

Natural Disaster Risk Management (NDRM) in Vietnam

Field Perspective based on INGOs' Community-Level Engagement

NDRM Accomplishments

- The Government is already implementing programmes to raise awareness and to build the capacity of local communities regarding the Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) and the National Climate Change Strategy; particularly targeting the most vulnerable groups such as ethnic minorities, children, disabled, elderly, and women.
- Local authorities have a strong interest in integrating Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) into local planning to ensure sustainability, particularly in terms of implementing the Socio Economic Development Plan (SEDP) at the local level.
- The Government has established an Early Warning System – still not completely accurate for natural hazards and not providing forecast related to climate change impacts – which may benefit from further improvements. However, the Government's response to disasters in Vietnam is good – both at central and community levels, particularly in saving lives and securing food supply during and after a crisis.
- Collective INGOs' interventions over the past 15 years have supported local communities' efforts to build their own resilience to disasters, and also the Government's capacity to implement and roll out wider CBDRM actions. This existing capacity should now be leveraged to scale up interventions in 6,000 communes nation-wide, as targeted by the Government's Decision N°1002.
- Most INGOs are well organized and collaborate with other NDRM partners through the Disaster Management Working Group (DMWG), which meets regularly every month at the VUFO-NGO Resource Centre, utilizing its resources such as the DMWG mailing list as the key channel of communication between different stakeholders.

NDRM Challenges

- Local communities lack sound guidance for the integration process and they must build their capacity to better respond to disasters. A greater level of coordination is required between the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MoNRE), the Ministry of Planning and Investment (MPI), other relevant line ministries, United Nations agencies, INGOs, development agencies and civil society.
- The budget secured by the state for Programme 1002 will cover CBDRM activities in 3,300 communes (55%). The programme will require scaling up to meet the needs of the remaining 2,700 communes in Vietnam. The Government is committed to mobilize the remaining 45% of the funding from international aid and public contribution. However, there has not been a clear guidance from the Ministry of Finance on how these funds are utilised at different levels.
- The new law on disaster management – currently under development – should take into consideration the need for urgent humanitarian assistance during a crisis period; The government should work towards enabling more favourable visa regime, tax exemptions and less bureaucratic import procedures. These changes will secure swift interventions by INGOs.

The coordinating role of the People's Aid Coordinating Committee (PACCOM) should be utilized through its community appeals and announcements.

- Clearer understanding is required of the mechanisms for cooperation, the roles and the capacity of the Provincial Committees on Flood and Storm Control, the Fatherland Front, Red Cross and People's Committees – in relation to preparedness, response, recovery and longer term disaster risk reduction in a climate change context. INGOs should improve information sharing, including standards, projects' locations, methodologies and good practices.
- Livelihood recovery after the crisis is slow and needs more resources, particularly at the family level. Preparedness plans should include better stockpiles and a more efficient supply system; The Government often puts emphasis on building dikes and infrastructure, but there is a lack of community-based Disaster Risk Reduction plans.
- Rapid livelihood recovery as a measurement of community resilience needs to go beyond household level and take into account the DRM capacity of the Small and Medium Enterprise sector (SME) at practical and policy levels. The SME sector is key to Vietnam's economic growth and employment generation, yet nearly half of the businesses have no emergency response or DRM plan. The Asia Foundation 2011 SME Survey in Khanh Hoa, Da Nang and Nghe showed that 85% of businesses are frequently affected by storms and 45% by floods, with serious losses in assets and products.

Lessons Learnt on DRR

- More effective DRR plans should be developed, including local communities' participation and using the tools for community risk assessment, such as Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (PVCA).
- Priority should be given to improving knowledge, awareness, attitudes and a self-help spirit regarding Disaster Risk Management among stakeholders – then focusing on public infrastructure.
- The most effective introduction of CBDRM at all levels is through direct communication and 'hands-on' support – such as experience sharing meetings, cross visits, presentations of good practices and community participation in project activities.
- INGOs 'grass-roots' experiences should be better utilized and used for policy advocacy.
- Gender roles and responsibilities of different community groups need to be clear. Communities must be empowered for participation, contribution and monitoring of the process. Women should be empowered to participate in planning and decision making processes for DRR/CCA.
- SMEs should be integrated into CBDRM work as an essential part of community resilience.

