

MANUAL ON  
COMMUNITY BASED DIASTER RISK  
MANAGEMENT (CBDRM) TO STRENGTHEN  
COMMUNITY RESILIENCE IN MYANMAR  
(CONDENSED)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Note: Expanded version of the manual is currently under review and will be available shortly.

### **Scope of this manual**

This Manual is primarily intended for Local Government, Community Based Organizations and Civil Society Organizations (CSO) supporting or implementing Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) program.

## Background

Disasters have a tremendous impact on lives and livelihoods of individuals, communities and their overall development. In the past (as well as on some occasions), disasters big or small were considered as a one-off event or act of god hence unavoidable and it was primarily addressed from a humanitarian perspective, however over the recent decade's it is acknowledged that disasters are considered as cause and product of failed development. Evidence suggest that disaster risk is intimately connected to processes of human development as hazards are part of the environment, vulnerability to natural hazards stems from past development patterns. According to UNDP, Disasters put development at risk, at the same time, the development choices made by individuals, communities and nations can generate new disaster risk. Studies suggest that “vulnerability to disaster risks is growing faster than our ability to increase resilience”.

Communities in Myanmar are exposed to range of natural hazards and also have high degree of vulnerability. Climate change and extreme events pose significant threat to development outcomes. With recent extreme events such as Cyclone Nargis (2008) and torrential rains and its associated floods and landslides (2015) there is increasing concern on managing current as well as future disaster risks posed by extreme events and climate change in Myanmar.

Over the past, there has been a call for paradigm shift from managing disasters to managing disaster risk. While Government plays an important role in the process, there is greater acknowledgement of the role of communities as the traditional top down approach often fail to address the specific vulnerabilities and demands of at risk groups in the communities. When a disaster strikes, community are at the forefront as first responders and also of dealing with it until external support reaches. However, it is now acknowledged that their role is not limited to first responders but key stakeholder in managing risk and building long term resilience to disasters and climate change related risks. Based on the experiences and learning, the Disaster Risk Management approach in particular with the adaption of Sendai Framework for Action calls for proactive approach of managing disaster risk at all levels building on the experiences of managing disasters.

## CBDRM in Myanmar:

The concept of engaging communities through Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) is now a well-established process to proactively engage communities to mitigate and respond to disasters. In Myanmar, CBDRM approach was introduced in 2003, and gained prominence after Cyclone Nargis, 2008 as part of the post disaster recovery process and now it is being considered as an important approach to build resilience to disasters, at the same time has been continuously evolving to address specific issues<sup>2</sup> on how to manage disaster risks at local level. However, the integration of CBDRM with various other program /

<sup>2</sup> Inclusion, conflict sensitive approach, rapid to slow onset disasters etc.

activities has been limited and remains as a stand-alone intervention in Myanmar.

## Challenges and Opportunities:

Below table lists some of the key challenges faced during the implementation of CBDRM in Myanmar over the past years and recent developments in legal, policy and institutional aspects and specific programs / actions undertaken by the government and its partners.

Context and challenges	Recent developments and opportunities
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. CBDRM in Myanmar evolved from in the context of post disaster recovery after Cyclone Nargis in Delta.</li> <li>2. CBDRM has primarily focused on sudden onset events primarily in the coastal regions. CBDRM has proven to be an effective mechanism for small scale extensive events</li> <li>3. While the local government and township officials participate in CDBRM process, due to absence of policies, CBDRM efforts often lead to stand alone intervention. Hence does not integrate with broader disaster management systems and development planning interventions, hence the vulnerability and risk drivers are not adequately addressed.</li> <li>4. The institutional arrangement for Disaster Risk Management does not take into account of Village Disaster Management Committees (VDMCs) established under CBDRM process, hence there is a disconnect between the formal institutional structures (Township and Village Tract).</li> <li>5. Lack of climate and risk information to support and guide the CBDRM process at local level.</li> <li>6. CBDRM results in identifying priority risk reduction activities and its implementation through development of community action</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ongoing reform and decentralization process (initiated in 2011) provides an opportunity to promote broader disaster risk governance with participation of communities, CSOs, private sector, media etc.</li> <li>2. The Disaster Management Law (2013) and the Ward or Village Tract Administration Law (2012) provides the necessary entry points for strengthening CBDRM.</li> <li>3. The Community Disaster Resilience Framework (CDRF) developed by National Disaster Management Committee with the support from the Asian Development Bank and the DRR WG promotes the integration of CBDRM efforts into broader sectoral development planning process to address the underlying risk factors and to promote community resilience.</li> <li>4. Disaster Management Fund established at National and State Regional level to support Disaster Risk Reduction activities.</li> <li>5. With support from Development Partners and the DRR WG members, CBDRM programs are now being piloted and scaled up in various parts of Myanmar (Rakhine, Mon, Kayin, Mandalay and Chin) and widely accepted to promote disaster</li> </ol>

