

# Safer Cities 2

Case studies on mitigating disasters in Asia and the Pacific

## Coping with flood in Cambodian communities Enhancing community solidarity through capacity building

Three decades of internal upheaval and warfare in Cambodia have eroded the traditions of community solidarity and trust. In times of flood and other disasters, families feel virtually responsible for themselves. A community-based approach to flood mitigation and preparedness is now challenging this attitude by building the capacities of villagers to act concertedly in building safer communities.

### Introduction

Flood along the Mekong River and the Tonle Sap Lake and tributaries is a recurring event, sometimes reaching disastrous dimensions, with severe losses in human lives and food production. The annual flood in Cambodia reached catastrophic proportions in 1996, prompting the Cambodian Red Cross (CRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (the Federation) to initiate a Community-Based Disaster Preparedness Program

(CBDP) — the first of its kind in Cambodia. The program added depth to CRC's role as a relief and response agency by taking on a development approach, and treating communities of Cambodia not as victims awaiting assistance but as capable people who can prepare for and mitigate against flood.

Recognizing CRC's leading approach to disaster management, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center's (ADPC) Asian Urban Disaster Mitigation



### Abstract

*This case study, the first of a two-part series, is derived from the experience of the Community-Based Flood Mitigation and Preparedness Project (CBFMP) (1998-2001). It features the development of an organizational framework for flood vulnerability reduction in 23 Cambodian villages. The step-by-step process by which this was achieved involved: (1) selecting project sites, targeting most vulnerable communities (2) selecting community members as volunteers and training them to work with communities in reducing vulnerabilities; (3) organizing communities and establishing Community-Based Disaster Management Committees (CBDMCs) as a coordinating body; and (4) identifying, estimating and ranking local disaster risks through risk mapping. Building the capacities of communities to mitigate, prepare for and respond to disaster in a self-reliant and cooperative manner is emphasized.*

### The inside story

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### Cambodia



Program (AUDMP) worked in partnership with CRC, the Federation and Private Agencies Collaborating Together (PACT) to develop a pilot project — the Community-Based Flood Mitigation and Preparedness Project (CBFMP) under CRC's CBDP. The CBFMP aimed to establish sustainable mechanisms for flood vulnerability reduction in 23 villages under three flood-prone districts - Kang Meas District in Kampong Cham, Kien Svay District in Kandal, and Peam Ro District in Prey Veng (see map on p.1). The success stories and lessons learned from the CBFMP have been replicated to other communities throughout Cambodia.

CBDP and CBFMP relied on a network of Red Cross Volunteers (RCVs) and Cambodian Red Cross (CRC) officials at the commune, district and provincial levels to tap resources and build capacities in flood mitigation and preparedness within communities. This unique network of CRC, together with the strong support of the Royal Cambodian Government and H.E. Lok Chumteav Bun Rany Hun Sen as CRC's President, contributed to the acceptance of this new community-based initiative.

This case study is the first of a two-part series about CBFMP. This part explores the methodology for establishing and

sustaining an organizational framework for identifying needs and cost-effective mitigation strategies that will be implemented and maintained by the communities themselves. This process was carried out by selecting project sites, training community volunteers, establishing local disaster management committees, and risk mapping. From these, community members have prioritized, planned and implemented mitigation solutions (or micro-projects) to minimize the impact of flood. Lessons from planning and implementing the mitigation solutions will be discussed in *ADPC Safer Cities 3*.

**Issues to consider when implementing community-based initiatives** questions to ask ?



Where will the project be developed?



Who will be involved?



What will they do and how will they do it?



How do we involve the community?



How do we find out the problems, needs and resources available?



What next?

## Step 1: Selecting project sites and volunteers

Red Cross defines selection criteria



CRC headquarters and the provincial Red Cross officials, with support from the Federation, selected the target communities based on the extent of damage and rate of recovery from past floods, particularly during 1996. All selected villages are situated along the Mekong River or nearby tributaries.

