

Three Case Stories from The Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction Project (CBDRR)

Under DIPECHO 5th Plan of Action for South Asia, Concern Universal (CU) has been awarded funding from the European Commission-Humanitarian Aid and Cordaid to implement a Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction Project in cyclone-vulnerable communities of the coastal belt of Bangladesh. Concern Universal is implementing the project in partnership with the Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM) building on the learning and experience gained through implementing projects under DIPECHO 3rd and 4th Action Plans. The following case studies describe some of the processes followed under the CBDRR project that have led to positive outcomes.

Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in Non Formal Education

DAM is a leading national NGO in the education and non formal education sector. Over the past two years, DAM has led a consortium of international and national NGOs with support from the European Commission for the implementation of a country-wide Non Formal Education Project. The UNIQUE project targets and offers an educational alternative to children who have dropped out of the formal education system in both rural and urban areas through the establishment of community-managed Children Learning Centres.



Children entering a Children Learning Centre

Children attending the Children Learning Centres (CLC) are from amongst the poorest and most vulnerable families within their respective communities and are therefore at particular risk when disasters strike. Yet whereas efforts have been made to integrate DRR in the formal curriculum of both primary and secondary formal education systems in Bangladesh, the area of Non Formal Education has so far been neglected.

Based on this premise, and within the framework of CBDRR project, Concern Universal and DAM's CBDRR team have decided to join forces with the UNIQUE project to pilot a far-reaching DRR mainstreaming initiative across seven regions of Bangladesh. In

consultation with UNIQUE field personnel, 1576 Children Learning Centres in 13 Districts of Bangladesh have been selected on the basis of their vulnerability to common hazards in Bangladesh such as cyclones, earthquakes, floods, river erosion and droughts. Operational guidelines and plans for this initiative were jointly developed to ensure both effective project implementation and clear communication, reporting and monitoring mechanisms.

On December 5th, the implementation of DRR mainstreaming in non formal education was officially initiated with the start of a 5-day Training of Trainers, jointly facilitated by CU and DAM for 28 master trainers and technical officers of the UNIQUE Project representing the 13 selected Districts . In addition to a training manual for CLC tutors on DRR, the training covered the Guidelines for Tutors on DRR that were developed by the CBDRR team to allow for the planning and conduction of 12 sessions on DRR of an hour each for children of the CLCs. Both the guidelines and the training manual are coupled with relevant IEC material that has been adapted from DIPECHO III and IV. The Training of Trainers was followed by a one-day orientation session for regional managers and monitoring officers of the UNIQUE project where reporting and monitoring mechanisms were finalized.



ToT for master Trainers and Technical Officers December 2009



Orientation session for Regional Managers and Monitoring Officers December 2009

The training of tutors by the trainers will start in January and continue up to March and will be followed by the implementation by tutors of sessions on DRR for the children of the CLCs as well as discussions on DRR with guardians and local authorities. Through this initiative, CU and DAM are planning to reach over 75,000 beneficiaries (around 50 per CLC) and thereby contribute significantly to building disaster resilient communities across the country.

Community mobilization and action planning for enhanced preparedness

Building on lessons learnt and good practices from DIPECHO III and IV, the CBDRR project is working at continuing the capacity development of community stakeholders to lead awareness-raising campaigns on DRR at community level towards making themselves disaster resilient. Since November 2009, CU and DAM have provided training to over 3,500 community members in the Upazilas of Mirzagonj (Pathuakhali) and Pathorghata (Barguna). Through planning, the different community action groups will be taking forward DRR messages using innovative and culturally relevant initiatives. These action groups are centered around 90 community-based organizations (CBOs) and 30 schools, including: CBO management committees, community trainers, community volunteers, radio spot managers, student brigades, teachers and School Management Committee members.