<p>plan. Due to lack of resources as part of CBDRM process underlying risk driver's / vulnerability issues are often not adequately addressed. Moreover, the issues identified are of relevance to support under development efforts.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. In adequate infrastructure for disseminating weather, climate and early warning information at local level, impeding establishment of an effective end-to-end early warning systems.</li> <li>8. Specific needs of vulnerable groups are not adequately addressed and there are barriers to their participation.</li> </ol>	<p>risk management and also to support long term risks posed by climate change.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. Decentralized planning process at Township Development Plan and also the pilot program on development of Village Development Plans provides opportunity to address underlying risk factors and specific vulnerabilities through development process.</li> <li>7. Substantive improvement and progress made in hazard monitoring, forecasting of different time scales and the dissemination of information through Monsoon Forum at National and Sub-National level, Mobile Apps etc. and availability of information such as Township Climate Profile, CC scenario etc.</li> <li>8. Development of National Awareness Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (NAS DRR) to bring coherence to promote</li> <li>9. Establishment of Disaster Risk Reduction Youth Volunteers (DRR YV) and the pilot program to strengthening the network.</li> <li>10. Wider acceptance of CBDRM as an essential interface between DRR and CCA at local level.</li> <li>11. Establishment of the National Disaster Management Training Center and the new courses such as Basic Disaster Management Course, CBDRM, Early Warning Systems and DRR and CCA targeting all stakeholders.</li> </ol>
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Above development in DRM and broader development landscape over the recent years are potentially opportunities for integration to strengthen CBDRM in Myanmar.

## Why revisiting CBDRM manual:

UNDP initiated CBDRM initiatives as part of Cyclone Nargis recovery programme in 2008 and the manual developed then has been widely adapted by several agencies and further improved for the CBDRM work in Myanmar. The process of engaging communities through CBDRM approach is now a well-established and accepted process in Myanmar. UNDP Myanmar, with funding from Adaptation Fund is currently implementing a Climate Change Adaptation project - “Addressing Climate Change Risks on Water Resources and Food Security in the Dry Zone of Myanmar”. The project also support strengthening disaster risk management of 70 communities in 5 townships. There have been challenges for sustaining and strengthening CBDRM initiatives along with changes in DRM and broader development systems in Myanmar since the reform process initiated in 2011. To support the implementation of the project as well as for wider use, UNDP is revisiting the CBDRM manual to improvise it to take into account of lessons learnt and opportunities to promote, institutionalize, strengthen and sustain CBDRM efforts in Myanmar to build long term resilience.

## What’s new:

The manual build on the existing CBDRM process by introducing three key elements while taking into consideration of opportunities listed above while also incorporating specific aspects in the CBDRM process. The manual does not promote one model or approach or activities because interventions at local level need to take into account of local contexts and purpose. However, building synergies and integration between the top down and bottom up process is essential to promote, institutionalize, strengthen and sustain CBDRM efforts as shown in Figure 1 and further discussed below. Detailed step by step process will be available in the expanded version of the manual.

- a. Risk information, communication and education.
- b. Promote and strengthen disaster risk governance
- c. Reduce underlying risk factors through local development / disaster management planning



Figure 1 : Framework for proposed CBDRM approach

Note: The dotted circle “Reduce underlying risk factors through local development / disaster planning” is still evolving in Myanmar.