Red Cross Volunteers (RCVs) residing at the selected communities were recruited through candidates application in response to RCV advertisements posted in the villages. The selection of suitable volunteers was based on the Red Cross criteria for RCVs (see right box). In some cases, Red Cross officials approached potential

volunteers, sometimes to ensure that at least one woman is in a team of RCVs.

**At the first sign of flood, I worked with other volunteers to move children and women to a safe place, and livestock to the newly raised road . . . I didn't have to worry about my family because I knew they were well taken care of, said Mr. Leang Thea, Village Chief of Prek Andong and Red Cross Volunteer.**

Although most villagers had to work hard daily to earn just enough for a day's subsistence, a sufficient number of volunteers were recruited with little problems. This is because CRC is a well respected organization and community members are generally proud to be RCVs. Women might have faced additional difficulties due to their multi-tasked workday, but once appointed as RCVs both women and men were committed to the Red Cross principles and felt a sense of responsibility for the well-being of the community.

### Main characteristics of selected communities:

- Highly vulnerable to flood
- Limited capacity to recover
- Experienced severe damage by flood
- Supported by the people in the community

### Criteria for RCV selection:

- At least 17 years old
- Cambodian nationality
- Able to read and write in Khmer
- Able to do simple mathematical calculations
- In good health
- Has been affected by flood
- Willing to be an RCV

### Composition of RCVs per village:

At least two RCVs (one male and one female) not from the same family

## Step 2: Capacity building

CBFMP trains volunteers



### Training curriculum for RCVs: Four Modules

1. Red Cross Values and Responsibilities (3 days) — Encompassing the values of the Red Cross Movement.
2. Disaster Management and Hazard Mapping (5 days) — Covering concepts of disaster and flood mitigation; the role of RCVs; risk mapping and vulnerability assessments; and exposure to techniques for community organization and resource mobilization.
3. Community-Based First Aid (CBFA) (6 days) — Demonstrating First Aid techniques in case of emergencies.
4. Leadership and Community Organizing (10 days) — Focusing on activating RCVs to utilize the information gathered in the assessment process to prioritize mitigation strategies and mobilize resources from within the community and from outside sources. This module also covers proposal-writing skills.

Financial Management — This module was added later to arrange a system for the management of funds provided by the community members and donors in a transparent manner.

### Volunteers go through modular training

By June 2000, the project had trained seven trainers at the CRC headquarters and a total of 159 RCVs in 23 villages of the three selected provinces. CRC, the Federation, PACT and ADPC developed the training curriculum for RCVs under four modules (see left box).

Upon completion of Module 2, RCVs returned to their communities to conduct risk assessments and complete a risk map (see Step 4). This map was intended to encourage participative identification of problems and planning of preparedness and mitigation strategies in the communities. At the end of Module 4, RCVs

### Safer Cities

**Safer Cities** is a series of case studies that illustrate how people, communities, cities, governments and businesses have been able to make cities safer before disasters strike. The series presents strategies and approaches to urban disaster mitigation derived from analyses of real-life experiences, good practices and lessons learned in Asia and the Pacific. This user-friendly resource is designed to provide decision-makers, planners, city and community leaders and trainers with an array of proven ideas, tools, policy options and strategies for urban disaster mitigation. The key principles emphasized throughout Safer Cities are broad-based participation, partnerships, sustainability and replication of success stories.

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continued to work with communities in reaching a consensus on priority mitigation solutions. Subsequently, communities were organized and resources were mobilized in order to plan and implement the solutions.

### RCVs get after-training support

The training curriculum was developed on the basis of limited funds and time frame. However, it was well recognized by CRC, the Federation and PACT that training in itself is not sufficient. CRC considered this training as a first step in establishing a long-term relationship with the RCVs and community members. It was also developed as an orientation to disaster mitigation and preparedness. Continuing support and future training for RCVs have been incorporated in CRC's master plan. It includes refresher courses that would allow

Mr. Sang Kee, Chief of Koh Ta Ngor I Village, said, **Every time there was a problem, Mr. Kong [District Red Cross Officer] came and provided support and encouraged us to do the work needed.**

existing RCVs to get together; clarify concepts on and practices of flood preparedness and mitigation planning; and learn from each other's experiences. To continue to build the capacity of RCVs, new modules such as Participatory Risk Assessment and Community Action Planning are being designed.

