Climate & Development Knowledge Network

INSIDE STORIES on climate compatible development

December 2011

Key messages

- Bangladesh's Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP) is one of the most ambitious of its kind in a developing country.
- Collaborative networks have enabled the CDMP to expand its operations.
- Support from government leaders ensured that challenges to implementing the CDMP were overcome.
- The institutionalisation of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation beyond the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management has proved slow and challenging.
- Challenges to CDMP implementation included natural disasters, political unrest and turnover of high-level officials.

Author:

Kirsten Luxbacher

Bangladesh's Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme

Bangladesh is afflicted by a multitude of natural hazards including tropical cyclones, tornadoes, tsunamis, drought, earthquakes, riverbank erosion, landslides, salinity intrusion and arsenic contamination[1]. In an average year, roughly 10 million Bangladeshi citizens are affected by one or more such hazards, and their frequency and severity is projected to increase as a result of climate change[2]. The impacts of these disasters are exacerbated by the fact that almost one third of the nation's population lives below the poverty line and has little capacity to adapt.

A tropical cyclone that struck Bangladesh in 1991 killed an estimated 140,000 people and left millions homeless[3]. As a result of this and devastating floods in 1987 and 1988, the Government of Bangladesh began to look for ways to improve its ability to reduce risks and vulnerabilities from disasters. In 1997, it issued the Standing Orders on Disaster that set the institutional framework for disaster risk reduction and emergency management. These Standing Orders and the Allocation of Business of food security and disaster risk reduction activities to the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management form the legal framework for disaster risk reduction in Bangladesh[4].

In 2000, the Government of Bangladesh and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) began to explore opportunities to fast track the transition from response and relief to comprehensive risk reduction. This resulted in the design of the Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme (CDMP) and its approval in November 2003. The programme precedes the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–2015 that came out of the 2005 World Conference on Disaster Reduction.

The CDMP takes a proactive approach to addressing disasters, shifting the emphasis away from relief and rehabilitation towards risk reduction. It aims to accomplish this by fostering a holistic, multi-hazard approach to reduce the nation's risk and vulnerability to a variety of human-induced and natural hazards[5].

CDKN helps developing countries to design and deliver climate compatible development. When decision makers in government, business and civil society speak to us about their aims and needs, they often ask about 'best practice' in other countries or, indeed, mistakes to avoid. What are the leading innovations in integrating climate change planning with economic growth strategies and poverty reduction? What are the biggest challenges faced along the way: institutional, financial, political, technical? This paper is one of a series of policy briefs that explore the 'Inside stories on climate compatible development': briefing papers that aim to answer these questions.

The ultimate goal of the CDMP is to reduce the nation's vulnerability to natural hazards by integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation strategies into the development policy and planning of central, regional and local government agencies.

The programme comprises two phases. Phase I (2004–2009), a pilot phase, laid the foundations for long-term disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation within seven targeted districts. It created policy and planning systems and increased capacities to enhance the leadership and core business functions of several key entities including the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management, the Department of the Environment, the Fire Service and Civil Defence, the Geological Survey Department, the Meteorological Service, and the Department of Agricultural Extension. The total budget for this phase was US$27.12 million. Phase II (2010–14) builds upon and expands Phase I achievements by ensuring that the institutionalisation of risk reduction and climate change adaptation occurs across all levels of government[6]. Donors have committed more than US$70 million to this phase.

Phase I generated several notable outcomes, including: the mapping of hazards, risks and vulnerabilities; the creation of an early warning system; and increased capacity of "disaster managers" at all levels of government. These outcomes complement existing initiatives, such as previously produced risk maps and the Red Crescent's Cyclone Preparedness Programme (on-going since the 1960s).

The programme components outlined below made many of CDMP Phase I's outcomes possible.

Disaster Management Information Centre (DMIC): This centre aims to improve the availability, quality, and management of the information that underpins emergency response to disasters. It monitors and reports on natural hazards as they unfold, operating all day, every day during emergency situations. Using a web portal and mobile phones (via a Memorandum of Understanding with mobile phone companies), emergency information is exchanged between the centre and its satellites in the nation's 64 districts and 235 sub-districts considered to be high risk. As part of its work, the DMIC supports Bangladesh's Meteorological Department and Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre. This support has increased the timeliness and effectiveness of flood warnings and the capacity of regional and sub-regional administrations to manage and report on disasters[7]. For example, during the flooding season of 2010, residents of the Sirajganj district in the Jamuna river basin received text messages informing them of present water levels and river forecasts 72 hours in advance. These text messages improved citizens' and the government's ability to prepare for and respond to floods[8].

