to enhance awareness, knowledge and understanding of disasters and disaster management with varying degrees of success. These included:

- **The "Edutainment" Programme** which sought to bring together the whole community to raise awareness of disaster risks and preparedness actions
- **Simulation Exercises** at village (and in one case, Township) level, aimed at providing an opportunity to apply knowledge and skills gained from DRR trainings
- **Targeted trainings on Inclusive Community-Based DRR** (ICBDRR) for members of the Village Disaster Management Committees (VDMCs - including the Village Leader and Volunteers/Fellows/Mobilizers) and School Disaster Management Committees (SDMCs comprising school children and teachers), women's Self-Help Groups and selected government officials
- **Distribution of leaflets and posters** adapted to the needs and capacities of different groups including children and older people, and orientations on the same at community meetings, trainings and workshops
- **Interactive activities** such as quizzes, drawing and song competitions held to mark International Day for Disaster Reduction every October

1.1 Good Practices in Action
The "Edutainment" Programme

The **"Edutainment" Programme** is an innovative programme combining education and entertainment, which seeks to disseminate disaster-related information and guidance on disaster preparedness actions to community members through the medium of traditional theatre.

Once the community identifies people who would like to take part, they are trained as actors and playwrights with the goal of simplifying and communicating, through drama performance, messages about hazards, vulnerabilities, capacities and ways to reduce risk.

> *We wouldn't have been able to attend the "Edutainment" program if it had been during the day. More people can attend with it being in the evening*
>
> Female VDMC member, Kaing Thaung Village, Laputta

Prior to delivering the final performance at community level the actors conduct rehearsals over a period of 1-2 months to ensure the narrative and messaging is understandable and engaging. Under the DIPECHO IX project the "Edutainment" Programme was rolled out across 32 communities in Labutta and Pyapon.

> *Because it is a perforance, it is easier to understand. For those people who wouldn't be able to read a leaflet, the Edutainment programme is good*
>
> Male VDMC member, Kaing Thaung Village, Labutta

The Programme was repeatedly highlighted during the consultation process as an effective way of enhancing awareness, knowledge and understanding for a number of reasons. Good practices that the programme employed included:

- It was **practical and participatory** - making it more fun, memorable and engaging, and appealing to a range of audiences
- **Messages were clear and easy to understand and accessible** to a range of different groups **including those who cannot see or read**
- **Messages were contextualized**, allowing community members to relate the messages to their own situation and inspiring them to take action to address the points raised
- Community members consulted indicated that it would be **possible and relatively simple to replicate** the programme on their own, stating that in order to reduce costs they would combine performances with religious or school activities
- Rehearsals and final performances of the "Edutainment" programme were conducted in the evening, thereby **not conflicting with livelihoods or other commitments of the community**. Across commu-

nities consulted, this was a major success factor of the programme.

- It was felt that the **involvement of young people** in the programme meant parents were more eager to attend

Additionally, the knowledge and skills learned through drama helped some community members to **overcome their lack of confidence and/or shyness** – something that had previously been a barrier to their active participation and engagement.

> *Practical activities like the simulation exercises and Edutainment are much better because they are less theoretical*
>
> Male government official (RRD), Pyapon

1.2 Good Practices in Action
Simulation Exercises

Simulation exercises are practical exercises which bring together different stakeholders – including community members, government officials, civil society and community-based organisations, Myanmar Red Cross Society staff and volunteers, the Fire Brigade and other actors – to run through a disaster scenario as if unfolding in real-time. Under the DI-PECHO IX project simulation exercises were conducted across 78 communities in the Delta, with an additional exercise being undertaken at Township level in Labutta.

