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Strengthening the Human Resource Base at Township Level: Ensuring More Effective Implementation of Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction Initiatives

Summary

Capacity building is one of the key components of disaster risk reduction interventions of Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS), enabling the national society to nurture capable human resources at all levels. The strengthening of risk reduction abilities, particularly at the township branch, is of utmost importance given the fact that the township branch is responsible for the implementation of a range of activities under each of the five disaster risk reduction programs that are currently undertaken by MRCS¹. Under the five on-going risk

¹ MRCS disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities are predominantly undertaken under five specific programs:

1. Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) Program;
2. School-Based Disaster Risk Reduction (SBDRR) Program;
3. Urban Disaster Risk Reduction (UDRR) Program;
4. Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction (CBDRR) Program and;
5. Disaster Risk Reduction Capacity Building and Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction Coastal Area Program (DRR Program).

The CBDRM program is being implemented in different state/regions since 2008 funded by IFRC. In the next year (2013) the CBDRM program is funded by Singapore Red Cross. The UDRR program is funded by the Norwegian Red Cross Society as is the CBDRR program in Rakhine, Yangon, Mandalay and Shan East. Both programs are currently planned for a 2 year period (2013-2014). The CBDRR program in Ayeyarwady region is funded by Hong Kong Red Cross Society for 2 years (2013-2015). The DRR program is funded by FRC/CRC and is implemented over a 5 year period.

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reduction initiatives of MRCS, capacity building of Red Cross Executive Committee (RCEC) and Red Cross Volunteers (RCVs) is carried out using a number of common as well as program specific approaches that incorporates traditional training delivery, dissemination of relevant guidelines/manuals and learning-by-doing as well as the execution of specialized township reinforcement activities.

Introduction

Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS), one of the largest organizations working on disaster management in the country, is the pioneer of community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM) in Myanmar, implementing related programs since 2003. MRCS' biggest advantage is its countrywide presence right down to the village level; a network that consists of close to 100,000 members and over 200,000 Youth Red Cross Volunteers (RCVs). To equip its personnel and volunteers with indispensable disaster preparedness, mitigation, relief, recovery and risk reduction skills, MRCS devotes large amount of resources, both financial and human, in designing and delivering relevant capacity building activities.

MRCS has to constantly face the turn-over of its experienced volunteers and staff that create a vacuum for skilled personnel and the continuous need to train the newcomers. On top, with the extension of in-country CBDRM initiatives as MRCS' core activity under the Disaster Management Division, the

demand for strengthening the capacity is more pronounced than ever. Especially considered crucial is improving the ability of responsible personnel at the sub-national level, particularly at the township level. This view is in tune with MRCS' goal of becoming a decentralized organization with more autonomy at branch level². Furthermore, MRCS activities largely have been based around the structure of a

² See 2011-2015 Strategy - <http://myanmarredcrosssociety.org/publications/Strategy%202015%20%28English%293.pdf>



Successful participants of a MRCS training

Table 1 Roles and Responsibilities of Tsp/Branch EC

Position	Government Official/Red Cross Staff	Responsibility
Chairman	Township Medical Officer	Health component, blood donation
Vice Chairman 1	Township Police Officer	Disaster management
Vice Chairman 2	Township Education Officer	School Red Cross, Junior Red Cross
Treasurer	Township Audit Officer	Financial statement and auditing
Secretary	Township Health Staff	Blood donation, blood donor recruitment, celebrations (WRDC, WFAD)
Associated Secretary	2IC	RC dissemination, disaster risk reduction + management, health care, first aid, branch + youth + volunteer development and management, school + junior RC, IG/FR, blood donor recruitment, RC ceremony
Member	Township Fire Brigade Officer	Disaster management and rehabilitation
Member	Deputy Officer from General Administration Department	Disaster management, volunteer recruitment, dissemination
Member	Community Member	Income generation, fund raising
Member	Community Member	Income generation, fund raising

Township Branch and it is, therefore, imperative for them to possess essential skills and competence in the management of CBDRR/CBDRM activities.

Disaster Risk Reduction Capacity Building at Township Level

MRCS Structure at Township Level

MRCS is represented in all States and Divisions down to Township level³ and, same as in State/Division/District Branch, MRCS Township Branch⁴ is represented by 10 members Red Cross Executive Committee (RCEC) the composition of which is given in Table 1.

