



UN

Volunteers

inspiration in action

Contribution of Volunteerism to Disaster Risk Reduction

Front Cover: In response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004, UN Volunteer Suranga Kahandawa conducts disaster risk management training sessions with beneficiaries in Sri Lanka. (UNV, 2007)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

BCPR	UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery	NGO	non-governmental organization
CPP	Cyclone Preparedness Programme (Bangladesh)	SGCO	self-governing community organizations
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction	SNGR	<i>Secretaría Nacional de Gestión de Riesgos</i> (Ecuador)
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection	UN	United Nations
HFA	Hyogo Framework for Action	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
ICMC	International Catholic Migration Commission	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies	UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
ISDR	United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction	UNV	United Nations Volunteers
		VIOs	Volunteer Involving Organizations
		WMO	World Meteorological Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Practice Note (PN) on the Contribution of Volunteerism to Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) was developed to provide an understanding of volunteerism and its relationship to this focus area. This document is primarily intended for UNV programme staff based in the organization's headquarters and field units. It intends to contribute to strengthening UNV's capacity to more effectively engage partners in Disaster Risk Reduction during its advocacy and programming work.

The PN presents relevant background information and basic concepts related to DRR. It also highlights good practices and lessons learned drawn from analysis of case studies of volunteering contributions of UNV and non-UNV programmes and projects in this field.

The role of volunteerism in general and mobilizing and managing volunteers in particular are important components of any disaster risk management strategy that aims at fostering community recovery, strength and resilience in vulnerable areas. The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 acknowledges that "civil society, including volunteers and community-based organizations, are vital stakeholders in supporting the implementation of disaster risk

reduction at all levels." United Nations General Assembly resolution (A/RES/56/38) identifies disaster response as one of the leading areas in which volunteers can contribute to society and development.

All too often national, regional and local disaster risk management plans do not acknowledge the contribution and role of volunteers, even though they usually play an important role when implementing those plans. In these cases the risk of an ad hoc and uncoordinated approach to the involvement of volunteers is high. It is therefore part of the UNV programme strategy to work toward better integration of volunteerism into disaster management plans and to support national and local capacities for mobilizing and managing volunteers.

The PN provides an overview and understanding of how volunteerism can enhance the capacities of national and local actors in mitigating and coping with natural disasters. It intends to strengthen UNV's capacity to better support national and local actors in identifying ways that volunteerism can make a difference in the area of DRR and to more effectively integrate volunteerism into any disaster risk reduction and/or response plan.

BACKGROUND AND RATIONAL

Disaster Risk Reduction

The explanation and definition of DRR terms are based on United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and Peace Corps publications.

A disaster can be caused by natural or human-induced hazards that affect a community or a society, causing loss of life, damage to property, economic loss and/or environmental degradation.

Disaster risk refers to the probability of potential losses due to a hazard - these include loss of life, health, livelihoods, assets and/or services - which could occur to a particular community or a society over a specified time period in the future.

In particular, disaster risk is a combination of:

- **Hazard:** the probability of an event occurring in a specific area, over a specified period of time, with a certain intensity level;
- **Vulnerability:** the susceptibility of a community/society or system (building, bridge, pipeline, etc.) to that specific hazard, due to physical, social, economic and environmental factors; and
- **Exposure:** people, property, systems or other element present in hazard zones that are subject to potential losses.

Geological hazards (earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, and landslides), hydro-meteorological hazards (tropical cyclones, thunderstorms, tornados, blizzards, heavy snowfall, avalanches, floods, droughts, heat waves) and wild land fires are natural hazards that can cause disasters, but are not disasters in and of themselves.

For instance, an earthquake that occurs in a desert area may not trigger a disaster because there is little to no population or property that could be affected.

Disaster risk can be reduced by addressing the underlining factors of risk to reduce vulnerability and/or exposure.

DRR, then, is defined by ISDR as the concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through

efforts to reduce exposure to hazards, vulnerability of people and property, land management and the environment, and improve disaster preparedness .

The World Conference on Disaster Reduction, held from 18-22 January 2005 in Kobe, Hyogo, Japan, adopted the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters*. The Hyogo Framework for Action is a ten-year plan to make the world safer from natural hazards. The Hyogo Framework for Action presents a comprehensive approach to reduce disaster risk (see box).

Measures that can be adopted to reduce risks include the construction of dams, flood levies, earthquake-resistant construction, and evacuation shelters.

Additional measures might be the adoption of building

Priority actions proposed in the Hyogo Framework for Action

1. Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and a local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation.
2. Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning.
3. Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels.
4. Reduce the underlying risk factors.
5. Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.

www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/hfa

1. 2009 UNISDR Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction, ISDR, 2009.
2. Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction for Field Practitioners, IFRC, 2009.
3. Integrating disaster preparedness and mitigation in your work, Idea Book Series M0084, Peace Corps, 2001.
4. Living With Risk: A global Review of Disaster Reduction Initiatives, UNISDR, 2004;pag.17
5. See 1

codes, land use planning laws and their enforcement (that, for example, would avoid construction in high-risk zones), risk assessment, and public awareness programmes. The complete avoidance of risks is often not feasible, but DRR measures can significantly reduce disaster risk and associated losses.

In order to effectively manage disasters, it is important to understand that there are different measures that can be taken during the three phases of a natural disaster: before, during and after.