**CBDRM Process:** The process of undertaking CBDRM through six steps as shown in Figure 2 is now well established in Myanmar. Adequate emphasis is made to address inclusiveness, conflict sensitive approach and use of long term trends as part of the CBDRM process.



Figure 2 : Six sequential steps in Community Based Disaster Risk Management

- a. **Inclusiveness:** While CBDRM aims to address the needs of the vulnerable groups (children, boys, girls, women, elderly and disabled, women headed households, minority groups, vulnerable livelihood groups, etc.), experience from implementation of CBDRM in Myanmar over the past years highlight<sup>3</sup> the need for explicit approach to identify and address the needs of the vulnerable groups as their specific needs tends to be overlooked. Based on the experiences from the CBDRM implementation, inclusive approach is essential to encourage their participation thus minimize vulnerabilities of the groups and build their capacity and to manage disaster risk.
- b. **Conflict sensitive:** CBDRM approach aims to mobilize community collective action to address disaster risk, however power relations and dynamics at community level can exacerbate conflict and disaster risk particularly in the context of Myanmar which has diverse ethnic groups. Experience from implementation of various community level projects in Myanmar calls for



conflict sensitive approach. CBDRM approach if well designed can provide an entry point to minimize social tensions and conflict through interventions.

**c. Use of long term trends:**

CBDRM approach identifies hazards and prioritizes disaster risk based on the past disaster events and community experiences, however community understanding on dynamic and longer term risk are often limited. In order to manage longer term risks posed by climate variability, change and extreme events, there is a need to complement the assessment with scientific, evidence based information during the assessment process. Climate analysis and trends and downscaled climate information are now available at local level<sup>4</sup> and it will be a useful source of information to guide the participatory disaster risk assessment process while that community is able to improve their risk knowledge and are able to identify appropriate options with a no regrets approach.

### **1. Risk information, communication and education**

Traditional risk management approach perceives risk leading to a negative outcome that needs to be mitigated or managed by reducing vulnerabilities and increasing capacities, but risk can be positive and considered an opportunity so instead of mitigating or avoiding, communities can also exploit or benefit in particular climate associated risks. Climate information including climate analysis and trends along with the forecast information/outlook can guide communities to address the gaps in knowledge and better prepared to manage risks as well as take measures to exploit for beneficial purpose. This approach is one of the important of climate risk management approach<sup>5</sup>.

Climate Risk Management (CRM) is defined as a systematic and coordinated process in which climate information is used to reduce the risks associated with climate variability and change, and to take advantage of opportunities, in order to improve the resilience of social, economic and environmental systems (WMO)

In this context, risk information for CBDRM will be dynamic in nature by making available weather and climate forecast of different timescales. Furthermore, communicating the information to the end users plays an important aspect as the information are technical in nature and risk communication process along with education will be an important aspect to strengthen CBDRM efforts.

#### **Possible alignment with ongoing program/ activities to strengthen CBDRM:**

- Implementation of National Awareness Strategy for DRR (NAS DRR) developed by Relief and Resettlement Department with the support from UNDP along with the DRR WG can provides coherence to activities and sustaining the interventions

4 AF Project is supporting the development of Climate Profile along with trends at Township level

5 <http://www.wmo.int/pages/prog/wcp/ccl/opace/opace4/ClimateRiskManagement.php>

at local level.

- UNDP as part of the project is working with Department of Meteorology (DMH) and Regional Integrated Multi-Hazards Early Warning Systems (RIMES) to developing township level climate profile, risk maps, customized climate information and outlook for the communities and also building local capacities.

By integrating the risk information and communication and education into CBDRM process will also support strengthening community capacities to deal with climate variability, extreme events and long term risks associated with climate change.

## 2. Promote and strengthen disaster risk governance

Over the years, DRM approach has significantly changed the legal, policy and institutional frameworks at national and local level as the focus has moved from managing disasters to managing disaster risk. Governance is considered as a key unresolved issue in both the configuration and the reduction of disaster risk as disaster risk and its manifestation are a development issue. Disaster risk governance (DRG) includes principles of ‘good’ governance - i.e. participation, accountability, transparency, equity and effectiveness - that are necessary to achieving inclusive and sustainable DRR outcomes. Sendai Framework for Action emphasis the need for whole of government and all of society approach.

