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**Climate adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction in practice:
Bangladesh**



Climate adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction in practice Bangladesh

Climate change is a huge concern for Bangladesh these days, as it is one of the hardest hit countries by the consequences. The country already suffers extreme weather conditions, and is frequently hit by floods and cyclones, for instance Sidr in November 2007. As sea level is rising, it is expected that cyclones and floods will hit the country even more frequent and harder then before. Therefore Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction Programmes are introduced.

Background

Bangladesh is a low lying delta, where more then 310 bigger and smaller rivers, original from the Himalaya Mountains meander to the Indian Ocean. Natural disasters, mainly floods and cyclones, form a serious threat to development in Bangladesh. And as sea level and temperatures are rising, the problems will increase. Precipitation becomes unpredictable and more extreme, resulting in floods and periods of drought, while sea level rise causes salination of the agricultural land. This will be an enormous challenge for a country where 70% of the population depends on agriculture. Especially those groups with an income on or below the poverty line (an estimated 45% of the population) can be hit very hard. From one day to another their livelihood can be washed away, and those people do not have any reserve to fight poverty again.

The Cordaid approach: shift to Disaster Risk Reduction

In 2007 Bangladesh was hit hard by several natural disasters. As a result millions of people lost their houses and livelihood. Once more it became obvious that preventive measures are needed in order to better protect the people who live in risk areas. Both the government of Bangladesh as well as local organisations are very much aware about this and take measures now.

The concept of Disaster Risk Reduction is widely adhered to in Bangladesh. It is included in the Government's policy as laid down in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. However, when it comes to achieve full implementation of the policy there is still a way to go. Several bottlenecks exist at the levels of government, NGOs, communities and also at the level of donors. A main bottleneck at all levels is that although the concept of Disaster Risk Reduction is widely adopted, a clear understanding of the concept and its implications at the practical level has not been achieved yet.

Working together

In Bangladesh Cordaid is cooperating with several partner organisations. In 2007 and 2008 large part of the Cordaid support to Bangladesh was invested in disaster response: flood relief and rehabilitation and cyclone relief and rehabilitation. The main focus of the rehabilitation programmes was on livelihood and safe shelter. In the mean time support is being provided to several Disaster Preparedness / Disaster Risk

Reduction initiatives.

At the same time RDRS (Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Sevices) conducts two studies in Bangladesh. One study is focussing on traditional coping mechanisms of rural people and communities living in flood-prone areas. Based on the outcome of the study recommendations can be provided on suitable interventions (for both government and NGOs) to empower communities in preparing for and withstanding floods. The second study focuses on the relation between the response of various actors at different levels and the impact of the recent (August 2007) floods. The study should provide a clear understanding of the impact (or non-impact) of the various interventions on people's vulnerability. Based on the study best practices can be documented and recommendations for possible future interventions can be made. The study reports will be available in spring 2009.

DRR in practice: adaptation measures

Cyclone shelters

There are now roughly 2,025 cyclone shelters in Bangladesh, of which 224 have been constructed by Caritas in Sandwip, Monpura and Kolapara. During normal times, the buildings are used for primary and secondary education and for community activities. The cyclone shelters played a life-saving role during the super cyclone Sidr in November 2007. In 1991 almost 150,000 persons died during the cyclone; in 2007, due to better early warning systems and timely evacuation, only 3,500 persons died due to the fact that thousands of people took timely shelter and survived.

After cyclone Sidr, the government estimates that a further 2,000 shelters are needed to accommodate the increased number of people living in cyclone-prone areas. The government, with support from Saudi Arabia and Japan will take up the construction for 1,000 new cyclone shelters. The other buildings should be constructed by others. Amongst them are Cordaid and other member of the Caritas Internationalis network.



Disaster friendly water & sanitation project

Safe water, sanitation and hygiene promotion combined with a culture of safety towards natural disasters are critical to human and economic development. More than sixty percent of the population of Bangladesh is deprived from basic sanitation, making it one of the key challenges for sustainable development. Open defecation is the prime concern of sanitation, which pollutes the environment and transmits viral and bacterial diseases like diarrhoea, dysentery, cholera, typhoid, gastrointestinal and other epidemic diseases. The situation is further aggravated by the fact that sanitation infrastructures are not resistant to the devastating effects of the recurrent floods and cyclones that devastate the country on a yearly basis.

Poor maintenance of latrine at household and school level is another threat for environmental hygiene. Water sources are not available nearby and people are not habituated to collect and reserve water near latrines. As a result, odour pollutes the environment and very few children in the school use these latrines.

During their Disaster Preparedness project implementation, Cordaid partners Concern Universal Bangladesh and Dhaka Ahsania Mission, identified from Lessons Learned that it would be benefiting to the Bangladesh population to have access to "Disaster Friendly" water and sanitation components.

Objectives

- Promote disaster resistant concepts and technology at micro and macro level
- Identify set-up and needs of the community through vulnerability mapping
- Ensure availability of potable water to the targeted population through provisioning of water sources
- Improve sanitation for the targeted population through provision of sanitation facilities