

**Training on TDRM :
Experiences in Laos and Cambodia with support from OCHA Kobe and ADRC
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Over the last two years, OCHA Kobe together with ADRC has tried to advocate the TDRM approach in Asia through meetings and workshops for international and regional organizations, government officials, and NGOs. In the TDRM approach, the importance of the enhancement of local capacity in disaster risk management in order to prevent, mitigate, prepare for and respond effectively to the occurrence of disasters is emphasized. This includes the capacity building of national and local governments who are the key and leading players to implement the TDRM approach in the respective countries.

A participative approach in the TDRM is essential. The effectiveness of disaster risk intervention can be ensured when the local governments and people at risk are directly involved in the disaster risk management process because of their local knowledge, rather than relying on expert knowledge and technologies. Furthermore, local involvement not only makes it possible to define problems correctly, but also to respond to disasters more efficiently and effectively with existing local resources.

The participants of this international training programme on TDRM are government officials, and focal persons in national disaster coordinating bodies, national government agencies, and/ or provincial governments, especially those willing to take leadership challenges and are able to commit to implementing the same training in their countries. Following this training, in order to realize a participative approach in each country, we hope that echo-training programmes for disaster management, hazard mapping and damage and needs assessment based on this training will be organized in the participating countries in the near future.

However, there were already several countries which had conducted training workshops at the provincial level prior to this training session in Kobe. Today, on this occasion, I would like to present a report summarizing the experiences of training related to the TDRM approach, which was held in Bangladesh, Laos and Cambodia with financial and technical support by OCHA Kobe and ADRC. The main theme taken up at each workshop was different and included issues such as improvement of early warning systems, enhancement of the capacity of the media for disaster management and capacity building of the local government officials for damage and needs assessment, all of which are very important factors to implement in a holistic approach to disaster management.

Bangladesh

In December 2002, OCHA Kobe and ADRC supported the Bangladesh government in organizing a workshop on *"the Improvement of Early Warning Systems and Responses in Bangladesh towards Total Disaster Risk Management Approach"* held on 19-24 December 2002 in Dhaka. This workshop was organized by the Bangladesh Public Administration Training Center (BPATC) & Disaster Management Bureau (DMB).

The main theme of this workshop was to improve the capacity in disaster preparedness and disaster response in terms of early warning systems of various disasters with special reference to earthquakes. Another issue was the adoption by both government and NGOs of appropriate

policy options in the country. Early warning systems are widely considered to be efficient and effective because they reduce human and economic losses. Achievement of early warning and response to disasters requires effective coordination and cooperation between various responsible agencies, institutions, officials, the media, political leaders and other players at local, national and international levels. In consequence, achievement of overall improvement in early warning requires capacity building, particularly at the local and national levels, and improving coordination at local, national and international levels.

Thirty-seven participants from different Ministries, local and national governments, NGOs and institutions, attended the seminar. The seminar provided the participants with the opportunity to learn about early warning systems in Japan and Bangladesh and to raise and discuss the issues that need to be improved. The following were the major recommendations adopted by the participants: 1) preparation of standard hazard maps with recent aerial photographs and topography and evacuation plans, 2) institutional capacity building for concerned departments and agencies through training for trainers, exchange programmes for technical specialists, etc, 3) establishment of seismic stations and observatories for the prediction and monitoring of seismic activities equipped with the most technically advanced instruments, 4) conducting of damage assessment at the initial stage, 5) improvement and simplification of warning signals, dissemination system, flood forecasting and warning systems, and 6) enhancement of regional cooperation for information sharing on water level, rainfall, and flood data.

Laos

In February, the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO), Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of the Laos government organized *"the Training Workshop on Early Warning, Public Awareness and Education against Disasters"* in Vientiane, Lao PDR on 4-7 February. The participants were from the Information and Culture Department of the local governments, most of whom were editors, and journalists in charge of information flow and dissemination. The purpose of this workshop was to train the participants in order to enhance their knowledge of disaster risk management and risk reduction with emphasis on the roles and responsibilities of media in effective disaster preparedness and response through activities of early warning, public awareness and education.

