

BACKGROUND

Capacity building in disaster management is essential to initiate, sustain, mainstream, and replicate community based disaster management/disaster risk management (CBDM/CBDRM). Training and awareness raising activities are key interventions, which enable communities and stakeholders to participate in and sustain the CBDM/CBDRM activities.

Although the Philippines is generally recognized as having a head start in implementing community based disaster management/ community based disaster risk management (CBDM/ CBDRM), the actual reach and coverage of on-the-ground activities are still limited. Highlighting beneficial impacts, the First National Conference in Community Based Disaster Management in January 2003 called for the widespread replication of CBDM in communities in the Philippines. Organized by the National Disaster Coordinating Council-Office of Civil Defense, the National Defense College and the Philippine Disaster Management Forum, the Conference attended by 82 participants from 69 national and local government agencies, NGOs, community organizations and the academe underscored zero casualty due to community preparedness, enhanced community-local government-NGO coordination, efficient disaster response, optimum utilization of resources, and strengthened communities as key benefits of CBDRM.

OBJECTIVES

The objective was to enhance capacity building programs through training and education of vulnerable communities and groups, directly or through the local government units, which is considered as an essential element for the process of implementing CBDRM.

ACTIVITIES

■ Building Capacities of Local Government Units and Communities in Camiguin Province

The Center for Disaster Preparedness

Foundation Inc. (CDP) is a resource center that assists in capacity building in CBDRM. Having more experience in working with communities and NGOs, CDP now sees the need to support local government units in training in community based disaster preparedness and mitigation. Although NGOs are effective in advocating for, initiating and facilitating on-the-ground CBDRM activities, CDP recognizes that it is the role of the government to mainstream CBDRM and integrate disaster risk reduction in the development planning system and process.

The "Enhancing Capacities in Disaster Preparedness, Prevention and Rehabilitation Project" was undertaken by the 5 municipal and the provincial government of Camiguin from April 2002 - May 2003 together with the Canada-Philippine Local Government Support Program and CDP. Camiguin Province in the northern tip of Mindanao was devastated by Typhoon Nanang (international name Lingling) on November 7, 2001 leaving in its aftermath 152 dead (excluding those declared missing) and 146 injured. The associated flashflood, landslide and debris flow affected some 7,000 families and damage to settlements, agriculture and infrastructure was placed at Php 201 million.

To prevent another repeat of the Typhoon Nanang disaster, the project sought to enhance the level of knowledge, skills and attitude of the local government officers on the concept, process and tools of local and community based disaster preparedness and mitigation. The trained municipal and provincial officers (called Municipal Technical Working Group and Provincial Technical Working Group) were expected to assist one pilot barangay (village) in each of the 5 municipalities in CBDRM training.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Capacity building in CBDRM was initiated in at least one barangay per municipality - Barangay Hubangon of Mahinog, Barangay Baylao of Mambajao, Barangay Bonbon of Sagay, Barangay Looc of Catarman, and Barangay North Poblacion of Guinsiliban. Community risk assessment and counter disaster/disaster management planning workshops were undertaken in one pilot barangay in each of the

municipalities through the Technical Working Group supervised by CDP. At the barangay level, barangay officials, community organizations and residents participated in the capacity building activities. The 3-4 days community risk assessment (hazard vulnerability capacity assessment) workshop ended with a community validation, a visioning exercise of a developed community, and recommendations on necessary and do-able disaster preparedness and mitigation measures to undertake. The counter disaster planning workshops resulted in the reactivation and reorganization of the local disaster coordinating council/s and an action plan for flood level monitoring, early warning system, safe evacuation centers, and do-able mitigation measures.

Aside from training workshop, the project included a study tour of the local government officers to Legaspi, Albay and Guagua, Pampanga to share and learn with these local government units which are recognized as best practices in local and community level disaster management.

The Mahinog Municipal Technical Working Group was also able to replicate community disaster preparedness training in 3 other barangays (Barangays Tupsan Pequeno, San Isidro and Poblacion), Catarman in 2 other barangays (Barangays Tangaro and Compol), while Mambajao has assisted all its 14 barangays in emergency preparedness through the local branch of the Philippine National Red Cross in First Aid and Basic Life Support Training.

Among the 5 municipalities of Camiguin, Mahinog suffered the most damages during Typhoon Nanang. The Community Risk Assessment Workshop held in May 2002 in Barangay Hubangon by the Technical Working Group was well attended with 80 participants from the community. During the Disaster Preparedness Training held in July 2002, the barangay officials and community members realized that the flood water level does not rise all at once, and there is opportunity to give an early warning after typhoon and flood monitoring. Their newly designed early warning and evacuation system was put to an initial test during Typhoon Milenyo in August 2002. Continuous ringing of the church bells and sirens was understood by the community that they should evacuate to safety from flood waters in the Chapel and Mahinog National High School premises. The Barangay Hubangon Disaster Coordinating Council has been reconstituted and is composed of 135 members and volunteers.

LESSONS

■ Building the capacity in CBDRM through training of local government units, which are closest to the communities, should be undertaken to have sustainable disaster reduction as well as sustainable and equitable community development. Disaster management, similar to the delivery of basic well-being services, is part of the governance function and the responsibility of local government.

■ Training of trainers from the local government units should include skills and techniques on participatory training methods so that they can effectively build capacity of the community in CBDRM.