The simulation exercises were highlighted as effective and suitable ways of raising awareness of disasters and strengthening knowledge and skills for timely and effective disaster response, primarily because:

- The **practical and participatory** nature of the simulation exercises made them more fun, memorable and engaging, and meant the participants had an **'action' and 'real-life' experience'**

> ***In the simulation exercise, I had to pretend I had lost my husband. It felt really real and I felt genuinely sad. It helped bring to life the reality of possible disasters***
>
> Female VDMC and SHG member, Thit Yaung Village, Nga Yoke Kaung

- Basing the simulation exercise on a hazard – such as a storm or cyclone – **identified by community members during their community risk assessment** helped make the situation more realistic and relevant
- The **multi-stakeholder approach** – bringing together different actors involved in disaster response – strengthened understanding of who is responsible for doing what when a disaster strikes

1.3 Good Practices in Action
Targeted Trainings for School Children

A number of good practices were employed in the targeted training and support provided to school children and teachers through the school-based DRR component of the project. Aside from being **practical and participatory** and therefore **enjoyable and easier to digest** for both the children and teachers - particularly the creative drawing exercises used to increase awareness of disasters and disaster management - the initiative used and sought to strengthen an existing community mechanism – the school - for information dissemination and knowledge-sharing. By training and mobilising children and teachers as "DRR champions", knowledge extends out to the rest of the community organically.

> ***It is great that the children are also trained so we can work together on extending our knowledge to our community***
>
> Female Teacher, Yae Kyaw Village, Nga Yoke Kaung

> ***After attending first aid training, I felt confident to help someone in my village who got sand in their eyes by washing it with water***
>
> Young Female First Aid Taskforce Member, Yae Kyaw Village, Nga Yoke Kaung

Section B: Promoting and facilitating inclusion in decision-making and other processes

Inclusion means equal rights of all, irrespective of race, disability or impairment, colour, sex, language, religion, land ownership, political or other opinion, national, ethnic, indigenous or social origin, occupation, place of birth, age, or any other status or characteristic.

The term inclusion also refers to a process through which we work to create and maintain an environment that actively promotes and allows for the full and meaningful participation, involvement and engagement of all in the decisions and processes that affect people's lives; that values differences and diversity; that upholds fundamental human rights; that empowers, draws out strengths and capacities and builds confidence; and that proactively identifies and addresses key barriers to inclusion with the ultimate goal of achieving fair, equitable and sustainable outcomes for all.

> *It is really important that we realise that each community is different. In my community, women are quite advanced. They are in lots of leadership positions. But in another village, it may be very different*
>
> Male Volunteer, Nga Yoke Kaung

To this end, inclusive community-based disaster risk reduction should work towards ensuring that:

- Everyone in the community understands and acknowledges the importance of inclusion
- Everyone in the community is empowered, has the confidence, the right knowledge and skills, and the opportunity, to participate in identifying risks and solutions to reduce these risks
- The fundamental rights of all are understood and respected
- The diversity of views and opinions, characteristics, strengths and vulnerabilities that make up a community are understood, respected and utilized
- Power relations, stigma, self-stigma and other possible barriers that keep excluded people out are understood and addressed
- Good practice recommendations relating to promoting and facilitating inclusion in decision-making and other processes include:

> *I am really happy to have the chance to learn about disasters and how I can help my community*
>
> Young Female School Disaster Management Committee Member, Kanmantar Village, Pyapon

- Invest time and resources in ensuring all project staff understand and acknowledge the importance of inclusion, particularly the value of participation and collaboration from different groups of people
- Focus on the strengths and capacities of different groups to avoid conveying the message that certain groups of people need to be "included" only because they are "vulnerable". This can inadvertently disempower the respective group by reinforcing negative perceptions which may result in stigma or self-stigma and subsequent discrimination
- Develop a solid understanding of who is or may potentially be excluded within the community, based on a thorough analysis of the prevailing power dynamics. This will likely go beyond children, persons with disabilities, women and older people and extend to other individuals or groups, such as those who may not live and/or work in the centre of the village (for example, people who work in the paddy fields, fishermen, people working in the forest outside the village or migrants)
- Ensure project staff have a clear understanding of the range of possible barriers to inclusion and are trained to avoid making assumptions about what is prohibiting or limiting the inclusion of different groups of people
- Seek to address these barriers through a multi-pronged and tailored approach for different situations and for different individuals or groups or people. Strategies to address barriers to inclusion should be appropriate, target the right people (not just the excluded or potentially excluded individual/group in question but also people in positions of authority – such as Village Leaders – who can influence community-level power dynamics), be flexible and adaptable, and should apply "do no harm" principles to reduce the risk that tensions/conflicts may arise from the rights-based empowerment process
- Draw on and leverage the knowledge and technical expertise of key stakeholders with proven experience in working with and promoting inclusion of different groups of people. It is likely that differing levels of technical support will be needed to strengthen inclusion of different groups, particularly, but not exclusively, persons with disabilities
- Collaborate and coordinate with other organizations, where relevant and possible, for the provision of services and equipment that may help promote inclusion – for example affordable assistive devices such as wheelchairs or hearing aids