BEFORE

- **Prevention and mitigation** – actions and measures taken to avoid or limit the adverse impacts of hazards. Examples include reforestation, watershed management, urban planning and zoning, improved infrastructure (i.e. communications, transportation), utilization of drought-resistant seed, and improved construction practices (i.e. earthquake-resistant housing).
- **Preparedness** – activities and actions taken to prepare for and ensure that an effective response to the disaster takes place. Preparedness actions can include risk analysis, development of early warning systems, contingency planning, stockpiling of supplies, training and field exercises. Actions also include education and training activities that aim at capacity building for effective disaster management and response.

DURING

- **Response** – the provision of emergency services and public assistance during or immediately after a disaster.

AFTER

- **Recovery** – restoration and improvement, when appropriate, of facilities, livelihoods and living conditions of disaster-affected communities, including efforts to reduce disaster risk factors. Rehabilitation and reconstruction begin soon after the emergency phase has ended.

Volunteerism

Volunteerism is a fundamental source of community strength and resilience that exists in all societies throughout the world. Volunteerism is expressed through a wide range of activities, including traditional forms of mutual aid and self-help, formal service delivery, campaigning and advocacy, as well as other forms of civic participation. The UN General Assembly (A/RES/56/38) defines volunteerism as “undertaken of free will, for the general public good and where monetary reward is not the principal motivating factor.”

Following the International Year of Volunteers in 2001, the UN General Assembly (A/RES/57/106) recognized that “volunteerism is an important component of any strategy aimed at...poverty reduction, sustainable development, health, disaster prevention and management and social integration and, in particular, overcoming social exclusion and discrimination.” Furthermore, the General Assembly noted that “volunteering, particularly at the community level, will help to achieve the development goals and objectives set out in the UN Millennium Declaration.”

Volunteerism and Disaster Risk Reduction

In disaster response, the role and contribution of volunteerism is well recognized. In fact, when a disaster happens, volunteers are normally the first to act. The impact of volunteers in disaster response can be tremendous, as the extent of damage – in terms of economic and human loss – is greatly influenced by the initial response to a disaster.

In 1995, it was the massive voluntary response of citizens to the Hanshin earthquake in Japan that led to the *International Year of Volunteers* being held in 2001. In turn, this fostered a greater understanding of the role of volunteers in the humanitarian field and in DRR. The increased recognition of volunteerism in DRR was marked by UN General Assembly Resolution 57/106 ‘Follow up to the International Year of Volunteers’ in 2003 and the *Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World* in 1994.

The Hyogo Framework for Action also highlights the importance of volunteerism in DRR, stating that “civil society, including volunteers and community-based organizations, the scientific community and the private sector are vital stakeholders in supporting the implementation of disaster risk reduction at all levels.” The Priorities for Action of the Framework suggest that community participation in disaster risk reduction includes the strategic management of volunteer resources and calls for the development of specific mechanisms to engage active stakeholder participation in particular by building on the spirit of volunteerism.” Further, it acknowledges that “civil society, including volunteers and community-based organizations, the scientific community and the private sector are vital stakeholders in supporting the implementation of disaster risk reduction at all levels.” The Hyogo Framework also called for education and training to “promote community-based training initiatives, considering the role of volunteers, as appropriate, to enhance local capacities to mitigate and cope with disasters.”

Volunteerism was also highlighted as a way of contributing to community resilience, community engagement and good governance for all stakeholders, particularly those most vulnerable to disasters.

Volunteerism contributes to the five HFA priorities for action in the following ways:

1. Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national and local priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation.

- Develop national volunteer infrastructure, which could include supporting the development of specific volunteer legislation and national volunteer schemes.
- Support the mobilization of volunteers: coordinate the activities of volunteer-involving

organizations, promote good volunteer management and advocate the value of volunteerism.

2. Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning.

- Assist national level risk assessments.
- Facilitate national vulnerability and capacity assessments.
- Support the creation of early warning systems.

3. Use knowledge, innovation, and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels.

- Share good practices.
- Engage in policy forums.
- Promote discussion and cooperation on DRR.
- Ensure dissemination of information, build public awareness and promote strong voluntary action at the community level.
- Support the production of village- and provincial-level disaster risk management plans and ensure full ownership by communities.

4. Reduce the underlying risk factors.

- Support DRR projects.
- Provide vital links between government and affected communities, empowering communities to participate actively in rehabilitation and sustainable livelihood schemes.
- Increase the capacities of volunteers to respond to disasters.
- Integrate volunteerism in DRR strategies.
- Pilot emergency plans.

5. Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response at all levels.

- Support initiatives to build community knowledge and resources, such as village-specific maps, evacuation plans and contingency strategies.
- Help develop preparedness and response capacities of local authorities and volunteers.

6. UN General Assembly A/RES/56/38 Distr. 10 January 2002

7. UN General Assembly A/RES/57/106 December 2002

UNV and Disaster Risk Reduction

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is the UN organization that promotes volunteerism to support peace and development. Volunteerism benefits both society at large and the individual

volunteer by strengthening trust, solidarity and reciprocity among citizens, and by purposefully creating opportunities for participation. UNV contributes to peace and development by advocating for volunteerism globally, encouraging partners to integrate volunteerism into development programming, and mobilizing volunteers. These beliefs inform the concept of **volunteerism for peace and development**, which is at the core of UNV's mission.

UNV's comparative advantage is the ability and knowledge to bring about transformational change through volunteerism, community voluntary action and civic engagement through active partnerships with civil society, volunteer-involving organizations, United Nations agencies and governments. This is inspiration in action.

