

Fact Sheet

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Gulf of Mottama Project



CBDRM | Community Based Disaster Risk Management

17 June, 2020



The Gulf of Mottama Project (GoMP) focuses on Natural Coastal Resources Management in 60 villages and considers natural hazards, climate change and environmental degradation as crucial factors influencing development. In order to address these risks and identify relevant solutions, community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM) has been introduced since 2016. This experience and learnings are presented here.

Myanmar is exposed to a broad range of natural hazards such as cyclones, floods, erosion. The limited access to communication, migration, inappropriate natural resource management and lacking prevention measures negatively contribute to the vulnerability of the population. Disasters pose a serious threat to the socio-economic development of the country. With the effects of climate change, these events tend to increase in intensity and frequency. Today the focus is rather on response during a disaster event than on preparedness and prevention for an integrated disaster risk management. Particularly rural communities are at the frontline of disasters related to extreme events but also recurrent seasonal phenomena.

The Government of Myanmar co-signed the international Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and elaborated the **Myanmar Action Plan for DRR (MAPDRR17)** for the period 2016-20 with 32 priority measures in four core areas: risk assessments, risk governance, DRR mainstreaming into development planning and preparedness. The MAPDRR17 as well as the National Framework for Community Disaster Resilience, underline that communities shall be actively involved to be better protected and prepared for a disaster resilient development.

The GoMP is a project of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) implemented by a consortium led by Helvetas and the Network Activity Group (NAG) and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) with a focus on Coastal Resources Management. It aims to conserve and sustainably manage the natural coastal resources in Mon

State and Bago Region for the ultimate benefit of coastal communities. Considering the exposure and vulnerability of the area, natural hazards, climate change and environmental degradation are important cross-cutting aspects of the project.

The success factor for a functional DRM system is a strong collaboration among different actors, considering disaster risk as a development topic. The project focuses on strengthening local actors through **community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM)** including linkages to strengthen mandated government institutions.

What was done, how, with whom?

The GoMP is implemented in partnership with the local NGO NAG, that works in close collaboration with the communities through representatives of village development committees, farmers, fishers and other interest groups. The first step in CBDRM was to have a clear understanding of the challenges, namely disaster risks, to jointly identify solutions, namely DRM measures. In a one-week workshop community facilitators were trained to identify and prioritize disaster risks and risk reduction measures. Instead of a top down expert approach, the project chose to strengthen communities by putting them into an active role. Hence, CBDRM was identified as the most effective way to consider the high social and geographic variability of hazards and vulnerabilities, and to **value communities as proactive contributors**.

Sr	Activities	Planned Activities	Completed activities		On going activities		Uncompleted activities	
1	Infrastructure & Other development activities	207	27	13%	61	30%	119	57%
2	Livelihoods	382	119	31%	157	41%	106	28%
3	Natural Resources Conservation	59	10	17%	30	51%	19	32%
4	DRR & WASH	159	37	23%	44	28%	78	49%
Total		807	193	24%	292	36%	322	40%

Table 1: Planned, ongoing and completed CBDRM activities of GoMP villages as of March 2020.

CBDRM refers to more than a set of activities with the communities. It is an approach, where communities' capacities are built to identify disaster risks, prioritize these and define required actions.

In each village of the GoMP, two DRM focal persons - usually a man and a woman - were identified and **trained in CBDRM and disaster preparedness** through a 3 to 5-day training in close collaboration with the Department of Disaster Management (DDM). After the training, the village DRM focal persons, supported by a community facilitator elaborated a DRM action plan together with a group of village representatives. Considering the high migration rate, DDM and the project also supported yearly refresher courses. Through this process the village DRM focal persons were enabled to follow up on the implementation of the action plan and to update the DRM action plan.

The project followed the CBDRM guideline book by DDM. But practice showed that this lengthy process focused more strongly on risk and problem analysis than on solution finding, and consequently participation by the communities was low. Therefore, the project opted for a **simplified CBDRM process**: the information referring to the first steps - referring to general data, problems, resources, social maps, seasonal calendars - was extracted from earlier project work, in order to start directly with the hazard - risk assessment, which is a crucial entry point for understanding the problems and for identifying successful DRM measures. It is therefore important to do this jointly

with the concerned communities to ensure that their **local perspectives and priorities** are considered.