> ***I didn't realise my strengths. Now, I want to learn more!***
>
> Female SHG member, Thit Yaung Village, Nga Yoke Kaung

> ***Children are fast. They can distribute messages very efficiently in the community. They remember what to do!***
>
> Male VDMC member, Yae Kyaw Village, Nga Yoke Kaung

2. Examples of good practice

The Consortium promoted an inclusive approach in a number of different ways. These included through the strategic design of the Consortium itself and through

- **Sensitization workshops** on the importance of inclusion, targeted at the whole community
- **Targeted trainings on women's leadership and empowerment**
- **Targeted trainings on Inclusive Community Based DRR** - with components related to older people, persons with disabilities, women and children
- **Targeted trainings aimed at empowering school children and teachers**
- **Development of guidelines on the gender and age balance of community DRR structures** such as Village Disaster Management Committees and Task Forces

2.1 Good Practices in Action
Consortium design

The **design of the Consortium** itself provided a **very effective platform to leverage knowledge and technical expertise and support in applying inclusive approaches**. In recognition of both the disproportional impact of disasters on women, children, persons with disabilities and the elderly, and of the ability of these groups to make valuable contributions to DRR work, the Consortium employed a unique structure bringing together "Implementing Partners" and "Technical Partners".

In the Ayeyarwaddy Delta, ActionAid and HelpAge (plus their respective local partners Action for Social Aid and Young Women's Christian Association) acted as the main "implementers" whilst Technical Partners Oxfam and Plan provided specialist support from an inclusion perspective on **gender/women's leadership**, and **child-centred/school-based DRR respectively**. In addition, HelpAge provided technical input on the inclusion of **older people in DRR** whilst national partner Social Policy and Poverty Research Group worked to support **inclusion of persons with disabilities**.

Embedding "Technical Partner" project staff from Oxfam and Plan in the field offices of "Implementing Partners" allowed for in-depth support on the inclusion of women and children – an approach whose success was evident in the level of participation and engagement of these groups in project activities.

It also had the added benefit of **building a collective identity and fostering a sense of unity and camaraderie** amongst staff from different consortium organisations.

2.2 Good Practices in Action
Promoting women's leadership

The Consortium undertook a range of activities aimed promoting women's leadership in DRR and emergency response. These included awareness-raising sessions on how women's strengths and capacities can be utilised to benefit the whole community, as well as capacity-building trainings aimed at providing women with the skills and confidence to lead disaster preparedness efforts.

Training on women's leadership actively sought to engage men as well as women, to build common understanding of the value of women's leadership in the community. This is an important step towards the meaningful inclusion of women

One older male, a VDMC member in Boke Pin Seik village in Nga Yoke Kaung, explained that he really didn't believe in the need to empower women and to encourage them to participate in the community. However, after attending a training which **focused on the key strengths of women**, he began to change his opinion. When the women formed a group and contributed proactively in the village, **he really began to see and appreciate how effective women could be** in encouraging others to become engage in community activities. This example really illustrates the importance of focussing on strengths of different groups, while highlighting the need to work with men and women together to create the space for women to be able to lead.