To support CBDRR interventions on the ground, mainly under the umbrella of the wider MRCS disaster management system, there is, next to the Township Executive Committee, a committee of 10 RCVs who are responsible for disaster risk reduction and disaster management activities. These 10 RCVs are always in place, even though there is no specific CBDRR intervention implemented by MRCS in that specific township. The nine RCVs together with a focal DRR RCV

3 The Headquarter of MRCS is located in Na Pyi Daw.

4 There are altogether 330 township branches in Myanmar, which is one in every township.

are responsible for community mobilization, conducting vulnerability and capacity assessment (VCA), and the coordination and monitoring of activities and reporting. Most of the MRCS activities are performed by the Red Cross Volunteers which can be divided in four categories:

- Brigade members: partake in the “uniformed activities”;
- School members (teachers and students): approximately 25% of the total with their activities centered on community health education & dissemination, and basic first aid training;
- Life members: general adult volunteers; and
- Youth Red Cross

Both the RCEC as well as the DRR/DM Team exists in every single township branch as it is required under the new Branch Development Model. However, next to the Branch

Figure 1 Roles and Responsibilities of the MRCS Township Executive Committee with regard to CBDRR Initiatives

- Identify the most vulnerable communities in the township (based on VCA results)
- Take regular visit to the target communities
- Keep track of the activities and the movement of financial resources to report to HQ
- Represent MRCS at the coordination meetings
- Conduct awareness generation, social mobilization activities at township level
- Mobilize the trained manpower

Figure 2 DRM/DRR Structure

CBDRM program	SBDRR program	UDRR program	CBDRM program	DRR program
CBDRM Facilitator Team (6)	SBDRR Facilitator Team (2 teachers from each school + 3 RCVs + TEO)	Urban Risk Reduction Committee (6)	CBDRR Supervisory Committee	Focal RCVs for TBCB (7) CBDRR (21) SBDRR(7)
CBDRM Multiplier Team (30 per village)	SBDRM Multiplier Team (22 people per school)	Ward Risk Reduction Committee (15)	Township DMC	Village Disaster Management Committee (6)
		School Disaster Safety Team (7)	Community Safety and Resilience Committee (CSRC)	School Disaster Management Committee (6)

Table 2 Capacity Building Approaches of Different DRR Initiatives**Program****CBDRM Program**

- Community members to have disaster management knowledge & skills and to reduce disaster risks.
- To improve disaster awareness among community members.
- To empower community members to participate in disaster risk reduction activities and regional development.

Geographical coverage: Ayeyarwaddy, Bago (East), Kayin, Kachin, Magway, Mon, Rakhine, Shan (East), Sagaing, Mandalay, Yangon and Tanintharyi regions.

SBDRR Program

- Improve the resilience of identified vulnerable school children in Myanmar by increasing school participation in risk reduction activities.

Geographical coverage: Ayeyarwaddy, Bago East, Magway and Shan (East) regions.

UDRR Program

- High level awareness on hazards and risks factors in urban area including health issues
- Better community level preparedness in urban area
- Established Early Warning System
- Effective social mobilization mechanism
- Established coordination and collaboration with local authority and other stakeholders

Geographical coverage: Mandalay, Shan (east) and Yangon regions.

CBDRR Program

- To increase community safety and resilience and reduce vulnerability to disaster at household/school/ and community level through community mobilization and an integrated risk reduction.

Geographical coverage: Ayeyarwady region and Rakhine state.

DRR Program

- The capacity of Myanmar Red Cross Society, communities, key government bodies and other stakeholders is increased in order to improve community based disaster risk reduction activities in townships at high risk areas of the coastal states/divisions
- The capacity (knowledge, awareness and organization) of targeted at-risk communities to better cope with natural hazards is improved
- Preparedness of targeted schools in at-risk areas (in 6 coastal states / divisions) is strengthened through planning, knowledge and awareness mechanisms
- MRCS contribution to the DRR advocacy in Myanmar is increase through participation in DRR coordination mechanisms, widespread information and communication events related to DRR

Geographical coverage: Ayeyarwady, Bago (West), Rakhine and Yangon regions.



