

2. Overview

Decentralized Disaster Risk Management (DDRM) in Sri Lanka

The Rationale

The concept of decentralized disaster management (DDRM) derives its insights from the concept and practice of community-based disaster management (CBDM) in South Asia. This introduction will help you to understand the rationale behind this DDRM Training Program and why each session has been integrated.

A change over from ‘top-down’ to ‘bottom-up’

Community based disaster management was born out of the realization that communities are the first and the last responders when a disaster impacts an area, and therefore the capacity of the communities must be built up in order to create resilience.

This is a paradigm change from the ‘top-down’ approach where a centralized state controlled emergency management after a disaster impact. Many top-down programs fail to address specific local needs of vulnerable communities, ignore the potential of local resources and capacities.

A ‘bottom-up’, or community-based approach to disaster management should take a participatory approach giving priority to micro level community needs. Opportunity to address pre disaster risk management is more realistic and practical at community level provided funding options and know-how are available.

Concept of ‘community’

This is a debatable concept.

A community here refers to the population of a limited geographic area identified as vulnerable to one or many hazards. Defining the area of intervention is the first step of any CBDM. The dimension of the geographic area should remain flexible to be determined by the disaster management intervention based on its capacity of manpower, financial capability and the know-how. The Disaster Management Center of Sri Lanka in its capacity building endeavor of communities residing on the coastal belt, recommends blocks of 150 – 200 houses as ‘one’ target group for an intervention (e.g. participatory hazard mapping, identification of safe areas for shelter, safe routes and mock drills for evacuation on a tsunami alert). This however varies according to the degree of urbanization as well as the geographic terrain. For instance, communities living on landslide vulnerable slopes are spread far and wide and the number of households would become far less for “one’ target group.

In wide spread disaster events such as the 12/2004 Asian Tsunami or Cyclone ‘Nargis’ that hit Myanmar in 5/2008, clusters of such communities will be impacted.

Communities living with disaster risk could be empowered, socially and economically, to

reduce their risk of exposure to disasters through small-scale, community-oriented actions that safeguards their assets, improves local resource management and contributes to overall empowerment of the people.

But, while applying the CBDM approach at ground level it has become apparent that there is an over-expectation of the role of communities in managing their disaster risk. CBDM approach, aimed at empowering communities to take proactive ownership over their resources and mitigation actions seems to be sometimes an added burden for resource-poor and livelihood-deficient communities living in disaster-prone areas across South Asia. DDRM is an alternative to ease such restraints.

This training program will allow you to discuss the concept of community in greater detail later.

Approach to community risk reduction

$$\text{Risk} = \frac{\text{Hazard} \times \text{Loss}}{\text{Capacity}}$$

Risk is a quantification of the vulnerability. Assessing risk provides a tool to prioritize actions that needs to be taken to reduce risk. Hazard here refers to the probability of a hazard event taking place. Loss is a quantification of hazard impact in terms of life lost, people injured and displaced, property and infra structure damage etc.

Capacity refers to the ability of the community to cope up with the disaster impact. An example is the preparedness to set up camps for the displaced and provide initial needs without delay.

A Disaster Manager can do nothing about hazard probability. Loss however can be reduced with preparedness and mitigation. This may need financial investment. Capacity building appears to be the most appropriate to create resilience. Increased capacity will reduce risk. An example is the capacity to respond quickly in a pre-determined manner when a tsunami alert is received.

This training program will therefore allow you an opportunity to familiarize with the disaster management concepts such as vulnerability, risk, hazard probability and capacity etc. It will provide an opportunity to discuss how to use these concepts as tools for proper decision-making in disaster management.

Links to Governance and Development

CBDM in its current practice appears to be **community-oriented** rather than **community based**. The level of community consultation in CBDM approaches can vary widely and for most DM practitioners adopting CBDM is not mandatory. Most importantly there is no community-led mechanism (stable, long term) to actually propel the bottom-up approach that CBDM advocates.

It is difficult for communities to manage their natural resources, as CBDM advocates, because decisions and control over these resources are not in their hands. Through micro-level interventions, the community is not able to influence the extent or nature of natural resource exploitation that happens in a macro scale. National and local governance makes such decisions. In Sri Lanka, jurisdiction and control of natural resources like land, water, forests, coastal belts etc are vested in the state by legal enactments.

