



DRR IN ACTION CASE STUDY

Preparing and reducing risks of disasters to displaced communities

Theme of the Case Study
Displacement and DRR

Country
Bangladesh

Case location
Cox's Bazar

Background

The widespread violence during August 2017 in Rakhine state (Myanmar) led to a massive influx of people from Myanmar into Cox's Bazar. As of March 2018, approximately one million people from Myanmar are estimated to be living in Bangladesh⁽¹⁾. The speed and scale of their arrival has led to a critical and complex humanitarian emergency and created the world's most densely populated refugee settlement. The new arrivals from Myanmar are concentrated in two sub-districts (upazilas) of the district of Cox's Bazar: Ukhia and Teknaf, putting an immense strain on local infrastructure and services, which was originally only designed to serve the present host population⁽²⁾.

The coastal district of Cox's Bazar is prone to disasters, which have been hit by more than three cyclones (with winds speeds of more than 85 km/h) in the past three years⁽³⁾. Upon arrival to Cox's Bazar, refugees have sheltered under tarpaulins and bamboo structures on steep slopes and in low, flood-prone areas. The difficult terrain of the hills, combined with the clearing of forest cover has increased the likelihood of erosion, landslides and floods which are likely to bury or wash away the flimsy makeshift shelters and their inhabitants when monsoon and cyclone seasons arrive. It is estimated that over 700,000 people are living in the mega camp settlement, which is administered as 24 camps by the Government of Bangladesh and the humanitarian community. Evacuation for the refugees is currently not an option due to scarcity of land, difficulty to move a large population and lack of strong structures to serve as cyclone shelters. Therefore, disaster readiness and emergency preparedness interventions need to be considered as life-saving assistance in this context.

Photo: Temporary CPP Camp volunteers participating in the mock drill of Camp 4 in Cox's Bazar – 22 June 2018. | Brad Zerivitz, American Red Cross

What did the action seek to change?

To increase the preparedness levels of the at-risk vulnerable communities to disasters.

What were the key actions taken to achieve this change?

Actions to prepare the refugee and host communities were taken across various levels:

1. At the macro level: Engaging the Cyclone Preparedness Programme (CPP) of Bangladesh, a joint programme of the Government of Bangladesh and Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS), to expand the current existing preparedness systems to the camp settlements. CPP is a world-renowned disaster preparedness programme established in 1972, covering 13 coastal districts of Bangladesh through an Early Warning System (EWS) built on a central control room and early warning radio system that mobilizes over 55,000 CPP volunteers to provide early warning messages to communities to take early action.
2. At the government level – working closely with CPP, the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR), Refugee Resettlement and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) office, local government officials such as the Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO), to establish and expand the CPP system within the camp settlements and recognizing the camp residents as temporary CPP Camp Volunteers. Through these efforts ensuring CPP coverage in the camps as well and coordination with the National Disaster Management Systems in adjacent host communities.
3. At the humanitarian coordination level – working with the Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) and working closely with the various Sectors and Camp Coordination agencies in setting coordination systems for temporary CPP camp volunteer units, within the overall humanitarian and camp coordination structures; ensuring a standard preparedness model across all camps; government-approved and contextualized preparedness messaging to the displaced community.
4. At the camp level – working closely with CPP and camp management agencies in identification of camp volunteers and training them on basic disaster preparedness and community risk assessment; early warning system protocols within the camps, preparedness actions and role of CPP camp volunteers in disaster preparedness efforts in the camps. Mock drills were and are being conducted to ensure that the CPP camp volunteers are part of the larger camp coordination system working within the ‘Camp-in-Charge’ (CiC) – the government focal point being representative from MoDMR and site management agency for the camp.

What were the essential steps taken along the process to bring about this change?



The Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC), Mohammad Abdul Kalam, in discussion during training session on the need for better preparedness and early warning of disaster risks – 23 June 2018 | Din Mohammed, American Red Cross

Step 1	The IFRC together with many partner Red Cross and Red Crescent National Societies, have since the 1970s supported the CPP with BDRCS. The American Red Cross (AmCross), took initial steps to engage government stakeholders (MoDMR and CPP) for the establishment of the CPP system within the camps. The CPP system exists already in the host communities. This was done with the leadership of the BDRCS in the CPP.
Step 2	Working closely with the humanitarian agencies involved in camp coordination (UNHCR and IOM) and camp management (INGO/NGOs) system and relevant government partners, to identify and select temporary CPP camp volunteers covering all settlements in both sub-districts of Ukhia and Teknaf (30 camps).
Step 3	Focusing on training and capacity building of temporary CPP camp volunteers by utilizing expertise of the CPP offices, BDRCS and, other UN agencies and INGOs (UNHCR, IOM and camp management agencies). 30 CPP units set up in the 30 established camps.

What were the essential steps taken along the process to bring about this change?

Step 4	Establishing the EWS and existing CPP Flag System within each of the camps, ensuring the relevant preparedness and response actions could be completed as per the flag system. Establish coordination mechanisms in the camps relating to early warning system with CICs, military and humanitarian actors.
Step 5	Engaging with the Communicating with Communities (CwC) Working Group to inform the communities of the EWS; who will provide it, what is the messaging, what to expect, and how to take early action at each stage. Working with BBC Media Action, Translators Without Borders and CwC partners to send mass communications on the subject.
Step 6	Coordinating agreements with MoDMR and CPP for expansion of volunteers to reach a total of 3,000 with 100 temporary CPP camp volunteers in each camp.

Ms. Diloara (resident of Camp 18):

“I am so lucky to have attended this training and learned so many new things about disasters. I feel that we as participants should go back to our camps and educate others on what we have learnt and also help our community members be better prepared for the upcoming monsoon season. I am so thankful for being part of this training.”

What SFDRR principles¹ were applicable to this change process?

- Principle 1 Disaster risk reduction requires an all-of-society engagement and partnership
- Principle 2 Disaster risk reduction and management depends on coordination mechanisms within and across sectors and with relevant stakeholders at all levels
- Principle 2 Managing the risk of disasters is aimed at protecting persons and their property, health, livelihoods and productive assets, as well as cultural and environmental assets, while promoting and protecting all human rights, including the right to development

What were the Achievements and the Impacts?

- The recognition of the displaced people as temporary CPP Camp Volunteers has been an important achievement in this process. This also signifies the Government of Bangladesh’s approach to the camp settlements and ensuring that one of their largest and renowned disaster preparedness programme – the CPP, is also extended to the camp settlements and guest population.
- Bringing together the host community and the displaced communities, and, in understanding the interconnected disaster risks – the need to facilitate better coordination between these two groups by the government.

What were the key Lessons Learnt?

- Understanding and working within the existing disaster management systems and institutions is the foundation for strong, acceptable, appropriate and locally-owned initiatives.
- Better understanding the nuanced contexts of the displaced communities and aspects of culture, language and experience is critical for building an effective programme design and improved implementation. Existing interventions or approaches used elsewhere in Bangladesh had to be adapted for the displaced community based on such context.

¹ e.g. Primary responsibility of the State, Shared responsibility, Protection, All-of-society-engagement, coordination mechanism, empowering local-decision makers, Multi-hazard approach and inclusive risk-informed decision-making, Sustainable development, Local and specific risks.

Ms. Lima Dhar, a Site Monitoring Officer from IOM:

“I was able to learn about hazards and risks and how important it was to ensure that we make communities aware of their risks and be prepared for any hazard. I was excited to teach the refugee community and feel that there is potential in everyone to contribute towards making their environment safe.”