Human Resource Commitment	Capacity Building Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HQ staffs: respective DP/DR Unit and staff from other divisions depending on the subject matters RCVs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard and customized courses Distribution of guidelines and manuals Learning-by-doing Drills and simulation exercises
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HQ staffs: respective DP/DR Unit and staff from other divisions depending on the subject matters RCVs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard and customized courses Distribution of guidelines and manuals Learning-by-doing Drills and simulation exercises
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HQ staffs: HoD, Deputy HoD, Program Coordinator, PMER Coordinator, DM Delegate Field staff: Field Officer, Community Mobilizer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic equipment and furniture for office Skill development training, PMER, financial management & gender sensitization VCA Exercise DRR Field Session
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HQ staffs: HoD (overall coordination); Deputy HoD (coordination); Program Coordinator (management), DM Delegate (technical input) field staff: Field Officer (implementation), Community Mobilizer (one in each village), Livelihood Technician & Watsan Technician (in MRCS CBDRR program) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Basic equipment and furniture for office Skill development training, PMER, financial management & gender sensitization VCA Exercise DRR Field Session
<p>Specific to township/ local branch capacity building:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One Township Branch Capacity Building (TBCB) Officer at HQ Two Township Branch Capacity Building (TBCB) Training Officers: RCVs based at township level <p>Specific to delivery of trainings (RCVs based at township level):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two Disaster Risk Assessment (DRA) Training Officers Four Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP) Training Officers Two Education Training Officers Two Mitigation Training Officers <p><i>Note: They are supported by relevant divisional staffs from MRCS HQ depending on the subject matters.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard and customized trainings Distribution of guidelines and manuals Learning-by-doing Drills and simulation exercises Township reinforcement activities (TRA) Income Generation Activities



Development Model requirements, several additional DM groups are formed on township level under each of the DRR programs that MRCS is implementing. Figure 2 gives an overview of the different teams and committees that are formed on different levels under the different DRR programs.

Capacity Building Efforts of On-going Programs

As mentioned before, MRCS disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities are predominantly undertaken under five specific program and programs:

1. Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) Program;
2. School-Based Disaster Risk Reduction (SBDRR) Program;
3. Urban Disaster Risk Reduction (UDRR) Program;
4. Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction (CBDRR) Program and;
5. Disaster Risk Reduction Capacity Building and Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction Coastal Area Program (DRR Program).

All five programs are implemented by the DM Division of MRCS. While the SBDRR, UDRR, CBDRR and DRR program have been formulated after 2008 Nargis event, the MRCS CBDRM program has been implemented since 2003 in different townships throughout the country. All programs implemented under MRCS management are required to follow the Branch Development Model developed by the Organizational Development Division of MRCS. In all programs, the overall capacities of the targeted township RC branches have been evaluated through the Township Branch Assessments, applying the same tool used for Branch Development Model. The assessment intends to identify the needs and gaps in terms of existing and required human, material, financial and technical (CBDRR, First Aid and SBDRR) resources and capacities. The outcomes of the assessments present the fundamental data for formulation of suitable capacity building tools and approaches.

However, when it comes to actual capacity building activities, a slightly different approach is used in each of the programs. Table 2 sums up the different approaches being employed by the risk reduction programs of MRCS.

Capacity Building through Standard and Customized Course

Generally, all the RCVs have to undergo a rigorous training program that begins with a **Basic First Aid** course⁵, which teaches the fundamentals of first response treatment, followed by **Standard First Aid** after a certain amount of experience gain in the field. A few more years of field experience and RCVs are qualified to take the **First Aid Instructor Course**, which allows successful trainees to become certified First Aid trainers themselves. This intensive yet rewarding training scheme ensures the highly capable and knowledgeable volunteer base. The compulsory first aid training has great value in disaster response and relief phase since it allows the RCVs as the first responders to provide crucial life-saving skills in a time of need. Under SBDRR program, first aid trainings are conducted for teachers, students and education officers at the selected schools.



Practical exercise during a Basic First Aid Training

Besides the First Aid training courses, all five programs further adapted certain MRCS standard courses to reflect specific target area hazard profile and the capacity building needs of the target recipients. The basic CBDRM course, for one, was modified to a Training of Trainers (ToT) for the CBDRM Committee members (six RCVs) at the township level who in

⁵ Within the first six months of joining MRCS.

Table 3 Capacity Building Trainings under DRR Initiatives

<i>CBDRM Program</i>	<i>SBDRR Program</i>	<i>UDRR/CBDRR Program</i>	<i>DRR Program</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● CBDRM Facilitator Training ● CBDRM Multiplier Training ● BFA Training ● CBFA ToT ● VCA Training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● SBDRM Facilitator Training ● SBDRR Multiplier Training response) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● PMER ● financial management ● gender sensitization ● Skill Development Training (ERT, livelihood, disaster response) ● Skill Development to ERT members (FA, PHAST, PhiE, PSS, Water Safety, Watsan) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● IGA training ● CBFA ToT ● BFA Training ● Admin and Finance Training ● Computer and Office Work Training ● Baseline Survey Training ● VCA Training ● CBFA Multiplier Training ● Recruiter Training ● Communication & Facilitation Training ● VDMC Role & Responsibility Training ● Disaster Awareness Training

turn contributed their newly acquired knowledge and skills, in training CBDRM-Multipliers Team⁶ at the village level. The CBDRM Committee also receives customized and exclusive training orienting them on the Committee's roles and responsibilities. The township level senior brigade members from DRR program areas (9 townships altogether) likewise received a tailored 'Branch Leadership Management Training Course' in November 2012 at MRCS Naypyitaw headquarters office to improve their leadership and advocacy skills. The issues included in the course range from basic DRR concepts, MRCS policies and plans, communication tools, branch development model, team building techniques, youth program development, volunteer security guideline and policy, advocacy and leadership skills, report writing and camp management.