> ***The women's leadership and empowerment training helped me to understand the importance of women's participation in community affairs. Before I thought they should stay at home with the children and cook. I now realise that I should respect and encourage my wife to do other things more***
>
> Male Volunteer, Nga Yoke Kaung

> ***I found my voice!***
>
> Female SHG member, Thit Yaung Village, Nga Yoke Kaung

2.3 Good Practices in Action
Championing the capabilities of children

The Consortium sought to strengthen inclusion of children and promote them as active **"agents of change" for DRR**. This was done through direct engagement of children and young people in schools and communities, as well as by working with adults – including school teachers, Parent-Teacher Associations and community leaders – to recognise the value children can bring to DRR efforts and indeed wider community development initiatives.

Awareness-raising sessions and capacity building trainings **focusing on the strengths and capacities of children** – as opposed to exclusively their vulnerabilities – helped build support among adults for stronger engagement of children in DRR activities.

Ensuring both school and community-based DRR structures (Disaster Management Committees and Task Forces) included children and young people gave them **an opportunity to demonstrate and prove their capabilities**. This in turn helped **foster a sense of children as a trust-worthy and reliable source of information** relating to disaster risk and disaster preparedness.

> *Thanks to the training and support we received, we now understand that it is important to involve children and ask them what problems or risks they face in our community like falling into the ditch because the road isn't good*
>
> Male VDMC member, Kanmantar Village, Pyapon

> *I was so proud that I could tell people about the cyclone warning I heard on the radio*
>
> Young Male School Disaster Management Committee Member, Yae Kyaw Village, Nga Yoke Kaung

2.4 Good Practices in Action

Valuing the contributions of older people and persons with disabilities

The components in the Inclusive Community-Based DRR (ICBDRRR) training (one of the core trainings delivered to community members at the start of the project) on older people and persons with disabilities were highlighted as useful in helping get **a better understanding of the value of these groups**, which should be recognized - similarly to the examples relating to women and children - as an important step towards their meaningful inclusion. For example, one male Volunteer said that before participating in the training he thought persons with disabilities were not capable of being involved in or contributing to disaster preparedness activities but he now realises they have considerable strengths that should be utilized.

> *I realised after the training that persons with disabilities can do things. I also realised that I might one day have a disability so I want to treat them [persons with disabilities] well*
>
> Male Volunteer, Nga Yoke Kaung

> *Older people can give ideas and suggestions to younger people*
>
> Female Task Force Member, Pyapon

Section C: Fostering collaboration and cooperation amongst and between key stakeholders

No one person or group of people can enhance the resilience of communities and address the multiple factors that contribute to or compound risks faced by communities by working alone.

Productive collaboration and cooperation amongst and between key governmental and non-governmental stakeholders is, therefore, a key component of any successful inclusive community-based disaster risk reduction programme and the sustainability of its outcomes.

Good practice recommendations for fostering collaboration amongst and between key governmental and non-governmental stakeholders include:

- Apply and actively promote a collaborative approach that promotes cooperation and coordination that goes beyond information-sharing towards a more strategic and mutually beneficial way of working together; and ensure all project staff understand the importance of collaboration and cooperation among and between key stakeholders
- Engage communities in a discussion on their rights, as well as on the roles and responsibilities of duty-bearers in relation to reducing disaster risks
- Conduct a mapping of existing community groups or committees, which may include development committees, youth groups, community-based organizations, self-help groups, etc. in order to build on these rather than create new or parallel structures
- Where community structures are not already in place, support the formation of dedicated groups, such as Task Forces and committees, that can work together towards common goals and objectives and with clear and agreed roles and responsibilities in relation to reducing disaster risk
- Conduct a mapping of government stakeholder groups at Township level, to include the Departments of General Administration and Rural Development at a minimum (and others such as the Department for Relief and Resettlement, where present) , to identify who is responsible