One example of successful planning and commitment to the task is provided by Kaosar, a 20 year old student who was selected as a community trainer in his village of Uttor Chouta (UP of Madovkhali, Mirzagonj) and who subsequently received a 5-day Training of Trainers covering community mobilization, local resources mobilization, DRR and facilitation skills. Kaosar, explains why he is the right person to be a community trainer and why this role means a lot to him:

“the community people know very well who is skilled in doing what and they know that I like to talk too much and that I am very happy when I can share with my neighbors”. Kaosar adds: “my village is very vulnerable to disasters. In my neighborhood, 3 people died during SIDR and many more lost all their belongings and crops because of SIDR and AYL A. Before the training, I had no idea how to help people to be better prepared but now that I have this knowledge, it is my responsibility to disseminate it so that nobody dies if there is a cyclone”.



Kaosar and Akhi

Together with his co-trainer Akhi, Kaosar has developed an action plan which includes facilitation of courtyard sessions on DRR, engaging Imams and the local elite to spread messages on DRR, developing drama and folk songs on DRR and ensuring that his community' concerns and needs are shared with relevant local authorities such as Union Parishads.

The Radio Spot Managers have a specific mandate to disseminate and act upon early warning systems. Abdul Rajak Mridha, one of the project's trained radio spot managers and the UP Secretary of Mirzagonj Sadr, explains why this role is of particular importance in Mirzagonj and shares his long-term objective:

“over 300 people died in Mirzagonj during SIDR even though it is comparatively less vulnerable than other Unions. This is because of lack of knowledge and awareness of the population on the early warning system. The absence of CPP means that people are not familiar with the signals and do not react on time. Linking with my peers in schools and CBOs, I will ensure that everyone in my Union can recognize the signals and that no one is left behind when evacuation time is declared”.



Abdul Rajak Mridha-
Radio Spot Manager and UP
secretary

By mobilizing community stakeholders and facilitating long-term planning on DRR, CU and DAM are expecting to not only increase disaster resilience within the project lifespan but also to ensure the sustainability of our intervention beyond the project through building community ownership.

Addressing the needs of people with disability

From project's inception, CU and DAM have entered into a technical partnership with Handicap International-Bangladesh in order to better address the needs of people with disability within the CBDRR project and beyond. According to Handicap International (HI), the prevalence rate of disability in rural areas of Bangladesh is 6% but this is compounded by a general lack of medical services and community awareness. In addition to poverty and social stigma, people with disability face greater vulnerability to disasters due not only to issues of access but also issues of social discrimination. In order to implement an effective community-based Disaster Risk Reduction project, it is therefore essential that significant efforts are undertaken at the community-level to raise the awareness of communities and ensure an appropriate level of services for people with disability before, during and after disasters.

The cooperation with Handicap International started with the organization of a Training of Trainers for senior staff on mainstreaming disability in DRR programming. This was followed by the systematic integration of a session on disability and DRR in all the training modules developed by CU and DAM under the different DIPECHO funding cycles. During the foundation training, CBDRR project staff were provided with an introductory session on disability. Handicap International also visited CU and DAM's project areas and following observation of the activities: training, CRA, meetings, etc. HI provided feedback to the field staff as well as further capacity-building through 2 one-day sharing sessions – one in each field office.



ToT on mainstreaming disability in DRR for senior staff



According to Abdullah Sayeed, Upazila coordinator of the CBDRR project in Mirzagonj, the main benefit of the cooperation with Handicap International is that *“it has provided the staff with the tools and arguments to effectively combat community prejudices and misconceptions on disability”*. With a sensitized staff, the participation of people with disability in all project activities is no longer a tick in the box but a real opportunity to engage dialogue and initiate a change in mindsets. According to Sayeed, one of the indicators of success is that in all the 45 CBOs with which he is working, a map and list of people with disability is available and the CBO members intend to use it not only during disasters to ensure that everyone is safe but also for referrals and access to assisting devices whenever needed.



A session on disability in field training activities



HI facilitates orientation session for field staff

CU and DAM will further their cooperation with HI at the field level but also through supporting the contextualization and translation of a training manual on mainstreaming disability in DRR developed by HI-Nepal under DIPECHO IV.