UNV's mandate has significantly evolved since its establishment in 1970, when its initial role was to recruit, place and administer the services of qualified volunteers, who provided professional support to UN agencies, funds, programmes and governments in various countries. The key UN General Assembly Resolutions and UNDP's Executive Board Decisions that have defined and advanced the UNV mandate are the following:

- The UN General Assembly (GA) Resolution 1976 had called on UNV to promote the advancement of the role of youth in Development and to be a major operational unit of the UN for the execution of youth programmes.
- The UN GA Resolution 1978 had called UNDP Administrator and Executive Heads of UN system organizations to promote, the use of UN Volunteers in UN-assisted project and activities.

- The UN GA Resolution 2001 had expanded the UNV mandate on raising awareness and promote volunteerism for development.
- The UN GA Resolution 2005 support for corporate volunteering.
- UNDP's Executive Board (DP/2007) encouraged UNV to increase its focus on assisting programme countries in developing sustainable, national capacities and to mobilize volunteers domestically through national volunteer schemes, volunteer centres and networks (DP/2007/2).
- UNDP's Executive Board Decision 2008 calls UNV to contribute to environmental sustainability and Climate Change agenda.

The *2011-2013 UNV Programme Strategy* identifies Crisis Prevention and Recovery as one of the strategic focus areas for the work of the organization.

UNV interventions in the above priority area will be supported by the three crosscutting themes of **youth, gender and marginalised persons**, also defined as the social inclusion pillars. At community and institutional levels the social inclusion pillars will be reflected in the above focus area through the inclusion of the relevant target groups in all volunteerism and related institutional initiatives. At policy levels, each pillar may be addressed separately in so much as it relates to volunteerism, without a direct link to a specific focus area .

Under this thematic area, the Programme Strategy identifies the following key sectors where volunteerism can intervene to provide an undisputed added value:

- disaster prevention and risk reduction;
- recovery, including livelihoods; and
- local post-conflict resolution/reconciliation/peace-building/human rights recovery and local conflict prevention.

UNV supports countries that have an identified risk and high vulnerability to disaster to mitigate the effects of crisis and address its root causes.

At the national level, UNV can:

- Support the establishment of a common awareness and understanding of crises among key stakeholders, including local authorities and local communities;
- Support governments in preparing, coordinating and implementing crisis-sensitive development and recovery plans, including establishing and/or strengthening contextually appropriate national volunteer programmes or schemes for disaster relief;
- Advocate for the recognition of the role and contribution of volunteerism of local communities and authorities in designing DRR plans;
- Facilitate the development of institutional capacities of national and/or local authorities to strategically plan, constructively negotiate, form consensus, coordinate, mobilize, register, support and monitor local volunteers and civil society organizations for disaster relief activities; and
- Provide coordination, operational and technical support to district administrations, non-governmental organizations and volunteer-involving organizations in the implementation of disaster risk assessment and reduction plans.

At the community level, UNV can:

- Create a space for inclusive dialogue and support the capacity development of community-based organizations to engage, empower and mobilize community members in grassroots disaster risk management efforts;
- Raise awareness, promote preparedness and conduct community level hazard, risk, vulnerability

and capacity assessments, in order to develop local disaster plans that feed into district and national disaster plans;

- Mobilize community contributions (volunteer, in-kind and other resources) for the implementation of local disaster risk management plans;
- Facilitate the inclusion and participation of affected communities, especially women and youth, in the planning and implementation of disaster risk management plans and tools;
- Mobilize extended volunteer support to other districts/regions hard-hit by disasters; and
- Revitalize the voluntary and/or mutual support practices and/or self-help activities of communities for the implementation of disaster risk management plans in times of crisis, recovery and reconstruction.

The most natural partners for UNV in the area of DRR are the UNDP Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) and the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR). In addition, UNV should work with national governments as well as national and international NGOs.

9. www.undp.org/cpr
10. www.unisdr.org

2. VOLUNTEERISM IN ACTION: CASE STUDIES

The case studies have been selected to provide geographical coverage and to highlight the role of volunteerism in Disaster Risk Reduction, particularly in addressing issues related to gender, youth and the involvement of marginalized groups.

The methodology for the development of the case studies followed a four-step process:

1. A desk and literature review based on interviews, project documents and articles;
2. Analysis and integration of information from the interviews, project documents and articles;
3. Synthesis of results of the case studies;
4. Identification of lessons learned.

For each case study, project officers and/or volunteers were interviewed. The methodology was participatory and consultative in approaching key stakeholders who were involved in the coordination and implementation of project activities.

Case Study #1: Integrating volunteerism into community disaster risk preparedness

A community-based DRR programme in Bangladesh significantly reduces loss from tropical cyclones

Bangladesh is one of the most disaster prone countries in the world and has suffered some of the highest casualties from natural disasters in history. In 1970, Cyclone Bhola struck killing 500,000 people. Again in 1991, Cyclone Bangladesh claimed 150,000 lives.

Bangladesh is particularly vulnerable to losses during natural disasters – which are mostly meteorological and hydrological in nature – due to a combination of its unique geographical location and having one of the lowest per capita incomes in the world, with a population that relies largely on agriculture.

Disaster preparedness and risk reduction have long been a national priority and the results are tangible. As early as 1965, the government initiated early warning systems for residents living along coastal zones. Following Cyclone Bhola in 1970, the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society in collaboration with Bangladesh's Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, and supported by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, established a Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP). The CPP relies on a volunteer structure to provide early warning to residents. There are currently nearly 43,000 local volunteers, half of whom are women, who use a system of radios and megaphones and hand sirens to warn residents of impending weather events and to help relocate them to evacuation sites. Some 2,500 elevated cyclone shelters have been constructed in coastal areas.