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63 Preparedness For Response To Future Disaster Risk Reduction: The Syrian Arab Red Crescent Society Experience

BACKGROUND

Evidence from recent disasters in other locations, shows that initial support, and a very significant portion of the total support provided, comes from the local community. It may take days for outside responders to gain access to affected areas due to the time needed to contact and assemble personnel, transportation limitations, or unfamiliarity to the area. Clearly it is the people in the community who will be the first response on the scene and can play a significant role in community disaster prevention.

With this in mind, in 2001 the Syrian Arab Red Crescent Society (SARCS) began a community based approach with an integrated disaster preparedness and health training program for local volunteers with input and involvement from government agencies such as the Civil Defense and the Ministry of Health.

The National Society was able to test their approach in 2002 during the Zaizon Dam disaster response. After the disaster response phase, a post disaster review and risk reduction meeting was held with the community and volunteers. The learning lead to changes in Disaster Management within the SARCS and community and a decision to hold a community disaster simulation exercise followed. The outcomes helped to inform the National Society about its Disaster Management planning needs in 2003-2004.



OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of the initiative was to develop integrated community based approach with focus on other development needs. The other objectives were to enhance the skills of the staff and volunteers of the SARCS, and to enhance the tie with the community. The objective of the simulation exercise was further cooperation and coordination between SARCS,

government and other organizations. The experience was designed to improve the community, volunteers and staff capacities in camp management through involving them in all stages of the relief and logistic preparedness process. In terms of preparedness, the need to support refugee camps in the future was a reality facing the SARCS in the contingency planning for the Iraq Crisis.

ACTIVITIES

People in Zaizon village observed cracks developing in the dam and responded by gathering neighbors on a high ridge. In the neighbouring villages the flash floods were unexpected and 21 deaths resulted. The infrastructure damage in Zaizon included 251 houses completely destroyed and 129 partly damaged. Within a few hours of the disaster, volunteers from the Hama and Edlib branches were mobilized, food aid was distributed and the first consignment of tents and blankets arrived at Hama Branch from the National Society headquarters.

The SARCS was in a position to provide rapid assistance and assess the needs of victims because of its network of trained volunteers and staff. They were proud of their response actions but the responsibilities and duties were much more than the capacities of the SARCS. Despite this, volunteers used whatever resources were available to help.

They began by assessing the needs of victims whilst distributing initial relief to families in the Zaizon area. An important factor was that villagers wanted to stay with their land and this was respected. Volunteers helped them to establish their first camp to provide shelter for people involved in the disaster. First aid, health education and cleaning of the camp were also part of the response from the first day.

The volunteers erected the Zaizon tent-camp (135 tents) within 48-hours of the disaster and the National Society was responsible for running the camp for the first month. In total 20 full-time staff members and 180 volunteers from all over the country were involved in the assistance. The actions of the volunteers highlighted to the community and government the important role of the SARCS in disaster preparedness and response.

ACHIEVEMENTS

It was clear that local communities and those affected placed great trust in the volunteers. Such trust was helpful in obtaining more accurate assessment of needs because of the direct relationship with communities. The confidence afforded to the SARCS resulted in the SARCS being charged with responsibility for relief distribution (food and non food items) during the operation. Additionally, the National Society played a key role in coordinating and cooperating with governmental and international agencies at the flood locations.

In addition, after the disaster, a community participatory post disaster review and risk reduction meeting was held facilitated by the SARCS and the Federation Regional Delegation in Amman which included those members of the community, staff and volunteers who were involved in the Dam disaster. It was anticipated that small risk reduction projects could be developed to reduce human and material losses in the future.

The review concluded there was a need for:

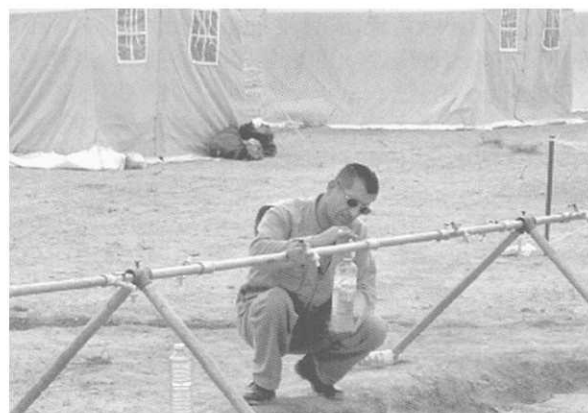
- staff and volunteer skill development in hands on disaster response experience;
- better coordination between National Society, government, local and international NGOs;
- development of community disaster awareness raising and education material;
- development of a logistics system as part of the National Society development;
- neighborhood disaster risk mapping and awareness.

Recommendations from the post disaster review risk reduction meeting resulted in a simulation exercise relating to camp management. All branches were involved and there were close to 100 volunteers.

CONCLUSION

The contributing factor to the successful response in this disaster was the integrated community based disaster health management approach, which resulted in trained volunteers prepared for disaster response. The Zaizon Dam disaster provided an opportunity to use these volunteers 'in action'. The 'post-disaster review' was an opportunity to learn from those involved in the disaster community and to identify future disaster risk reduction actions. The developing role of the National Society with communities and as auxiliary to government was imperative to SARCS.

In addition, SARCS recognized the importance of working with external partners and having signed agreements in place between the National Society with government, other agencies and vendors to systemize the response and preparedness program. Further, the SARCS is developing a disaster management strategy, which will reflect a development approach to integrated response training and simulation leading to action as highlighted within this case study.



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