INGOs' Recommendations

- Coordination among all stakeholders is crucial. The Government has taken important steps toward developing an understanding of climate change science and the potential future impact on Vietnam, as well as synergies of disaster risk reduction and climate change. In order to better link disaster risk reduction and climate change in the projects implemented at the local level, a

greater level of coordination between MARD and MoNRE is needed; as well as participation across Government agencies and collaboration between development partners.

- Red Cross, the Fatherland Front, Women's Union, Youth Union and other mass organizations should exchange information to improve their capacity and expand areas for cooperation; as well as to organize shared training sessions and workshops. INGOs and international development partners need to share long-term planning through PACCOM and United Nations agencies. They need to share good practices and to encourage participation of the governmental partners and mass organizations in forums such as the Disaster Management Working Group and Climate Change Working Group.
- The Disaster Management Working Group should continue to intensify its collaboration with other networks, including the Climate Change Working Group and the Joint Advocacy Network Initiative (JANI) to advocate for more comprehensive DRR programmes, policies and legal frameworks – such as the law on DRM and CBDRM programme. Risks and risk reduction should be closely tied to poverty, social environment and good governance in Vietnam.
- Humanitarian responses should meet internationally-agreed minimum standards, At minimum, there should be a clear agreement among different actors about expected standards for Vietnam.
- Local communities need more evacuation spaces, such as from high buildings, schools, health care centres and other public buildings; More safety techniques should be trained to save lives. All vulnerable groups must be involved in assessment, planning and implementation of local CBDRM plans. It is essential to mobilise INGOs' technical support for CBDRM in Vietnam.
- In order to become sustainable, PVCA results should be incorporated into communes' regular planning processes, such as Committee of Flood and Storm Control's plans and SEDPs. DRM plans should not be developed separately. The Government needs to improve down-scaled climate change information and early warning systems in the communities vulnerable to climate change; DRM and CCA planning should be integrated and institutionalized into socio-economic planning at provincial and district levels.
- New funding coming in for climate change adaptation should be in forms of grants (not loans), reaching vulnerable communities to support adaptation, and not just national or sectoral levels.
- Raising the awareness on CC and DRM needs to be included into regular education system.
- Gender equality and women empowerment should be integral parts of all policies, strategies and plans for DRR and CCA of the Government as well as stakeholders.
- INGOs, development partners, local and national government agencies should focus more on building the DRM capacity of SMEs and integrate business into DRM policies and planning.
- To help scale up the national CBDRM programme, good practices from local levels should be shared at provincial and national levels for replication in other areas and evidence-based policy changes. A clear coordination mechanism for CBDRM implementation should be supported by different organisations to help maximising good practices and preventing overlaps. Getting central and provincial government officials involved in 'hands-on' CBDRM process will help them to improve their guidelines for implementation at local levels.

Major NGO activities on DRR:

- Supporting development of commune/village/district/province DRR action plans;
- Developing DRR/CBDRM framework, including Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment;
- Capacity building at the household level;
- Developing early warning mechanisms;
- Developing rescue, evacuation and first aid mechanisms;
- Main-streaming leadership and gender issues;
- Initiating Information, Education and Communication campaigns;
- Organizing swimming lessons;
- Developing DRR education for students and teachers;
- Developing DRR for children, women and other vulnerable groups;
- Building small scale infrastructure;
- Analysing DRR strategies for livelihoods and food security;
- Piloting of livelihoods diversification and CC adaptation to increase household resilience;
- Establishing children's clubs on DRR and initiating children-led DRR actions;
- Developing community plans for DRR.
- Building the DRM capacity of SMEs.