CPP volunteers are organized in an efficient network of units, unions and sub-districts. Each unit serves one or two villages with an approximate population of two to three thousand each. Fifteen volunteers are recruited for each unit by the villagers. Ten units form a union and ten unions compose the sub-

Bangladesh, a densely populated country that is frequently beset by natural disasters, has been struck by three major cyclones in the past 37 years – but the resultant loss of life has diminished 100-fold (from some 300,000 in 1970 to around 4,000 in 2007). This bold statistic alone indicates that the Government of Bangladesh, together with a range of UN agencies and national and international NGOs, has developed an effective strategy that encompasses both disaster preparedness and response activities.

Peter Tatham, Karen Spens, Richard Oloruntoba, May 2009: abstract, "Cyclones in Bangladesh – A Case Study of Whole Country Response to Rapid Onset Disaster"

district. Information is collected from the Bangladesh Meteorological Department, which is transmitted to zonal offices and sub-district offices. The sub-district offices pass this information to unions (at the village level) through high-frequency radios. Unit teams then spread out, issuing cyclone warnings throughout villages.

Another important component of CPP is training of volunteers in cyclone characteristics, cyclone warnings and their dissemination, evacuation, rescue, first aid emergency relief, the usage of radio communication equipment and gender issues. Team leaders undergo a five-day training course on the above subjects, as well as leadership training. Officers and sub-district team leaders, who are also in charge of volunteer training, attend disaster management and leadership training, in addition.

CPP volunteers raise awareness at the community level as an integral component of cyclone preparedness. CPP volunteers use the following tools to increase public awareness; cyclone drills and demonstrations, film/video shows and folk songs, publicity campaigns, radio and television, posters, leaflets and booklets.

CPP volunteers are well-integrated and influential in their communities. They work closely with local administrations, NGOs, sub-district disaster management committees, and educational and religious institutions. Nevertheless, involving women in conservative Muslim or Hindu communities

Around 5,000 trained volunteers worked through the night of 14 November to alert residents of the approaching cyclone. Megaphones and hand sirens were used to warn communities and encourage people to evacuate their homes and move to cyclone shelters and other safe places. As a result, no lives were lost in the area of Kuakata (British Red Cross and Bangladesh Red Crescent, 2008). Although more than 3,000 lives were lost and three coastal towns and 1.5 million homes destroyed throughout the whole country, this disaster was a fraction of the size it would have been had no warning been available.

Excerpt from *World Disasters Report 2009*

remains a challenge. Women typically are not allowed to attend meetings, but by partnering with local committees and creating local women's associations, the situation changed. Gender issues are addressed through workshops targeting religious leaders and informing them about the work of the Red Crescent, as well as encouraging religious leaders to endorse women's participation. As a result, an increasing number of women are now volunteering with the Red Crescent and are becoming more involved in their communities. These women have been active in awareness-raising campaigns to ensure the evacuation of women in case of disaster, as traditionally they are expected to stay at home to look after the children and the household.

Analysis and Lessons Learnt

The Bangladesh case study shows how volunteerism and a low-cost, low-tech DRR strategy can produce impressive and measurable results. A structured community-based approach to preparedness can save thousands of lives. The prime example of this was the low casualty figure from Cyclone Sidr in 2001 attributed mainly to major community-based efforts led by some 5,000 trained Red Crescent volunteers (see box).

The success of the CPP can be attributed to: simplicity, integration of socio-cultural aspects, community-based volunteerism and an effective early warning communication network.

The effective organization of a network of volunteers, combined with training and awareness-raising, are important success factors. Use of a training-of-trainers strategy further helps to ensure long term and sustainable DRR capacity in communities. In addition, partnering with local committees, religious leaders and creating local women's associations significantly increased the level of participation of women. Involving the national government in CPP ensures long-term sustainability and national ownership.

Case Study #2: Developing local capacities for risk reduction through volunteerism

Rapid UNV response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami evolves into disaster risk reduction projects

The destruction caused by the Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004 was tremendous. India, Indonesia, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Thailand were among the hardest hit countries. More than 227,000 people died and economic losses were upwards of US\$ 9.9 billion.

Within 48 hours of the disaster, UNV had deployed volunteers to Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Indonesia. By the end of 2007, 238 UN Volunteers were mobilized in the region. Of this 238, most were national UN Volunteers, and almost 39% were women. UNV operated within the overall UNDP Tsunami Response framework. The initial focus on recovery and reconstruction support eventually evolved into disaster preparedness programmes.

In Sri Lanka, the project 'Strengthening Local Capacities for Disaster Risk Management' aimed to build national DRR capacity. The project was implemented by the Disaster Risk Management Centre of the Government of Sri Lanka, with support from UNDP. A total of 40 UN Volunteers worked closely with communities and with the Disaster Risk Management Centres. This helped bridge the gap between the national government and local communities and to better coordinate with all stakeholders. UN Volunteers were key players in DRR activities such as: hazard, risk and vulnerability assessments with communities, the development of

a vulnerability atlas for Sri Lanka, the development of community and district level disaster plans, mock drills at the community level, organization of local task forces, and technical training for communities and the development of the second phase of the Roadmap for Comprehensive Disaster Management.