During CBFMP, additional support after training was ensured. Once the training had been completed and the volunteers had returned to their communities, CRC organized regular group meetings and site visits (see box below) over the next several months to support the RCVs as they worked in their respective communities. The group meetings and site visits provided an opportunity for the RCVs to exchange experiences in the practical application of

their training. At the same time, these enabled CRC to monitor progress in the communities and troubleshoot individual problems.

### CRC expands training program

As CBFMP came to completion, CRC replicated its achievements into CDBP. CDBP and CBFMP developed a group of RCVs and active community members who could be mobilized to mitigate, prepare for and respond to flood disasters. To further build on the achievements of CBFMP, CRC plans to incorporate the following in its CDBP: (1) training for provincial Red Cross staff to train RCVs (training of RCVs is currently conducted by the trainers at CRC headquarters); (2) extension of community-based disaster mitigation training to Community-Based Disaster Management Committee (CBDMC) members (*more details on CBDMC below*); and (3) promotion of public awareness on flood mitigation and preparedness among villagers.



Training of Red Cross Volunteers



CRC and PACT conduct group meetings with Red Cross Volunteers and community representatives.

### A schedule of after-training site visits and group meetings of Red Cross Volunteers

#### Site visit 1 (after Module 2):

- Clarify roles and responsibilities of RCVs.
- Review hazard and vulnerability assessment processes.

#### Group Meeting 1 (after Module 2):

- Clarify roles and responsibilities of RCVs.
- Exchange ideas among RCVs and community members on the profile of exceptional historic disaster events.

#### Site visit 2 (after Module 4):

- Promote awareness of the prioritized hazards and elements at risk.
- Review preliminary strategies and solution to cope with the hazards.

#### Group Meeting 2 (after Module 4):

- Identify and define strategic measures to cope with potential hazards in the communities through participatory methods.

#### Site visit 3 (after Module 4):

- Assess the availability of community capacity and resources for disaster preparedness and mitigation activities.

#### Site visit 4 (after Module 4):

- Verify the prioritized community mitigation solution.
- Accept the prioritized solution proposal.

#### Group Meeting 3 (Solution implementation period):

- Review the basic financial management of the RCVs and the Community-Based Disaster Management Committee.
- Disburse funds to support community solution.

#### Site visit 5 (Solution implementation period):

- Monitor and follow up the mitigation activities.

#### Group Meeting 4 (Solution implementation period):

- Evaluate the completion of community mitigation solution.



CRC's replication of training through DIPECHO (Disaster Preparedness - European Community Humanitarian Aid Office) funds in Prek Kreh Village of Kampot Province:

With funding support from DIPECHO, CRC conducted training on Community-Based Disaster Preparedness to other communities in the three demonstration provinces of Kampong Cham, Kandal and Prey Veng as well as to communities in four other provinces - Kampong Speu, Kampot, Kratie and Pursat.

**Insights on capacity building** lessons learned

- ↳ Training could be used as an entry point into the community.
- ↳ Empowering RCVs through training is strategic in reducing communities vulnerability to flood and improving communities quality of life in the long term.
- ↳ Complementing training of RCVs with public awareness campaigns is crucial.
- ↳ Supplementing training with on-site practical work is essential.
- ↳ Providing additional support after training is helpful.