The central step in CBDRM refers to the joint identification of risk reduction measures. It is important not to end up with a long list of measures but to prioritize them, considering local resources and capacities. Not necessarily sophisticated engineering infrastructure might be the solution. Often, communities - or certain sub-groups, neighboring villages - already have ideas and capacities to improve or build local measures to adapt and deal with their problems. The project supported the partner communities in the identification of measures and supported them in their implementation of which the results are shown in Table 1.

The final step in the CBDRM process of the GoMP is probably the most relevant one. It refers to linking DRM with development planning. Unfortunately, this is often hardly done and not part of the official CBDRM process. Experience shows that many measures of the



Water pond, Mi Lauk Village, Thanatpin Tsp © Min Nyan Seik

DRM action plan cannot be implemented by DRR focal persons and villagers themselves but require support from external stakeholders. Therefore, a crucial step is to link the DRM action plan with the village development plan (VDP). Risk reduction measures should be considered as an added value for disaster resilient development planning. Mainstreaming DRM into development, means protecting investments from future disasters. Often simple adjustments in planned activities related to agricultural practices, water management or infrastructure can effectively help to prevent or at least reduce the impacts of disasters.

In the frame of the GoMP in each of the 60 partner villages, the communities elaborated their DRM action plan. Key elements of this plan were integrated into the VDP. Communities were supported to implement small scale priority measures or to lobby with other actors, especially township government to get external support for bigger interventions.

How to ensure sustainability of CBDRM beyond the GoMP?

The project piloted and adjusted its approach in CBDRM since 2016. The internal analysis and



Press Conference during Chased by the Tide, Sittaung Riverbank Erosion Documentary Launching Event, Yangon © NAG

learnings showed that a crucial aspect is to strengthen linkages between communities and government institutions from townships to Region/State level across different sectors to build up capacities and enable partners to continue an improved management of disaster risks and natural resources beyond the project duration. In the challenging context of a high migra-

The Gulf of Mottama Project supported the implementation of:

- Four CBDRM Facilitator Trainings to DRR focal persons, VDC members and CFMs in Bago and Mon
- 32 awareness raising campaigns and village action plan for DRM
- 32 Water supply schemes (two open dug wells, one deep tube well, one new pond and 28 pond renovations)

tion, multiple duties of community representatives - especially DRM focal persons - it is crucial that mandated governmental institutions in collaboration with other permanent actors ensure the institutionalization of CBDRM.

For the GoMP, the DDM and the DRR Working group of Mon State (DRR WG, see box) are therefore the most relevant partners. The DRR WG is a multi-stakeholder group, which meets regularly and elaborates a joint action plan fostering collaboration. CBDRM is an essential element of all members' work on which they exchange experience and support each other for project planning and implementation through supporting processes including provision of materials and tools.

Another important process for the institutionalization of CBDRM and its sustainability is the work across administrative entities fostering and validating a bottom up process (see figure).

As for DRM, this requires that the results of communities' CBDRM plans are considered in the township DRM plans, which thereafter inform district DRM plans and finally State/ Region and national DRM plans. This calls for a strong collaboration amongst the differ-



Participants from local communities discuss about riverbank erosion in affected villages in Bago Region during data collection for a disaster risk management workshop © Nyan Seik

Mon State DRR working group

Purpose

A platform for information sharing, [coordination, consensus building and partnership](#) to support DDM and Mon State Government in disaster preparedness and response.

Thematic Areas

- Support policy dialogue and strengthen institutions for DRR
- Promote community-based disaster preparedness and mitigation
- Build DRR knowledge and awareness
- Contribute to mainstream DRR into other sectors

Structure

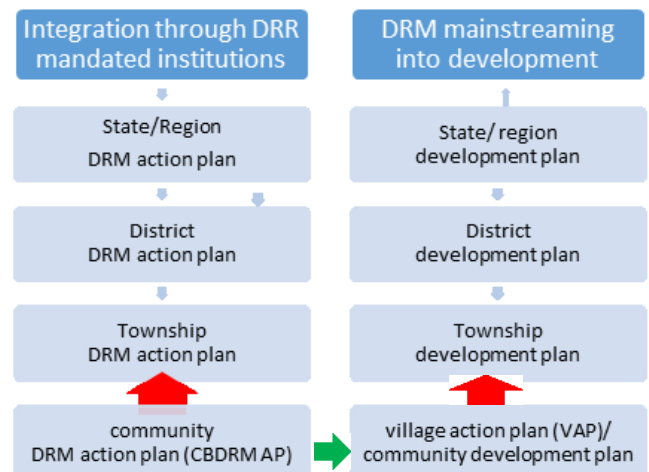
Honorary Chair: Mon State DDM
Chair: Helvetas Myanmar (since 2018)
Co-Chair: World Vision Myanmar