Community Risk Assessment (CRA): The CRA programme uses participatory methods to identify, analyse and evaluate the hazards, risks and vulnerabilities of communities. The CRA helps local communities to develop a Risk Reduction Action Plan (RRAP) listing and prioritising disaster risk reduction activities. These RRAPs are consolidated into union and district RRAPs that will ultimately be rolled into a national action plan to ensure that government policies and actions include and are driven by local communities. Once they have developed their RRAPs, communities can apply for financing through an established fund, currently maintained with contributions from the government and international donors[9]. Local-level disaster management committees implement the activities with assistance from government, national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs). At the close of Phase I, 16 districts and 622 unions had completed CRAs and RRAPs; and 562 community development projects had received funding, benefiting around 600,000 people. Through the CDMP partnership network, this figure was expanded to cover 32 districts[10].

Phase II will target a further 2,000 unions across the country. It will also focus on making the CRA and RRAP process more sensitive to climate change by improving stakeholder knowledge of its risks[11]. The terminal evaluation of Phase I determined the CRA to be successful, but noted that more in-country sources of funding – including government, the private sector, and local communities – will be needed to ensure long-term sustainability[12].

Capacity building initiatives: Since 2007, over 25,000 officials from the national to the local level have received disaster management training. Additionally, the CDMP established numerous collaborations and training partnerships to enhance the technical capacity of government officials. The government is also engaging Bangladeshi universities in the development of disaster management curricula. Fourteen national universities had been engaged by the end of Phase I.

Capacity building at the local level is also taking place. For example, the Livelihood Adaptation to Climate

Change (LACC) programme, which focuses on areas prone to drought and saline intrusion, helps rural communities adapt to climate change. In Phase II, LACC is directly implemented by the Department of Agricultural Extension, exemplifying the institutionalisation of CDMP goals throughout the government[13].

These and other CDMP initiatives are designed to increase the nation's capacity to address proactively its vulnerability to natural hazards and threats. Although it is too early to tell if they will have a long-lasting impact, the Terminal Evaluation of Phase I found that the DMIC played an important role in information management during Cyclone Sidr and floods in 2007. Effective early warning systems coupled with public awareness campaigns and evacuation systems are credited with keeping the death toll from Cyclone Sidr below 4,000.

The CDMP is also credited with influencing the expansion of the nation's legal framework on disaster risk reduction. This includes the National Plan for Disaster Management, signing onto the Hyogo Framework for Action, and the incorporation of climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction into the nation's Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and Climate Change Action Plan.

Challenges

The CDMP is not the Government of Bangladesh's first attempt at creating a disaster management programme. Since the 1960s, various initiatives have been implemented by international, national, and civil society actors. For example, immediately preceding the CDMP, the Government of Bangladesh and UNDP supported a disaster management programme that ran from 1994–1998. After a devastating cyclone in 1998, it was determined to be unsuccessful at achieving its strategic outcomes and the scoping mission for CDMP was initiated.

The implementation of the CDMP also faced challenges. The programme experienced several delays and disruptions that hindered implementation of its work. Natural disasters and political unrest led to several false starts for Phase I. Cumulatively, Phase I only ran for two and a half years[14]. The implementation of Phase II was also delayed. After Phase I ended in 2009, the Ministry of Planning took five months to officially approve Phase II. This delayed the recruitment of new staff members and led to the loss of several staff members working for the programme, including the national project director. Whilst backstopping and interim management plans were put in place, it was not until the last quarter of 2010 that implementation really progressed[15]. Civil society groups raised concerns that the delays had led to institutional memory loss and the potential reinvention of certain programme aspects by new staff[16].

Furthermore, high turnover of government appointed employees and key ministry personnel, most notably the national project director and deputy national project director, affected the continuity of implementation and the impact of capacity development programmes. Throughout Phase I, the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management had seven secretaries and its sub-agency the Disaster Management Bureau had five directors general.

Another challenge facing the CDMP has been the institutionalisation of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation beyond the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management. Phase I focused on building capacity within this lead ministry. Financing and technical assistance has been provided to a few other ministries, most notably the Livelihood Adaptation to Climate Change programme within the Ministry of Agriculture and the Climate Change Cell in the Ministry of the Environment. However, in Phase II much more remains to be done to fully involve other relevant ministries.