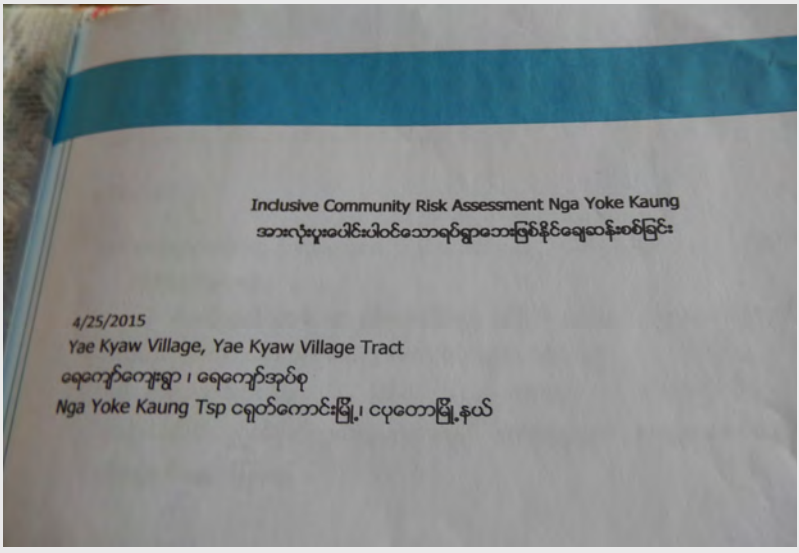
for what and to map the different funding mechanisms under the government architecture which could be leveraged to support DRR and resilience-building activities

- Identify and leverage opportunities for key governmental and non-governmental stakeholders to be brought together and find ways to work together towards common goals and objectives, to learn from each other, build trust and mutual understanding and strengthen relationships
- Utilize evidence-based outputs (ie analysis and plans) of risk assessments and subsequent planning processes to inform advocacy efforts. These outputs demonstrate that the community has done a comprehensive analysis of their needs, and present an important tool for the government in making decisions and prioritizing support to communities
- Keep the number of plans per community to a minimum to avoid possible duplication or overlap and subsequent confusion, and embed disaster management into any existing community development plans
- Embed disaster management into existing community development frameworks rather than creating stand-alone frameworks relating exclusively to disasters. This can reinforce the misperception that DRR and development are not linked, causing unnecessary confusion and leading to inefficient use of resources
- Encourage the community to assess what they can contribute to DRR-related initiatives or projects, including financial, material, technical and human resources, to foster two-way accountability and increase ownership
- Avoid funding DRR-related initiatives (for example, small-scale mitigation measures) that may be supported (or eligible for support) by the government under existing funding mechanisms. This can prohibit collaboration and cooperation and inadvertently contribute to the disempowerment of both parties

3. Examples of good practice

The Consortium contributed to promoting collaboration and cooperation amongst and between stakeholders in a number of ways. These included **bringing people together** and **facilitating dialogue** through:

- **Coordination meetings** at township level between communities and government officials, particularly in relation to specific events such as International Day for Disaster Reduction
- **Formation of complementary DRR structures at community and school levels** - namely Village/School Disaster Management Committees and accompanying Task Forces for early warning, first aid, and search and rescue
- **Simulation exercises**
- **The "Edutainment" Programme**
- **Generation of evidence-based outputs from participatory assessments and planning processes**



3.1 Good Practices in Action
Bringing people together

Numerous activities implemented by the project presented opportunities for a diverse mix of people **to come together towards common goals and objectives**; to share and develop knowledge; to exchange information; and **to work together** to enhance the resilience of the community. Government officials interviewed stated their appreciation at being involved in the simulation exercises and, where applicable, in the participatory assessment and planning processes.

The Consortium also sought to capitalise on DRR-related events such as International Day for Disaster Reduction, celebrated every October, as opportunities to facilitate interaction between communities and government stakeholders in pursuit of a common cause.

The Consortium also **conducted joint simulation exercises** involving both School and Village Disaster Management Committees and Task Forces, helping to clarify roles and responsibilities and identify areas for closer collaboration.