The notable feature of this training was that it emphasized the importance and responsibilities of media in disaster management. Media plays a vital role in the process of disaster reduction and response: 1) educating the public about disasters, 2) warning of hazards, 3) gathering and disseminating information about affected areas, 4) alerting government officials and the public to specific needs, and 5) facilitating discussion about disaster preparedness and response. In order for media to discharge these roles, it is indispensable to promote cooperation between it and national/ local governments, NGOs and international/regional organizations.

The workshop was attended by thirty-eight participants from the Information and Culture Department in different provinces. This workshop was designed to provide the participants with the basic concepts of terms and definitions in disaster management such as: disaster cycle, risk and damage assessment, emergency response, early warning, and lessons-learned from disasters that occurred in Laos. Another purpose was to demonstrate how successful disaster management supports the developmental process. Presentations were made by resource persons from NDMO, Lao Red Cross, Fire Protection Department, Traffic Department, Lao National Committee for Inspection and Drug Control, Lao National Mekong Committee, Meteorological Department, Vientiane Municipality, ADRC, Japan Weather Association and OCHA Kobe.

According to the course evaluation by the participants, most of them appreciated the opportunity to take this course and were satisfied with the outcome.

Cambodia

In May, the National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM) of the Cambodian Government organized a series of three-day training workshops for damage and needs assessment for provincial/district disaster assessment teams. The five workshops were held in different provinces in order to provide the participants with information concerning the orientation, format and procedure of disaster damage and needs assessment. The other purpose was to establish disaster assessment teams which consist of multilateral agencies in Cambodia. The participants were the provincial government officials in charge of disaster issues.

Disaster assessment is a key element of successful disaster response. The clear and concise assessment of damage, losses and injuries in the aftermath of a disaster is a prerequisite for the effective planning and implementation of relief and recovery. The objectives of damage and needs assessment are to determine: 1) nature and extent of a disaster, 2) damage and secondary threats, 3) needs of the population, 4) resource availability and local response capacity, 5) options for relief assistance, longer term recovery and development, and 6) the need for international assistance. An assessment that is improperly planned or handled can delay the response and in some cases cause increased suffering and even death.

The workshop presented information concerning reports that differ according to timing, frequency and information flow: flash-SOS reports (to report that an emergency actually happened and what local authorities are doing about it), initial reports (to report the severity of the disaster, the priority needs of the affected population and the type of outside assistance needed immediately), and district and provincial level damage report (to report in details the extent of damages for each vulnerable element, particularly population, household property, agriculture, livelihood, community and public facilities, the priority needs of the type of population, the type and quantity of assistance provided at each level and the additional need for outside assistance), and national report (to report a summary of the situation, nature and magnitude of disaster, effects to the population, damage by sector, any secondary threats, the national response by the government and NGOs and IOs, any unmet needs and recommendations for further assistance if needed. Many exercises for preparation of the risk monitoring reports were also adopted.

I hope that the experiences in Bangladesh, Laos and Cambodia will provide you with relevant data for the echo training you will conduct in your respective countries. The benefits derived from the use and applications of advanced technologies for disaster risk management could be substantial, especially in mitigating the impact and damage of disasters on human lives and the economy. However, major challenges in pursuing effective disaster risk management still remain, particularly in strengthening national capacities, improving coordination and communications across all levels and sectors of society, and in enhancing networking among government agencies, academe, scientists and local communities, among others. I believe these challenges can be effectively addressed through human resource development programmes, including training and skills enhancement, especially at the local level, with multi-sectoral and multidisciplinary participation that ensures a holistic approach to disaster management.

Lastly, I strongly recommend that those interested in the aforementioned training activities in Bangladesh, Laos and Cambodia, take the opportunity this international training presents to

discuss and share their respective ideas and experiences with the other participants.