In rolling out these plans, a participatory approach was adopted which supported capacity-building at the community level. The role of the communities was recognized in disaster management plans. Vulnerable groups were involved in disaster preparedness activities as well as mock drills in order to test the proposed disaster management programme. As a result, marginalized groups were able to access services not accessible before.

As an example, issues surrounding youth in disaster risk reduction were addressed in the village of Kirinde. Three schools received DRR training courses and 83 youth received swimming classes. In the districts of Kalmunai and Batticaloa, the programme had a particular focus on empowerment of women by targeting widows to prevent domestic violence and providing vocational training. The rights of children were covered too, through 17 workshops for children on human rights, child rights and leadership.

The efficient response of the Sri Lanka government to the 2008 landslides demonstrated the success of these UNV efforts and an enhanced national capacity in DRR. While hundreds of thousands of people were displaced, the loss of life was kept to a minimum.

In Indonesia, UNV worked with UNDP and the national government on the project, 'UNV Support to Tsunami Rehabilitation and Recovery in Aceh and Northern Sumatra.' 132 UN Volunteers supported this project, of which 87 were national and roughly 39% female. The UN Volunteers were deployed to national government offices and were instrumental in

11. Sources: UNV Support to Tsunami Rehabilitation and Recovery Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Maldives, UNV; Final Evaluation of Tsunami UNV Response Framework for Sri Lanka and Strengthening local capacities for disaster risk management, E.J. Goodyear, 2008; Final Evaluation of United Nations Volunteers Tsunami Rehabilitation and Recovery in Aceh and Northern Sumatra, E.J. Goodyear et al., 2007 .

strengthening the capacity of district offices in reaching out to communities. UN Volunteers reported on community needs, conducted monitoring and evaluation services, and helped strengthen coordination with national and international organizations. UN Volunteers also worked with other UN agencies supporting activities such as: emergency education, health, psychology, finance, housing and settlement, monitoring and evaluation, community development, water and sanitation, site construction, urban planning, quality control, field security, communication, data management, HIV prevention, livelihood training, village planning and project management.

One particularly successful element of the project was the establishment of Village Recovery Committees (VRC) to design and implement community-based approaches for development and disaster risk reduction. The International Catholic Migration Commission's (ICMC), one of the partner organizations in the project, supported the creation and development of these VRC. VRC members were elected volunteers from the communities, and received training on their roles and DRR. The committee members encouraged rural communities to participate in the planning and implementation of livelihood and income diversification activities, psycho-social community initiatives, and to support extremely vulnerable individuals (women, people living with HIV and AIDS, disabled, displaced people, and returnee communities) that often are overlooked in the social mobilization process.

ICMC's community-based approach empowered communities while developing organizational skills that could advance social and developmental attitudes, skills and knowledge. Moreover, through the use of effective communication processes, community leaders, local government and the ultimate beneficiaries were integrated into an effective community-participation planning and implementation process and were encouraged to share experiences and newly acquired skills with

neighboring communities. In Banda Aceh, data collection was disaggregated by sex to help highlight gender issues in DRR planning and rehabilitation processes.

Analysis and Lessons Learnt

The use of a balance between self-help and external assistance was key to stimulating rural community animation and relief assistance. Deploying volunteers from rural areas highlighted the added value gained from using residents of the affected communities. This action showed respect for communities as partners in recovery and development processes, as opposed to the actions of other agencies that were said to have merely conducting needs assessments and disappeared. The added value of local volunteers is that it 'humanizes' recovery activities, and minimizes the stigma and dependency tendencies often attached to external assistance.

Through the extensive work of volunteers, both national and community-level capacity was built. The creation of disaster management committees at the village level and the performing of mock drills raised tsunami awareness and preparation. The assignment of volunteers to work in national institutions helped build institutional capacity and ensured involvement of all stakeholders in all phases of the project. Promoting national ownership and institutional capacity development has led to the successful integration of the UNV tsunami programme into DRR systems and processes.

Case Study #3: Involving an entire population in disaster risk reduction

Culture of safety in Cuba

Cuba is the largest of the Caribbean islands and has a population of 11.3 million people. It is in the path of hurricanes, with almost 500,000 people exposed to risk every year. Yet Cuba has been recognized as

one of the least vulnerable countries to hurricane hazards. When Hurricane George struck in 1998, only six people died in Cuba, while 209 were killed in Haiti. The six hurricanes that hit Cuba between 1996 and 2002 killed 16 people; 649 were killed elsewhere in the region.

Cuba's ace in the hole has been an effective DRR plan. This plan successfully integrates volunteerism, with most community members acting as volunteers, and awareness raising and education. The Cuban Meteorological Service plays an active part in raising the awareness of citizens and institutions by explaining the characteristics of hurricanes, their phenomena, their risks and how to reduce them, as well as how to respond to hurricane warning messages.

Through social and mass organizations, citizens are actively involved in orientation activities and disaster preparedness information sessions. The population receives DRR education at work, in school, in their communities, and through videos that are broadcasted on national and local television. Local organizations also assist civil defense organizations with community preparedness. The Red Cross and other NGOs participate as well. Citizens work on reducing their own risk while helping other members of the community at the same time. This concept is conveyed by the sentence "Run, tell your neighbor!" – seen in the 2005 World Disaster Report.

The consistently low hurricane death-tolls in Cuba are, of course, a reflection of its unique circumstances, including a highly centralized government and well-developed civil defence, including a militia. The way Cuba deploys its expertise at local level to help vulnerable communities, in particular, may have lessons for everyone. Cuba's example, it is argued, shows that protecting citizens from disaster is as much to do with political will and good organization as material wealth. (Not to mention a respected Red Cross Society well able to play to the full its role as government auxiliary.)

