

Disaster mitigation, preparedness and response: City focused Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction

Padma Karunaratne¹

Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre¹

The Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) gained prominence in the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005, adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction in 2005. A strategic goal of "development and strengthening of institutions, mechanisms and capacities at all levels, in particular at community level, that can systematically contribute to building resilience to hazards" promotes community participation at all the stages of the disaster cycle.

Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) is working towards building safer communities in the Asia and Pacific with the mission to reduce impact of disasters by raising awareness, helping to establish and strengthen sustainable institutional mechanism and enhancing knowledge and exchange of information and expertise. Successes attributed with the involvement of communities in project implementation, gained specific accomplishments on community based disaster risk reduction (DRR). It includes drawing the local people together to plan and prepare for disasters systematically, working together to establish an appropriate emergency warning system (EWS), prepare community evacuation plans and define priority action plans for mitigation.

Urban disaster risk management is one of the areas where ADPC is closely working with community during the last fifteen years. The latest program of such nature is the Program for Hydro-meteorological Disaster Mitigation in Secondary cities in Asia (PROMISE 2005–2010) which was concluded last December. It was implemented in nine cities in six countries; namely: Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Vietnam. Floods and cyclones are common for all cities where storm surges are specific for some of them. Many of such instances are directly connected with the growing impact of climate change.

PROMISE was implemented under four main components. The City Demonstration projects largely involved the local community in project planning, designing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The program promoted the basic concepts of local level community-based approach with participation of other stakeholders. The city approaches were similar, but based on the indigenous culture, practice and to help on-going disaster related activities in the city. The basic activities were: i) Hazard, Vulnerability, Risk and Capacity Assessment (HVRC) and developing community based city & community level risk maps and action plans; ii) Mitigation and Preparedness measures using the HVRC assessment to identify the extent of vulnerability, actions and priorities, and develop participatory action plans. The focus was on establishing community based EWS, strengthening emergency operations centres (EOC) and community based structural and non structural mitigation; iii) Training and Public Awareness such as Community based Emergency Response, CBDRR, flood drills, simulations, school safety programs and city specific awareness initiatives.

Other components were: Regional and National level Capacity Building, Advocacy for Mainstreaming DRR in local governance and Regional Networking and Information Dissemination.

During the implementation in nine cities, ADPC identified the potentials of the local community, commitment of them, leadership and officials, available resources and utilization, and planned activities accordingly. The local knowledge and indigenous practices in disasters, cultural, social, legal, political and administrative backgrounds were carefully assessed. In some occasions, community based products were updated and upgraded with technical inputs. Selected mitigation activities were implemented with community participation. From the community of Jamalpur city (Bangladesh) with a mix of urban–rural nature to the more developed urban communities of Pasig and Dagupan (The Philippines), it was a challenge to develop strategies and to implement the same on the basis of common concepts of CBDRR. Social differences were no more barriers when actions are taken partnering with the local people.

Corresponding Author

Mrs. Padma Karunaratne, Head of the Resilient Cities and Urban Disaster Risk Management Department
Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre
SM Tower, 24th Floor, 979/69 Paholyothin Road, Samsen Nai
Phayathai, Bangkok 10400 Thailand
Tel: (66-2) 298 0682-92
Fax: (66-2) 298 0012-13
Email: padma@adpc.net