3.2 Good Practices in Action

Utilising evidence-based outputs from participatory assessments and planning processes

The outputs of participatory assessment and planning processes supported in full or in part under the DIPECHO IX project (for example, DRR action plans and the Village Book[11]) served as important tools in facilitating dialogue and collaboration between communities and the government. This is because these outputs demonstrate to the government that the community has **undertaken a comprehensive analysis** of their needs, providing robust evidence on which to base decisions regarding the allocation of resources for DRR and wider community development activities.

One successful example, shared during consultations with both the General Administration Department and the community itself, was in Zin Baung Village in Pyapon. Following the inclusive community risk assessment process, the community were supported to formulate a DRR action plan. When it came to selecting which disaster mitigation measures to implement, the community prioritized the repair of the road between their village and the next one and agreed collectively that they could contribute a sum of one million kyats towards its construction. In order to leverage additional resources, the community **submitted their plan to the General Administration Department**, who subsequently agreed to match the community contribution to the tune of one million kyats, with the Consortium contributing the remainder. This example shows how the outputs of community risk assessment and planning processes can serve as effective **advocacy tools** to lobby for support from duty-bearers.

Section D: Ensuring sustainability of project outcomes

What happens after a community-based disaster risk reduction project ends is the ultimate determinant of its success.

When a project ends the ideal situation is that all stakeholders continue to play their respective roles in enhancing the resilience of communities. This includes continuing to implement strategies and measures to ensure:

- Awareness, knowledge and understanding of disasters and how to reduce disaster risk continues to be enhanced
- Analyses of risks, vulnerabilities, capacities and strengths within the community and subsequent plans to reduce risk are kept up to date and relevant
- Barriers to inclusion in decision-making and other processes are understood and continually addressed
- Collaboration and cooperation amongst and between stakeholders continues to be fostered
- Appropriate resources are allocated to reduce disaster risk and build community resilience

For this to happen, there needs to be interest and willingness from all parties, coupled with the availability of necessary technical and financial resources and capacity.

Identifying and applying appropriate approaches and strategies, including through the development of an exit plan to outline how project-based outcomes will be maintained once a project ends is therefore an essential component of any community-based DRR programme.

Good practice recommendations for enhancing the sustainability of project outcomes include:

- Allocate a realistic timeframe to achieve sustainable outcomes of an inclusive community-based disaster risk reduction programme. This will vary from community to community, depending on the level of risk amongst other factors, but is likely to be a minimum of two to three years
- Allocate sufficient human resources during the project cycle to provide follow-up support on training and capacity-building initiatives, to ensure learning

is embedded within the community

- Identify people from within the community to lead/facilitate DRR activities. Apart from knowing the community better than an outsider, people from within the community are more likely to be accepted as a mobilizer; are physically present in communities so can provide sustained support over time (including after the project ends); and are more likely to have a vested interest in the success of initiatives that attempt to enhance resilience of their community
- Develop the exit strategy at the beginning of the project and adjust as necessary throughout the project duration. The exit strategy should be designed and agreed together with key stakeholders within the community and if possible, with relevant government and other stakeholders (eg. at Village Tract and Township level). This will assist in the identification of:
    - o People in the community who should be targeted for training and other capacity building support to lead on initiatives post-project
    - o Any necessary additional capacity-building support that Volunteers/community members might require - such as training on leadership, negotiation skills, resource mobilisation or financial management – in order to support continuation of DRR work post-project
    - o The level of financial resources required to sustain key DRR activities post-project
    - o Existing processes and structures to link community-level DRR work to, including ongoing disaster management planning processes at different levels (eg. Village Tract and Township) as well as wider village and Township development processes
    - o Roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders for maintaining the gains made under the project
    - o Material assets such as computers, mobile phones, or video cameras that could be transferred to the community post-project to support continued work on DRR initiatives

> ***I will pass on all my knowledge as much as I can and will maintain this disaster management group as long as I live***
>
> Male Volunteer, Nga Yoke Kaung

- Share the agreed exit plan with the community, Village Tract and Township level authorities including any agreement relating to the transfer of financial and/or material assets to ensure clarity and foster two-way accountability
- Support the community to develop a financial resource mobilization plan outlining potential funding sources from within the community (such as community-based organisations, existing Self-Help Groups, etc) as well as from external sources (including the private sector)
- Avoid proposing approaches, methodologies or systems at any stage of the project that go beyond what can be replicated or maintained in the long-term by the community members themselves without external financial or other support