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, 2009: Disaster: *How the Red Cross Red Crescent Reduces Risk*, p. 2

Community level exercises such as community risk mapping, updating of community plans, and simulation exercises actively involve a significant portion of the population. Practice drills (called *meteoro*) take place throughout the country in May each year, before the beginning of the hurricane season. The Red Cross likewise participates in the *meteoro* to test their capacity for activating volunteers and staff country-wide, as well as other elements of their contingency plan that supports national response plans. Making each citizen aware of disaster risks and enabling them to implement appropriate measures to protect their lives, their families and their communities have helped create a 'culture of safety.' Every citizen transforms into a volunteer to help reduce risks and threats to their community.

An important aspect for preparedness in Cuba is that the country has an effective early warning system in place. The Cuban Meteorological Service provides timely early warnings that are broadcast to everyone through the national media, 74 hours in advance. At the same time, civil protection committees check evacuation plans and shelters. With a storm 48 hours away, authorities target warnings at high-risk areas. Local officials check that vulnerable people are being evacuated. Volunteers harvest crops and move animals to higher grounds. With 12 hours to go, everyone who needs to be evacuated should be in shelters and homes secured.

Community members, who are well prepared and organized, become active in disseminating early warning. Some citizens are also in charge of measuring rainfall and the level and flow of the rivers. They communicate this information back to the center of risk management at the municipal government level. In Cuba, all of the following are involved in disaster risk reduction activities and evacuation and rescue operations: the National Civil Defense and the High Command of the National Civil Defense, the Cuban Red Cross, the

International Federation of the Red Cross, community volunteers, social organizations, women's organizations and youth organizations.

Analysis and Lessons Learnt

The Cuban example shows that even with limited resources it is possible to develop an effective and far-reaching DRR strategy. The strong national commitment to DRR objectives, the solid institutional framework for disaster preparedness, an effective early warning system, educational and awareness-raising campaigns (the “culture of safety”), and the deep roots of community volunteerism makes Cuba exemplary. According to an Oxfam report, “The single most important thing about disaster response in Cuba is that people cooperate en masse.” The Cuban model is often held up as an example for reproduction in other countries around the world.

Case Study #4: Engaging volunteer-involving organizations for sustainable capacity building

Strengthening volunteer-involving organizations to support DRR and climate change strategies at the community level in Ecuador

Ecuador is prone to volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, floods, landslides and lengthy dry seasons. Yet, the country has limited capacity to respond to disasters as shown by the floods in January and February 2008. A project called ‘Strengthening Volunteer-Involving Organizations (VIO)’ implemented by UNV, UNDP and the Secretaría Nacional de Gestión de Riesgos (SNGR), supports DRR strategies in Ecuador. Started in 2010, the project involves volunteers and VIOs in broader DRR efforts, increasing the capacities of VIOs, while complementing the current efforts of UNDP and the Ecuadorian government. Until recently, VIOs and volunteers have only been involved in the response to disasters and not in DRR. As a result of this project, VIOs will be able to complement and

support the government in disaster situations across the country.

The project involves local communities as members of a national body coordinated by. This national body exists since 2004 and is composed of 27 national and international VIOs. In particular, three provinces have been chosen for project implementation: Chimborazo (volcano and earthquake risks), Manabi and Guayas (flood, drought and earthquake risk). In 2010, three national UN Volunteers working were assigned to the selected regions. The national volunteers trained local volunteers using a training-of-trainers approach and provided them with methodologies and tools to be able to further disseminate and pass on information and skills to communities.

Gender issues are tackled through gender-sensitive planning exercises, consultative processes for risk-mapping and involvement of men and women in decision making processes for DRR. UNDP, SNGR, and UNV are sharing experiences, expertise and knowledge of gender perspectives in DRR.

The key stakeholders are the local communities, national and local VIOs, national institutions in charge of DRR, as well as local authorities, due to the specific context in each province of intervention. Stakeholders are involved from the preparation phase onwards and during all phases of the project. In particular, national authorities are in charge of the project and local government authorities are involved, as far as possible, in order to guarantee the sustainability of the project. This case study shows that by involving and developing the capacities of VIO and local volunteers in DRR activities, they can pass on this capacity to the communities by transferring the knowledge acquired and therefore contribute to sustainable responses.

Analysis and Lessons Learnt

Community and volunteer organization involvement is the central facet of this project. Sustainable

capacity is being built through involving communities, VIOs and vulnerable people in all activities and phases of the project and assigning them clear roles, from risk assessment to training, to the design and implementation of emergency plans. In addition, the production of training materials, tools and methodologies, which are transferred to VIOs during the training sessions, also helps to build capacity.

Case Study # 5: Enabling communities to identify and mitigate risks

Nepal's participatory disaster management programme

Nepal is prone to flooding, earthquakes, drought, landslides, epidemics, Glacial Lake Outburst Floods, fire, and ecological hazards. Between 1983 and 1998, approximately 18,000 people lost their lives due to disasters. UNDP has been supporting Nepal since 1985 to respond to disaster and with development programmes. The initial focus was on disaster relief and rehabilitation, but this has evolved to include a broader community-based approach to risk mitigation. Two projects – the 'Participatory Disaster Management Programme' and 'Strengthening Disaster Management Capacity' were designed to increase the capacity of the Nepalese people and authorities to manage risks associated with natural disasters and to influence organizations to include disaster mitigation in their regular development programming.