Most disasters today appear to be the result of growth driven development. The task of a government is to meet up with the demand for growth and better living conditions imposed by the expanding population. Urban sprawl, infrastructure developments like dams, canals, elevated highways, irrigation tanks, all cause new levels of risk in their wake unless appropriate impact assessments are not carried out prior to implementation. It is necessary therefore to understand how? and where? development decisions are taken and how? affected community voice could be heard.

The concept of DDRM is rooted in the fact that disasters, or their primary causes, can be directly linked to governance and its practice at national and local level. Disasters, as we recognize today, have little to do with the actual natural hazard with which it may be associated. In fact, disasters have more to do with lack of planning, failed development and inequity in its different socio-cultural dimensions. These are all governance issues.

In brief:

- Disasters are issues of national and local governance- primary responsibility of risk management should lie with governance institutions
- Communities are first respondents by default, whereas the responsibility of the governance structures is by design

The DDRM approach strives to take local action a step beyond CBDM. While realizing the importance of community ownership and leadership in risk reduction activities, DDRM also advocates that local level governance institutions are actively engaged in risk reduction; and appreciate the links between development and disaster; and make efforts to integrate risk reduction with development planning. Decentralized government institutions- whether elected or state administrative, have the mandate and capacity to address local development and risk reduction and as such are best placed to integrate disaster risk in to development planning.

This training program will therefore allow the opportunity to look at the government structure in Sri Lanka, the modus operandi of its development planning, budgetary allocation, framework for disaster management and good governance.

This will allow the understanding of existing institutional provisions in relation to national, provincial and local government. In turn it can lead to an exploration of possible entry points for the integration of risk reduction measures in development and community participation in decision-making.

The program would also provide opportunity to investigate status quo of Rights Based Development and Community-led disaster risk reduction.

Approach to sustainable livelihoods

After the impact of a disaster, requirements to complete the restoration of livelihoods in affected areas cover locally identified interventions in the fields of

1. Social protection;
2. Community infrastructure;
3. Local economic recovery and development, and;
4. Management and monitoring of on going and planned projects.
5. Coordination of implementation activities

These need pre disaster preparedness and the participants will have an opportunity to discuss livelihood interventions during the program.

Benchmarking

From lessons learnt in South Asia by a wide range of members of **Duryog Nivaran** the following **Performance Indicators** have been identified to denote successful application of DDRM approach:

- Public action towards risk management/reduction by at-risk communities and community representatives
- Enhanced responsiveness of local government organizations
- Participation of vulnerable communities in decision making
- High level of coordination between local government institutions and communities
- Accountability and performance-auditing of institutions and individuals dealing with disaster management
- Transparency in resource allocation, planning and implementation of counter-disaster endeavours undertaken by state and non-state actors
- Equity in provision and delivery of goods and services in terms of gender, cast, creed, etc.

Overview - Presentation

Concept:

**Based on-the-ground experience of
implementing community
based disaster management**



Introduction

Approach

**DRR of communities through their social and
economical Empowerment**

**small community-oriented initiatives at local level
that**

- ↘ safeguard their assets
- ↘ improve local resource management
- ↘ Strengthen livelihoods etc



Introduction

Lessons from CBDM

- Development decisions (eg NRM) have direct link to communities and their exposure to risk
- Difficulty for communities to make/influence decisions
 - decisions are made by others and out of their control
 - Accepted decision making systems and structures would not respect (challenge) community leadership
- Over/unrealistic expectation of the role of communities
- Variation of interpretation about communities' role

Moving forward; The DDMT approach

- Incorporate lessons learned from CBDRM
- Aims to take local action a step beyond CBDRM
- Importance of community role in DRR is retained
- Advocates active engagement of local level governance institutions
- Appreciate the links between development and disaster
- Make efforts to integrate risk reduction with development planning

Challenges

- Mandate of local governance institutions
- Capacity of local government institutions
- Culture of participatory work with community and other stakeholders
- Sustainability of financial allocation