- The role of host community and its related governance systems is important and must be considered in the planning stage to ensure their participation throughout implementation.
- In the context of the size of the camps as well as the cultural aspects of the displaced community, the number of CPP volunteers were increased from 15 (the approved size) to 20 with equal representation of men and women. This was found to be more appropriate and effective in relation to the camps. Given this success, the number of temporary CPP Camp Volunteers will be increased to meet the growing disaster risks needs of the camps.

What were the Good Practices arising from this action?

Good Practice 1	Understanding the existing disaster management framework, mechanisms and institutions, and working within these to ensure greater acceptance and ownership by the local and national government.
Good Practice 2	Bringing a range of stakeholders to the table (affected displaced and host communities, government, humanitarian community and military) for better coordination and understanding of the issues and the identification of solutions
Good Practice 3	Putting the displaced and the host communities at the centre of the programme design and implementation, resulted in greater empowerment, engagement and voices of these communities.
Good Practice 4	Supporting ongoing disaster preparedness efforts in the camps by providing a formal government-engaged early warning system.

Policy Relevance to DRR in Action

Migrants and displacement have been recognized as key issues in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction – both as a driver of disaster risk as well as migrants contributing their skills, knowledge and experience for the better design and implementation of DRR programming. Still, this does not translate down to the Asia Regional Action Plan with no adequate recognition of this issue.

Effective DRR initiatives need to be based on enhanced understanding of trends and consequences of disaster displacement, including displacement linked to slow-onset events. Community level understanding must play a critical role in informing our collective understanding.

Key Messages from this Case Study

- There needs to be collective action to better understand the risk of displacement in the context of disasters and climate change, and the impacts on individuals and communities, including communities that receive and host displaced people.
- Better understanding of displacement risk and impacts will require community level climate smart risk and vulnerability assessments and mapping of displacement hot spots.
- The RCRC network should enhance its focus on displacement and shift towards a more holistic, integrated, and conflict-sensitive disaster risk reduction programming (as well as response and recovery programming). RCRC strategies should aim to ensure that assistance to households is informed, inclusive, conflict-sensitive and resilient to disasters. This will require integrated actions/processes across the disaster risk management, humanitarian, and conflict resolution continuum, incorporating displacement as a key issue within relevant laws, policies, and plans.



Temporary CPP Camp Volunteer setting up the Early Warning CPP Flag System which is now established across all camps in Cox's Bazar – 21 June 2018 | Brad Zerivitz, American Red Cross

- Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies, with their mandate as auxiliaries to the Government are well placed to work with authorities, institutions, and experts to better understand displacement risk, through identifying and mapping communities at risk of displacement.

The case study aims to highlight the issue of disaster and displacement and bring it to the forefront by sharing experiences and relevant work being done. This will also help in advocating for better inclusion of disaster and displacement into the Regional Action Plan for Asia.

References for this Case Study

1. Bangladesh Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) Family Counting Exercise, supported by UNHCR
2. Humanitarian Response Plan 2017
3. Rohingya Crisis: Cyclones Background – Thematic Report, March 2018; NPM-ACAPS Analysis Hub
4. Standing Orders of Disasters (SOD) for Bangladesh, which highlight the CPP systems and EWS

Camp community in discussion between RRRC, CPP and other stakeholders on the learnings from mock drills conducted – 21 June 2018. | Brad Zerivitz, American Red Cross



Collaborators for this Case Study:

Cyclone Preparedness Programme,
Bangladesh Red Crescent Society,
Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief,
Refugee Resettlement and Repatriation Commissioner,
Inter Sector Coordination Group,
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,
International Organization for Migration,
American Red Cross,
International Federation of
Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

Contact Persons for this Case Study:

Mr. Ekram Elahi Chowdhury,
Project Director,
Population Movement Operations at Cox Bazar,
Bangladesh Red Crescent Society
Email: ekram.elahi@bdrcs.org

Mr. Achala Navaratne,
Country Representative,
Bangladesh Country Programme,
American Red Cross
Email: achala.navaratne@redcross.org