The programme partners are the Ministry of Home Affairs, UNOPS, UNDP/Japan Women in Development Fund, and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development. The programme's approach to reducing water-related hazards and risks is to create self-governing community organizations (SGCOs) and develop standard operation procedures in collaboration with the government. A methodology for assessing

women's vulnerability by disaggregating data by gender is included. The SGCOs are encouraged to utilize indigenous knowledge and locally-available materials.

As a result, community members are empowered to actively contribute to reducing the risk in their community. Twelve SGCOs were formed in project districts and members received training. About 50 percent of SGCO members are women. The SGCOs serve as a link between their communities and the programme and they mobilize local resources as well as maintain records of external support. SGCOs and community members designed and successfully implemented DRR activities. Hazard mapping and risk assessment activities were completed for participating villages.

The project was also implemented in the Kathmandu Valley to reduce the risk to communities from seismic activity. The focus was on community-based emergency plans and the creation of disaster management committees. Community members were provided with training and the necessary equipment for disaster preparedness.

Analysis and Lessons Learnt

By partnering with community networks and through the creation of self-governing community organizations, which collaborated with the government and local communities, these DRR projects enhanced the participation of communities in disaster response. Gender issues were addressed by developing a methodology for assessing women's vulnerability and by disaggregating national data by gender.

The project promotes an important shift from focusing on disaster relief and rescue to community-led disaster preparedness and mitigation.

Case Study # 6: Promoting the role of children in disaster response

Children and DRR in Mozambique

Between 1956 and 2008, Mozambique suffered 10 droughts (resulting in the death of over 100,000 people), 20 floods (1,921 deaths) and 13 tropical cyclones (taking 697 lives). Millions more people were affected by these disasters. In Mozambique, most families rely on farming, making them extremely vulnerable to natural hazards, such as floods, droughts and crop diseases.

Save the Children works in Mozambique focusing on several areas: HIV and AIDS, food security, health, education, disaster response and disaster preparedness. Jointly with UNICEF and the European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO), Save the Children has been promoting DRR in communities and in particular working with children in flood-affected areas of Mozambique.

The project 'Children and DRR' specifically aims at empowering children aged 12-18 and communities in two districts of the Zambezi Province – Morrumbala and Mopeia – that have been affected by flooding of the Zambezi River. These floods have increased in frequency and become more severe over the last decade. And this trend is predicted to worsen in the future due to climate change in the southern Africa region.

The project promotes the active role of children in disaster response and mitigation and disaster preparedness by disseminating information and good practices. Volunteer teachers use low-cost, local materials for books, games and toys to help children learn by doing. Educational and interactive tools include school magazines, community brochures, informative material, radio programmes, theatre and a project called the River Board Game.

All these materials impart information to children and adults on what to do in case of flooding, drought, cyclones, and forest fires. The River Game allows children to learn in a playful way how to cope with floods.

The use of radio and theatre helps stimulate community discussion on DRR, such as the causes of floods and measures to increase community preparedness. The programme also includes training activities and material development for teachers. It is careful to involve community members, community leaders and district education authorities. As it falls in line with national educational policy, the programme received strong support from the government. At the national level, there was productive collaboration with the National Institute for Disaster Management, which will help ensure the project's sustainability and replication in other parts of the country.

Through this project, children became powerful advocates of disaster preparedness and DRR in their communities, delivering the information received through the River Board Game and other materials to their peers and community members.

Analysis and Lessons Learnt

The active participation of children and other community members was ensured through the use of engaging educational and interactive tools. A hands-on, learning-by-doing approach was adopted and the methods were tailored to the needs of children, with emphasis on learning while playing. The involvement and support of the government will help ensure the sustainability of the programme and encourage replication in other parts of the country in the future.

According to the report *Local Voices, Global Choices: For Successful Disaster Risk Reduction* (Sarah Moss, 2008) the project "also played a part in helping to change attitudes towards the role of children in communities. The enthusiasm and

engagement by children helped to convince parents, community leaders and teachers that children are not just victims when these events occur but have an important role to play when they do.”

Sources: E. Back et al, 2009: Children and Disaster Risk Reduction: Taking stock and moving forward; UNICEF, 2009: UNICEF and Children in a changing climate; Save the Children: Coping with Flood, Children and Disaster Risk Reduction along the Zambezi River.

3. CONCLUSION

Increasingly, volunteerism is supporting initiatives to mitigate and prevent natural disasters, as well as prepare communities, should disasters occur. Volunteerism in DRR is a powerful means of engaging people. Volunteers play a strategic role in community development processes and in strengthening community resilience to disasters. Through the use of participatory methods, awareness-raising and education, the great dedication of volunteers can mobilize communities and contribute to building preparedness and response capacities at the national, local and community levels.

Several general conclusions can be highlighted:

Community participation

Community members are the first to respond when a crisis strikes. Therefore, it is important that volunteers ensure that DRR planning and activities involve the target communities. Communities need to be prioritized based on their need for assistance and encouraged to contribute toward and support extremely vulnerable individuals. Communities also require household income to meet basic requirements while building equity for asset replenishment.

Cooperation among volunteers, local authorities and NGOs enables national authorities to bridge the gap with communities and respond to their needs. Active involvement of the community, national, and local stakeholders in DRR, recovery and reconstruction

activities helps to build capacity at all levels; raise awareness, increase disaster preparedness and address the needs of the community.