In addition, specific courses are conducted under the DRR initiatives focusing on specific skills or knowledge that is necessary for the program implementation: Table 3 illustrates educational activities that have been organized for the RCVs.

6 Since CBDRM-Multipliers Team holds the principal responsibility in implementing the risk reduction plan, their CBDRM training encompass such areas as preparedness and response, community mobilization, household and village preparedness, DRR planning, awareness raising and organizational management and development.

Capacity Building through Distribution of Guidelines and Manuals

The Disaster Response training delivery undertaken in CBDRM program and DRR program is accompanied by the translation, printing and circulation of Sphere Handbook to ensure compliance to internationally accepted humanitarian response practices and standards. Primarily under DRR program, one more guideline was circulated to township branches: the financial management guidelines as companion to the financial management trainings. Furthermore, there is a draft of resource mobilization guidelines to enhance the fund raising and income generating activities of the branches. It is expected that through the use of resource mobilization guidelines, new sources of funds would be identified and pursued at the grass-root level including fostering partnerships with private sector. Furthermore, MRCS is planning to have camp management guidelines and volunteer security guidelines.

Capacity Building through Learning-by-Doing

It is imperative to note that township level field teams and RCVs are the ones in charge of the implementation of activities at different levels (township branch, schools and communities) under the control and support of the program field teams on a daily basis. They are selected according to their interests towards the program components and provided with appropriate trainings on the different processes and tools and expected goals for common understanding. Over and above the trainings and other capacity building opportunities, their



MRCS Brigade Members attend training

continuous involvement in the implementation process allows them to enhance their skills and knowledge through “learning by doing” approach. In this way their works are not confined to only one area but are engaged in an array of topics and subjects ranging from disaster preparedness and response to more management oriented initiatives of reporting and communication, thus improving their scope of learning simultaneously and immensely. Moreover, through field activities, RCVs are applying the theoretical learned mechanisms in practical ways.

For instance, RCVs participation in township branch assessments⁷, alongside RCEC members, local authorities

⁷ Mainly developed and adopted by DRR Program Unit in 2011, the Branch Capacity Assessment tool has been employed in the selected program implementation townships to identify the capacities of the branch and to define an action plan to reinforce these capacities. It is also envisaged that the tool may be used as a template format by the MRCS Organization Development Division to assess all the MRCS branches’ capacities in the country in the future.

and field team members, enable them to try-out and apply the knowledge gained from TBAT trainings and further extend their assessment know-how plus they have a chance to critically look at their own capacity and provide invaluable inputs and feedbacks. Equally beneficial is their partaking in the DRR planning process at the township and community levels which further advance planning, community organizing and analytical skills. So too their emergency response activities undertaken in the face of crisis such as Magway Floods in May 2012 permit them to enrich their hands-on experience in response and relief operations.

Capacity Building through Drills and Simulation Exercises

Drills and table top simulations are part of the CBDRM and DRR programs. The values of these activities are especially significant in the fact that they grant visualization of the destructive potential of hazardous events and can help stimulate the concerned actors to take pro-active actions.

Capacity Building through Township Reinforcement Activities (TRA) of DRR Program

Based on the recommendation of the midterm review of the DRR Program that was held in October-November 2011, a decision was made to implement the Township Reinforcement Activities (TRAs) in the initial townships focusing on township capacity building in managerial, financial, human resources, volunteerism, coordination and linkage development. The TRA was commenced in 2012 in three townships of Ayeyarwaddy region followed by Yangon. The overall processes of the Township Reinforcement Activities have been categorized into 2 phases and 15 steps. These phases and steps were decided based on the availability of time and budget and the intensity of the initial Township Branch Capacity Building (TBCB) activities.

TRA also gives focus to augmenting the technical and administrative skills of RCVs in support of better managed branch offices and overall program implementation. Up to present, significant measures taken include:

- **Provision of Financial Management** training to facilitate an easier and systematic transfer of funds from headquarters to the field, thus assisting towards the speedier implementation of activities.
- **Organizing Office Work and Logistic Procedure training** with DRR Unit training Officer and MRCS Logistics Officer participating as key resource persons. To further guarantee smooth functioning of township offices, office supplies and equipment are also handed over to newly established work places some of which are also supported in the construction of their own new office buildings.
- **Conducting Computer training:** 10-day training concentrating on improving the RCVs' ability to use the computer for office work and for preparation and submission of reports and documents to HQ.