Disaster risk governance (DRG) is defined as “the way in which public authorities, civil servants, media, private sector, and civil society at community, national and regional levels cooperate in order to manage and reduce disaster and climate related risks. This means ensuring that sufficient levels of capacity and resources are made available to prevent, prepare for, manage and recover from disasters. It also entails mechanisms, institutions and processes for citizens to articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights and obligations, and mediate their differences” (UNDP, 2013).

In Myanmar, CBDRM has been primarily focused on mobilizing community to prepare and respond to extensive risk events, however due to absence of formal linkages with DRM structures and programs and its effectiveness is not well documented for addressing underlying risk factors and also for large scale disaster thus being a barrier for effective disaster risk management and broader risk governance.

### **Possible alignment with ongoing activities to strengthen CBDRM:**

Recent developments in legal, institutional, policy, resources and partnerships provides an opportunity to promote broader risk governance structure in Myanmar as well as deal with large scale, extensive risk events.

- Disaster management law approved in 2013 along with Village Tract

Administrator Law (2012) provides a legal and institutional framework for disaster risk management efforts.

- Decentralization and establishment of local governance structures and planning process at Township Level and village level provides the institutional arrangement for broader risk governance.
- Disaster Management Fund at National and State level along with the Local Development Fund at Township level can provide access to resources for implementing risk reduction activities.
- The Disaster Risk Reduction Youth Volunteers Program (DRRYV) to promote DRR activities at community level can provide effective linkage for CBDRM at local level.
- Disaster Management Training Center with support of Myanmar Consortium for Capacity Development for Disaster Management (MCCDDM) has developed basic and specialized courses including BDMC and CBDRM.
- Collaborative efforts of the Government, ADB and the DRR WG to develop Community Disaster Resilience Framework provides an effective framework and partnership to integrate various sectoral development interventions with CBDRM efforts.

### **3. Reduce underlying risk factors through local development / disaster management planning**

Vulnerability to disaster risk is intrinsically linked to broader development process. Depending on the context, range of underlying risk drivers such as vulnerable and subsistence rural livelihoods, declining ecosystems, poor governance, unplanned urbanization, inadequate and weak infrastructure contribute to the translation of poverty and every day risk into disaster risk, in a context of broader economic and political processes. Studies have found that vulnerability to disaster risks is growing faster than our ability to increase resilience, reason is that underlying risk drivers are either not well identified or understood and DRR measures fail short to address those issues as they stem from range of development issues, many of which lie outside of the traditional responsibility of disaster managers and risk specialists and not addressed due to lack of resources and capacity constraints. Climate Change is also identified as one of the driver of disaster risk.

CBDRM process through participatory process identifies the vulnerability factors and the drivers of risk at community level. Through the action planning process risk reduction activities are prioritized and supported within the scope of the project. However, many of the risk factors are not addressed as they fall outside the scope of the project. Hence it is important to identify the risk factors as well as the root causes to be addressed through various local development and disaster management planning process.

**Possible alignment with ongoing activities to strengthen CBDRM:**

Since 2011, the Government has initiated the decentralized system with multi-year planning process which includes

1. Establishment of decentralized planning process at sub-national level and development of Township Development Plan under the coordination of Township Development Committee.
2. Community Driven Development Project providing improved access to and use of basic infrastructure and services through a people-centered approach.
3. Piloting of Village Development Plans to have comprehensive perspective of their current development situation at village level and the developing strategies to fully their development potential.
4. Establishment of National and State Disaster Management Fund to support DRR measures at various levels.

**Useful References:**

- Myanmar Community Based Disaster Risk Management Manual, UNDP and ADPC, 2008
- Inclusive Framework and Toolkit for Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction in Myanmar, Myanmar Consortium for Capacity Development, 2016
- Myanmar National Framework for Community Disaster Resilience, National Natural Disaster Management Committee, Myanmar, 2017
- Project Document “Addressing Climate Change Risks on Water Resources and Food Security in the Dry Zone of Myanmar.