**Step 3: Community organizing**

*Volunteers establish Community-Based Disaster Management Committees (CBDMCs)*



**Trained RCVs elect committee members**

Trained RCVs established a Community-Based Disaster Management Committee (CBDMC) in each targeted community by election. The CBDMC is composed of at least four persons - the Committee Chair, the Treasurer, the Secretary and a member. However, the size of the CBDMCs varied from 3 to 19 members. The nominated CBDMC members were well respected, giving credibility to activities initiated by the CBDMC. Committee members (predominantly male) often included the village chiefs, village deputy chiefs, village group leaders, elders, monks and members of the wat (or temple) committees, the RCVs, teachers, and health workers. According to the CBFMP evaluation (August 2001), the composition of the CBDMCs had a great impact on the effectiveness of the project process.

On the contrary, the size of the CBDMCs did not seem to have an impact on their effectiveness in resource mobilization or in implementing the project. Committee sizes likely reflected the level of village organization. Undoubtedly, communities that were well organized had an easier time mobilizing local resources. Furthermore, community bodies that had demonstrated their ability to achieve results on prior occasions were more likely to be effective,

**Composition of CBDMC for effective implementation** lessons learned

- ↳ Number of members may vary.
- ↳ Should at least compose of the Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and a member.
- ↳ Should include accepted individuals (e.g., elderly, monk, teacher and members of religious groups) to add credibility.
- ↳ Should capitalize on the existing social structures.

as some level of trust within the group exists.

**CBDMCs go beyond the call of duty**

Initially, CBDMCs were set up for the management of the project, more specifically, for the management of funds from donors and community contributions. However, at the end of the project, many committee members felt responsible to carry out further disaster mitigation and preparedness activities in collaboration with the RCVs. This could be due to the completion of a successful project demonstrating the benefits of such an initiative to the community. As a result, such committees are supported and sustained in many communities.

Highlighted below are the experiences of CBDMCs in communities of Kampong Cham after CBFMP had ended (see box on page 6). Two cases show that communities continue to rely primarily on their own families but a sense of community solidarity seems to be emerging.

**We were advised to stockpile food and animal fodder in preparation for flood and to purify water during flood, said Ms. Bee Savong, a 28-year-old villager in Koh Ta Ngor II.**

In some communities, CBDMC members and RCVs took upon themselves the additional role of raising public awareness on community-based flood mitigation and preparedness. As an illustration, Koh Ta Ngor II CBDMC members and RCVs reminded the community to store food supplies and purify water with cholarmine from CRC and other relief agencies during flood. The impact of their awareness promotion efforts could

## Experiences of Community-Based Disaster Management Committees in Kampong Cham communities

### Bang Sang Lech

In Bang Sang Lech community, the project to raise 500 meters of road and construct an 800-meter long and 0.5-meter high berm reduced the speed of flood onset on houses further inland, provided elevated grounds for communities to evacuate their livestock, and provided road access during flood. Following this success, more mitigation projects have been planned by the CBDMC with community members, including the construction of higher well caps to prevent contamination of

drinking water during flood and the building of safe areas for individual families near their homes. These safe areas are 4x6x2-meter structures costing Riel 120,000 (USD31.20) including materials and one-week labor charges. Communities in this village prefer to have individual safe areas rather than a public one.

### Prek Andong

Concern for one's family only continues to be typical of the communities in Kampong Cham but we could see hints

of community collaboration. For example, Prek Andong was completely inundated in 2000 and most people had to help themselves. Only families with relatives and friends in other communities inland were able to move temporarily to a safer place. However, the 2001 flood was met with a more concerted effort in this community, led by the CBDMC and RCVs in evacuating families in 15 small houses to a nearby community of Andong Ong. With the help of the Village Chief of Andong Ong, these families moved to stay with those who had stronger houses for more than a month.

be felt in other sites. For example, they encouraged mobilization of human and financial resources to raise the road in neighboring Angkor Ban Village.

The CBDMC members were keen to be trained on improving public speaking and

presentation skills to promote awareness not only in their own villages but also in neighboring villages.

It was suggested by a number of community members and RCVs during the 2001 evaluation of CBFMP that CRC

staff at the provincial office and the headquarters should also be involved in promoting awareness and providing advice on flood mitigation and preparedness. It was believed that this would boost the credibility of the messages conveyed.