Objectives of TRA

- Assess the managerial, technical, financial and human resources capacity of townships to ensure the sustainability of Township Branch DRR activities (Township, school and community levels.)
- Provide technical and financial support to implement selected/recommended activities in order to strengthen the capacity of Township Branch so as to make them able to contribute to achieving safety and resilient communities.
- Provide technical and financial support to build capacities of MRCS Regional RC to sustain its activities/plans and enable to support Township/community/school activities.



Practical exercise during a Basic First Aid Training

Enabling Factors

Basically, the capacity building initiatives of MRCS at the township level produce significantly positive results due to:

- **Existing far-reaching networks of RCVs:** MRCS has a nation-wide coverage of RCVs in all townships in all states and divisions. This existing mechanism makes it possible for the risk reduction programs to have an extensive outreach within a short time.
- **MRCS' experience:** The substantial experience of MRCS garnered over years of humanitarian and DRR interventions create a base of core competent staffs who are also motivated to pass on and share their expertise with others.
- **Availability of training materials:** The availability of relevant training materials not just within MRCS but also from other (national and international) agencies greatly eliminate the period required for designing subject specific courses.
- **Strong level of coordination with authorities:** The high awareness of the township authorities on MRCS roles make it easier to earn their support and coordination

as well as official permission to conduct training courses and other supplementary activities.

Challenges Faced

In spite of noteworthy accomplishments with regards to capacity building efforts, the implementation team under each program still encounters daunting mutual challenges throughout the way. Firstly, the high drop-out rate of RCVs and MRCS staff requires constant lookout for replacements and continuous capacity building need for new volunteers and staff. The root cause of difficulty in maintaining the interest and services of trained staffs at township level is especially excessive with youth volunteers as they migrate to other townships and cities to explore livelihood opportunities. Secondly, as has been pointed out in the practice case study, even though there are some standard trainings that will be received by every RCV in each township, most of the provided trainings depend on the DRR program that is being implemented in that specific township. The capacities of RCVs vary therefore considerably across the different townships. Furthermore, the content of the training may varies according to the program under which the trainings/manuals are provided which complicate the work for RCVs as well as staff when working/volunteering under different DRR initiatives. Thirdly, since the communication facilities are still minimal in many of the target township branch offices, there is insufficient interaction between the HQ staffs, partner representatives (mainly based in Yangon) and field personnel.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

- For capacity building initiatives to succeed, it is critical to identify existing capacities of target beneficiaries and to design appropriate activities. Hitherto, township branch capacity assessments were undertaken only in limited number of townships.
- The volunteer management systems and practices should be strengthened in recognition of the importance of volunteers in carrying out nearly all of the MRCS's activities and of the new skills needed to implement the community-based approaches under different programs. A better volunteer management system would also allow MRCS to find out which RCVs have already participated in a certain training and could therefore be relied on for certain tasks.
- The maximum support from the partners can be assured through better-organized and improved communication between Naw Pyi Taw HQ, partners' Yangon offices and the implementation team in the field.
- The disaster response and preparedness training previously provided to volunteers and vulnerable communities as part of the society's long-standing annual programming initiatives prove to be useful and effective in saving lives and mitigating the impact of the disaster. Therefore, a system of incentives should be established for trained RCEC and RCVs to prevent high drop-out rates.
- All training curricula and manuals should be standardized by MRCS to facilitate the learning experience of all participants. Especially for RCVs who have been trained in one township and then move to another township, standardized curricula will ensure that they have the necessary skills to join program implementation in the new township without the need to undergo additional trainings.

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CBDRR Practices is a series of case studies that illustrate good practices of disaster preparedness and mitigation undertaken by the Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) with the goal of reducing the vulnerabilities and risks on the communities living in hazard-prone areas in Myanmar.

The series with 5 case studies analyse of real-life experience, good practice and lesson learns from the past activities of MRCS in more than 7 provinces and 39 townships in Myanmar. These include awareness generation, capacity building (NDRT/ERT), volunteerism, school preparedness, risk reduction activities in rural and urban settings, and mainstreaming DRM in recovery etc. This practice documentation is best used as a learning input, inspirational trigger and tool for replication.

These case studies are being developed under the initiative to develop CBDRR Framework for Myanmar by the Myanmar Red Cross Society with the help from the IFRC and the PNS such as French Red Cross (FRC), Canadian Red Cross (CRC) and American Red Cross (ARC).



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