Members

- Government departments (DDM, Dept. of Social Welfare/ DSW, Environmental Conservation Dept. / ECD, Dept. of Health, General Administration Dept./ GAD, fire brigades)
- UN agencies (UNDP, WFP, IOM)
- International NGOs (Helvetas, World Vision, Care, Mercy Corps, Pact MMR, VSO, NRC) and national NGOs (LRC, Myanmar Red Cross)

ent administrative levels of DDM under the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement. In parallel to this process, it is equally important to mainstream DRM into development planning. This starts at the village level where community DRM plans should be integrated into village development plans. These plans should be considered by the consecutive administrative level, informing township, district, Regional/State and finally national development plans and respective budgets. This is a complex and lengthy process based on improved collaboration across different administrative levels; but essential for an inclusive disaster resilient development on the long term.

All 60 village CBDRM action plans in the project area where integrated into the VDP. Since 2020 the project works closely with the General Administrative Dept (GAD) and UNDP related to another SDC financed



project. By the end of 2021 all VDP shall be integrated into Township Development Plans. This institutionalization of DRM through mainstreaming DRM into development is a central aspect for sustainability.

What are the results and added value of CBDRM in GoMP?

The experience of the GoMP proved that CBDRM is an important process beyond the action focused participation of communities for disaster response. It

Quantitative results of GoM project

- 104 village focal Person trained in CBDRM
- 60 Village DRM Action plans elaborated
- DRM aspects integrated in 60 VAP
- Community mangrove forests are recognized by Government and managed by the communities themselves.

refers to the consideration of their perspectives, needs but also the validation of their resources, which tend to be underestimated. Through CBDRM local capacities for transparent and participatory process can be built up.

The analysis of disaster-related problems showed that DRM is not only relevant for mega events, but also for seasonal calamities regularly causing important losses at household level. DRM is a development topic, which refers to measures beyond preparedness for response of mega events. With simple prevention measures, losses of frequent small events can be substantially improved. The most relevant success factor in DRM is collaboration among actors, which requires exchange and partnerships between communities, government institutions and other interest groups for problem analysis, planning, implementation and monitoring of measures. For small-scale measures communities' resources shall be validated by building up local capacities. For more complex measures communities need to know their rights and build upon their linkages with the government to effectively advocate for support.

Key factors for successful CBDRM

- Shift from disaster response towards preparedness and risk management
- Set-up an effective early warning system
- Consider DRM as a development topic
- Foster collaboration among actors

The added value of community engagement in emergency situations - based on CBDRM experience

During the **COVID-19 crisis** in 2020 the experience of CBDRM proved to be highly relevant for a swift reaction. For the following aspects communities' participation was crucial:

- They knew the vulnerabilities and needs within their villages for the assessment and identification of people most in danger of COVID or in urgent need for support.
- They knew the local settings to select swiftly sites for COVID quarantine camps.
- Since they are already present, they could be mobilized swiftly for the distribution of required goods (soap, hygiene kits, etc.).
- The establishment of messenger groups was key to elaborate and disseminate credible awareness raising messages on what to do and to fight against false rumors and misinformation.

The Gulf of Mottama Project in a nutshell

Goal: Improve livelihood security and build resilience of communities in the Gulf of Mottama, through the implementation of a broadly supported Coastal Resources Management Plan.

Primary stakeholders: Fishers, farmers, landless and land-poor households, women headed households and youth.

Consortium: Helvetas, IUCN, NAG.

Partners: Myanmar Fisheries Federation, Agriculture and Fisheries service and input providers, Vision Fund Myanmar, Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Yezin Agriculture University, Mawlamyine and Bago Universities, HAFL (School for Agricultural, Forestry and Food Sciences).

Project duration: Phase I: 2015 - 2018, Phase II: 2018 - 2021.

Project region: 60 coastal villages of Mon State and Bago Region.

Further references:

- [Project website Helvetas Myanmar](#)
- [Project website SDC](#)
- [SDC factsheet GoM project](#)
- [Facebook Page GoMP](#)

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