4.1 Good Practices in Action
Embedding DRR over time

The Consortium has been working together since 2012, and prior to that operated as a smaller two-member consortium. The communities targeted under the first project in Labutta were also targeted under the two subsequent projects, meaning they have been implementing DRR initiatives for a total of five years to date. This **sustained engagement** has been instrumental in embedding a "culture of safety" and building strong ownership of DRR-related work.

4.2 Good Practices in Action
Mobilizing from within

The Consortium approach of **mobilizing from within the community** also enhanced the potential for successful maintenance of project outcomes. Volunteers or "Fellows"[12] are identified from within their community, either through an application process or by being nominated by Village Leaders or other community members. They receive support and training on Inclusive Community Based DRR, including on conducting inclusive community risk assessments and undertaking DRR action planning; how to promote the inclusion of different groups; monitoring and evaluation; leadership and organizational and financial management. They work with the community to establish community DRR structures (Village Disaster Management Committees and Task Forces) and provide key trainings to these community members as well as government officials.

The Consortium implemented various initiatives to support Volunteers/Fellows and their communities to generate the necessary financial resources to sustain DRR initiatives in the future.

For example, in Labutta, 15 "Fellows" came together and signed an agreement to work together in a co-operative. Seven of them plan to engage in crab farming. Those who don't have the option of crab farming identified alternative livelihood sources - home gardening; grocery store; hairdressers; solar power installation; planting betel leaves, etc. The group agreed that a percentage of the profits from their livelihoods will go towards a salary for them, a percentage towards disaster management and poverty alleviation activities in their community, and a percentage into a reserve fund.

> ***If there is a change in Village Leader I can help in making sure the knowledge is transferred to the new one. I can also strengthen links between all groups in the community***
>
> Male Volunteer, Thit Yaung Village, Nga Yoke Kaung

In Nga Yoke Kaung, a Volunteer has worked with the Village Disaster Management Committee to set up a revolving fund, which will help cover some of the costs of DRR-related activities and will eventually also provide him with a stipend. Volunteers have come together in Pyapon to set up a common fund to continue DRR activities in their communities.

Conclusion

The good practice recommendations documented in this publication outline a number of key considerations that need to be taken into account when designing and implementing inclusive community- based DRR programmes.

In particular, the recommendations highlight the critical importance of allocating sufficient human, technical and financial resources, as well as adequate time, to really embed DRR-related work and foster a “culture of safety”.

They also point to the need to ensure DRR practitioners are fully equipped with the right attitude, knowledge, skills and understanding of DRR and broader community development processes in order to support communities to strengthen their own resilience to disasters.

Finally, the recommendations and accompanying examples demonstrate a clear preference for interactive, practical and participatory methodologies to achieve outcomes, as opposed to theory-based, classroom learning approaches.

Whilst some of these considerations may seem logical, experience shows that they can easily be overlooked when applying standard, non-contextualised methodologies or in the rush to complete the full community-based DRR project cycle within tight donor-led timeframes.

Perhaps the most important point to emphasise is the vital importance of getting to know the communities with which we are working. Only by doing so can we really ensure that DRR initiatives are appropriate to the context, inclusive of diverse risks and actors, and sufficiently collaborative and sustainable to achieve our common goal: disaster-resilient communities.

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10. Note between 2010-2011 a two-member consortium comprising ActionAid and Malteser supported community-based DRR initiatives in the Delta and Rakhine, on which the subsequent MCCR projects built
11. The Village Book is an ActionAid-developed bottom-up community development planning process which engages communities in assessing and analysing their current needs, agreeing on solutions and priorities, and formulating concrete action plans
12. Community mobilisers embedded within a community (usually their home community) and trained on right-based approaches to development, who facilitate bottom-up participatory planning to analyse and address key issues identified by the community itself

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