## Step 4: Risk assessment

### Risk mapping goes wrong



RCVs were trained to facilitate a mapping exercise in their communities to identify hazard-prone areas in order to discuss and reach consensus on planning and implementing mitigation solutions. This process, however, was conducted in such a way that had no identifiable value to any of the people in the communities (CBFMP Evaluation Report, August 2001, p. 13).

Often, the RCVs felt responsible to lead the production of the risk map, thus, there was limited community participation and some community members had not even seen the map. Moreover, these maps were often not risk maps but sketch maps of the villages. Understandably, the local villagers felt they did not require a map to locate or designate hazardous areas at times of flood. These people were born and raised in the community and have an intimate knowledge of the local geography. Therefore, the RCVs and the CBDMC members felt that the map served more of the needs of the CRC staff and NGO representatives who visited their community.

### What is a risk map?

A sketch or a scale model that:

- shows geography (e.g., location of rivers and mountains)
- shows settlements and infrastructure
- identifies location of high-risk areas in the community
- employs symbols to identify key places that serve as reference points (e.g., Red Cross, Health Center, police, temples, schools and so on)
- identifies location of high-risk areas in the community
- highlights location of resources (e.g., wells and boats)
- marks safe areas for evacuation

As a result, these maps were neither visually displayed nor updated. However, they could be useful tools for identifying hazardous areas and mitigation planning. For example, residents of Koh Tah Ngor II Village of Kampong Cham Province perceived the nearby Mekong riverbank to be eroding at a rate of as much as 200 meters per year. The regular update of the risk map would clearly demonstrate the increased vulnerability of the communities (see map and photo on page 7).

One of the reasons for non-use of hazard maps may be the absence of a scenario-building exercise for extreme disaster situations as an integral part of the risk assessment. It is vital for community members to discuss community risks and hazards or even take a tour of the community to identify these risks and hazards. Following the recent and devastating high floods of 2000 and 2001, communities are beginning to learn the importance of mitigation and preparedness planning.



Communities should have a risk map NOT a sketch map.



Riverbank erosion is a major concern of villagers in Kampong Cham. The village map clearly shows houses and roads as elements at high risk.

## Key points in risk mapping lessons learned

- ↳ Risk mapping is not necessarily the panacea to all problems of hazard identification.
- ↳ It is important to get into the social psyche of how perceptions of risk are quantified and represented.
- ↳ Full involvement of all groups in the community (e.g., elders, monks, women, children, and others) is fundamental.
- ↳ The map has to be initiated and drawn by villagers (not by RCVs).
- ↳ Mapping is an effective tool to encourage participation in the community.
- ↳ Agreeable ideas or conflicts can be identified during the mapping process.
- ↳ Usefulness of risk mapping needs to be incorporated into community planning over a continuous period through training and practical application.

## Conclusion: What next?



### Sustainable disaster management recognizes community capabilities

The aim of community-based disaster mitigation and preparedness is to reduce vulnerabilities and strengthen people's capacity to cope with hazards. In this process it is essential to recognize people's capacities. Communities are not helpless and they have lived with flood for centuries. They are capable of preparing, responding to and recovering from disasters. When the capacities of communities are recognized, the solution comes from within the community itself, making it stronger and more self-reliant. The solutions are realistic and the community feels responsible and involved in the disaster management process. This leads to more effective and sustainable mitigation of disasters. Implementing the program through the existing structure of the Cambodian Red Cross contributed significantly to the success of the activities.

### Communities need to implement mitigation solutions

Discussion on the process of planning, designing and implementing the mitigation

solutions will be made in the second of the two-part series about CBFMP (see *ADPC Safer Cities 3*). The people in each community were evidently proud of what had been achieved and recognized that ownership of the end result of the project resided with them. During the flood of 2001, villagers of Bang Sang Lech in Kampong Cham protected their newly raised road by topping the community-raised berm with sandbags made of soil from their own paddy fields. When it was realized that this measure was insufficient to protect the road, the community's insistence on protecting the road led them to buy additional sandbags on credit from CRC.