Partly as a result of this, a common critique of the CDMP is that it has not had enough impact on the ground to reduce Bangladesh's vulnerability to natural hazards. To address this shortcoming, the pilot programmes of CDMP will need to be expanded to a national scale. For example, the only community structural projects currently arising from the CDMP are initiatives funded as part of community RRAPs. Once the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation is completed across the government, in theory, all structural projects should take these two factors into consideration.

Because UNDP and other donors designed CDMP Phase I, there is a feeling that insufficient consultation of community groups, NGOS, and other government ministries took place during the design process. During Phase I, changes were made to better incorporate these groups, particularly in the CRA process. Despite these efforts, the implementation and plan of action of the CDMP are not always clear to community groups and NGOs. At times, a communication gap exists that makes it difficult for these groups to understand the linkages between the different programme components and policy discussions. In Phase II, efforts were made to increase

transparency and accessibility. Civil society actors hope that this will improve communication and that there will be increased consultation and collaboration.

Lessons and Implications

Collaboration with a wide range of partners helps secure programme expansion and adoption

Partnerships ranging from international entities to local community organisations have been attributed with helping the CDMP to overcome initial scepticism. The sources of this scepticism were predominantly past risk assessments that resulted in little or no change; uninterested local governments; and turf wars with actors already working in the sector. Through its partnerships, the CDMP devoted considerable time to explaining the relevance and requirements of the programme to groups that could benefit from it and/or help to implement it[17]. It also engaged local community groups by creating project implementation committees that helped to add transparency and accountability to programmes on the ground. This helped the programme rapidly expand its operations from the original seven pilot districts to half of the nation's 64 districts[18].

High level leadership is essential

High level support was crucial to maintaining momentum and overcoming the hurdles to implementation of CDMP's Phase I. During Phase I, the secretary of the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management served as the national project director. During the final twelve months of Phase I, the secretary created the position of part-time deputy national project director and delegated to him day-to-day authority over CDMP's implementation. The position was given to the director general of the Disaster Management Bureau (an operational body of the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management). A senior chief technical advisor from UNDP was recruited to manage the programme[19]. Having such senior level officials serving as national project director and deputy national project director ensured that decisions made by the chief technical advisor were implemented and staff held accountable. Despite a high turnover rate in secretaries and directors at the Ministry, one constant was their support for the CDMP.[20]

In Phase II, the secretary will continue to provide leadership by chairing the project steering committee that is comprised of senior UNDP officials, donors, and partner ministries.

Retention and revisiting staffing configurations improves implementation

Ministry of Food and Disaster Management and programme management officials reassessed the staffing configuration of the CDMP throughout Phase I and during the design of Phase II to ensure a continuous improvement in implementation. This reassessment is exemplified by the creation of the deputy national project director position in 2008. For Phase II, this position became a full time government appointment, enabling the director to work full time on implementing the CDMP.

During Phase I, management officials created a large project team drawn from government, NGO, and private sectors. The team's role was to work alongside government officials to ensure engagement and ownership. This team also enabled the CDMP and the ministry to fill capacity voids within ministry staff. Whilst this recruitment strategy highlights the need for professional development policies, it also presents an innovative short-term solution.

Achieving outcomes is a slow process

The mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation across government agencies is a slow process. Designing the CDMP in two phases acknowledged this reality. In the two and a half years that CDMP Phase I was active it piloted programmes that could be scaled up as they became feasible. Phase II, designed as a four year programme, will continue to scale up these programmes in order to achieve their strategic outcomes.

The CDMP also faced challenges that slowed its implementation. As described above, many of these challenges were overcome through revising the programme and increasing collaborative efforts, but others have yet to be fully resolved.

Initiatives such as the CDMP are also dependent upon the political processes of a country. Political unrest delayed implementation of Phase I. The Ministry of Planning delayed the transition into Phase II. These types of delays make it necessary for legal frameworks to be in place to support programmes like the CDMP. In this way, the programme's work is given legitimacy and room for continued implementation when the topics of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation fall out of political and policy discussions.

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Front cover photo: G.M.B. Akash/Panos Pictures
Editing, design and layout: Green Ink (www.greenink.co.uk)

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WORLD RESOURCES INSTITUTE

www.cdkn.org **e: enquiries@cdkn.org** **t: +44 (0) 207 212 4111**