Partnering with community-based social networks increases community participation. The deployment of local volunteers who have a sound knowledge of the culture, religion and language of the region helps volunteers to gain the community’s trust and, as a result, promotes greater participation and a spirit of volunteerism in the community.

Gender, youth and marginalized groups

Every year, millions of people are affected by natural disasters. The most vulnerable - such as women, children and marginalized groups - usually suffer the most. Volunteers should work to identify the needs of vulnerable groups and involve them in the process of DRR activities and planning.

Gender issues can be addressed by partnering with local women’s committees or creating local women’s associations, such as those in Bangladesh (see case study 1). This has significantly increased the level of participation of women in DRR and women’s needs are therefore taken into greater account in DRR planning. An example of a good practice was the UN Volunteer working with the NGO Badan Rehabilitasi dan Rekonstruksi in Banda Aceh who developed a database to manage projects and coordinate the rehabilitation process, in which all data was disaggregated by gender.

Volunteers can also help by expanding marginalized group access to services that were inaccessible before.

Several case studies highlight the importance of providing training to women, youth and marginalized groups, that can empower them to reduce both personal and community risks. UNICEF’s project (case study 6) shows that it is particularly important for children to be involved in community-level DRR projects. Developing children’s skills and raising their

awareness of disaster risks can reduce their helplessness and vulnerability.

Cultural and religious aspects need to be taken into account to increase the participation of the most vulnerable populations. The example of the Cyclone Preparedness Programme in Bangladesh (case study 1) shows that involving women in DRR in a conservative religious environment can be challenging. In conservative Muslim or Hindu communities, some women are not allowed to attend meetings. Volunteers have partnered with local committees in creating local women's associations and have organized workshops with religious leaders in order to tackle this issue. As a result, an increasing number of women are volunteering with the Bangladesh Red Crescent and are becoming more involved in their communities.

Stakeholder participation

Many cases show that coordinated, multi-agency action, combined with education at the grassroots level, can help alleviate suffering and save lives. Volunteerism plays a key role in this. National and international volunteers can contribute – through a combination of sound technical skills and a high level of motivation, commitment and spirit of volunteerism – to a positive collaboration among stakeholders, governments, UN agencies and NGOs. Defining clear roles and tasks is crucial in this process. Successful collaboration is enabled by involving all stakeholders in every phase of the project, from the planning phase onward. Good collaboration ensures that all partners understand the benefits of their participation and cooperation. Collaborating partners each bring comparative advantages, experiences and perspectives into the process of achieving common goals, and complement each other's efforts.

The community at risk, as well as national and local government authorities, should be frontline partners in the development of DRR initiatives. This helps guarantee the sustainability of the project. Likewise, it is essential to involve community-based organizations

and local VIOs in prevention and mitigation plans. These organizations can play a key role in strengthening local capacities to prevent and reduce the impact of natural disasters.

Programming aspects

Volunteering is a spontaneous response when natural disasters occur. Volunteers can be considered a de facto resource that becomes critical during the emergency phase of a natural disaster. Strengthening the capacities of this resource increases the efficiency of their participation during the response phase. It is also important to establish national and/or local volunteer schemes that can facilitate the organization and management of this influx of spontaneous voluntary action. Moreover, involving spontaneous volunteers in prevention and mitigation plans, beyond the actual response to the emergency, reinforces their sense of participation and bridges the gap between national plans, policy-makers and affected communities.

DRR strategies need to integrate volunteer skills into the project planning phase. The integration of volunteerism into a DRR strategy and a country's disaster management plans leads to long-term capacity building and sustainability in the community.

The recruitment of national volunteers, familiar with their country's culture, religion and language, is highly recommended. Incorporating a strategic mentoring, monitoring and evaluation strategy within each initiative can strengthen effective communication and coordination within programmes and projects.

For effective programme and project implementation, it is important that clear roles are assigned to volunteers and long-term assignments guaranteed. Training should be a key component of every programme and project and – as there is often a high turnover of volunteers – it is necessary to conduct training on a continuous basis.

Capacity building

Capacity building should be a long-term, continuous process, in which all stakeholders participate (ministries, local authorities, NGOs, communities, professional associations, academics and others). The assignment of volunteers to work and live among communities or work in national institutions helps to encourage participation and develop capacity at the community and national level. It also contributes to filling an immediate capacity gap after a disaster has struck.

Employing participatory methods can enhance community involvement, while building long-term capacity at the national and community level. Involving the community in earlier stages of the DRR process helps in the collection of needs and requirements, allowing more accurate targeting and programming. Further involvement of communities in risk and vulnerability assessments, design of disaster plans, implementation of projects, mock drill exercises, and the creation of disaster committees empowers them to acquire knowledge and tools to be better prepared for disasters, while simultaneously building long-term

capacity. It is also important to provide communities with tools and methodologies that can be replicated in the future.

Training is a key component in capacity development strategies. Training should target communities, national institutions and the volunteers themselves. In fact, deployed volunteers are not always sufficiently trained, so training becomes integral to the success of the project. A long-term training strategy can be very effective and will build sustainable capacity at the community level. Training programmes that include a training-of-trainers strategy may be particularly successful in ensuring that community capacity is maintained long term. DRR training that targets women, youth or marginalized people needs to take into account their specific needs and requirements. For instance, the use of interactive tools such as games, toys and theatre plays can help children learn by doing and playing. Investments in children's education and training on DRR can have long-term benefits for both families and society. In addition, the language and images need to be adapted and relevant to local contexts.



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