### Communities may tap external funding

The most common problem for community-based disaster management initiatives is the lack of resources. It could be argued that seeking funding from outside sources create communities dependence, but most villages have no other resources and so are compelled to

depend on outside charity for anything above their basic needs. The project has allowed the communities to recognize that there are outside resources that could be tapped.

### Community-based approach builds safety and solidarity

All in all, CBDP and CBFMP had not only contributed towards building safer communities but also towards building trust through working together on a common problem — flood — to redevelop communities. The evaluation of CBFMP revealed that almost every villager took pride in what had been achieved in his or her community. Some villagers expressed sentiments that the project had served to build community solidarity and bring people together. The village elders recognized aspects of this important social element resurface in the process of this project. This provides the foundation for further community initiatives.

**Mr. Peng Eoun, a 63-year-old villager, stated, As we completed our project, our community became closer. This is something I have not seen in a long time.**



## Further references

### On CBFMP

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 CBFMP Evaluation Report: Lessons Learned from Community-Based Flood Mitigation and Preparedness Project in Cambodia (AUDMP Working Paper No. 3), August 2001.

### On community-based disaster management

ADPC Community- Based Disaster Management Course Curriculum (including Trainer s Guide, Coordinator s Guide, Participant s Workbook and Reading Materials).  
 ADPC Information Resources on Community- Based Disaster Management (CD-ROM), September 2001.  
 Nee, M., 1995, Towards Restoring Life: Cambodian Villages, JSRC Phnom Penh.

### Other relevant Safer Cities case studies

ADPC Safer Cities 1: Community-Based Initiatives in Kathmandu Valley  
 ADPC Safer Cities 3: Mitigating Flood Risk in Cambodian Communities  
 ADPC Safer Cities 5: Community-Based Initiatives in Sri Lanka

### On community-based disaster management initiatives in Cambodia

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## CBDP and CBFMP

The Cambodian Red Cross (CRC) Community-Based Disaster Preparedness Program (CBDP) aimed to reduce the vulnerability of flood-prone communities in Cambodia. As part of the CBDP, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) under its Asian Urban Disaster Mitigation Program (AUDMP) developed the Community-Based Flood Mitigation and Preparedness Project (CBFMP) through a partnership approach with CRC, the Federation and PACT. Disaster preparedness and mitigation activities were piloted in Kampong Cham, Kandal and Prey Veng Provinces. The project brought together a variety of humanitarian organizations to address the susceptibility of the general population and its infrastructure, livelihoods and shelter. Together, they focused on training volunteers and facilitating implementation of mitigation solutions for flood risk reduction in communities.

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## AUDMP

*The Asian Urban Disaster Mitigation Program (AUDMP) is the first of six regional programs implemented by ADPC. The AUDMP started in 1995 with core funding from USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) until 2003. The program was developed with the recognition of increased disaster vulnerability of urban populations, infrastructure, critical facilities and shelter in Asian cities. In an environment where good governance and decentralization are high in most countries' political agenda, AUDMP aims to demonstrate the importance of and strategic approaches to urban disaster mitigation as part of the urban development planning process in targeted cities of Asia.*



*AUDMP supports this demonstration by building the capacity of local authorities, national governments, non-government organizations, businesses and others responsible for establishing public and private sector mechanisms for urban disaster mitigation as part of city management. AUDMP also facilitates knowledge sharing and dialogue between the key stakeholders to promote replication of the AUDMP approaches to other cities and countries worldwide. Currently, the AUDMP approaches have been introduced and sustained by national partner institutions in targeted cities of Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam.*

## ADPC

*The Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) is a regional resource center dedicated to safer communities and sustainable development through disaster reduction in Asia and the Pacific. Established in 1986 in Bangkok, Thailand, ADPC is recognized as an important focal point for promoting disaster awareness and developing capabilities to foster institutionalized disaster management and mitigation policies.*

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