



Building Community Resilience

Community Based Disaster Risk Management Project in Hay Man Village Tract

ASEAN Volunteers' Experience



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abstract

To build community resilience for future disasters, a Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) project has been implemented in five villages of Hay Man Village Tract, Bogale Township between January and August 2009. The project aims to raise community awareness and develop disaster preparedness and mitigation initiatives.

Consistent with the ASEAN's People-Centred Approach, six ASEAN Volunteers from four countries: Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia and Myanmar, work hand-in-hand to foster continuous community engagement in CBDRM planning and activities. As a result, communities have been highly encouraged to plant mangroves and become aware of the importance of environment protection as disaster mitigation activity. Furthermore, a livelihood-based activity was also conducted in the targeted villages to support the most vulnerable families.

In addition to implementing the project, ASEAN Volunteers promote cultural exchange and demonstrate ASEAN's principle of building a caring society.



Background

Cyclone Nargis, which ripped into Myanmar on 2-3 May 2008, created a path of destruction that severely affected an estimated 2.4 million people, leaving 140,000 people dead or missing. Bogale township is one of the most affected areas. According to Post Nargis Joint Assessment (PONJA) report, it has the highest casualty among the Cyclone-affected areas. As noted, 41% or estimated 35,000 out of the total 85,000 people reported fatalities.

With the reported significant losses in Bogale Township, the Tripartite Core Group (TCG), comprised of senior representatives from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Government of the Union of Myanmar, and the international humanitarian community led by the United Nations (UN), endorsed a nine-month project to address the immediate need for humanitarian assistance and early recovery to Bogale Township from January to August 2009.

Hay Man Village Tract in Bogale Township with a population of 13,737 people was selected to be one of the areas for TCG-endorsed projects. It comprises of 3,051 households in 26 villages. It is considered to be the second largest village tract after Set San village in Bogale Township. Based on a needs assessment by ASEAN volunteers in mid-November 2008, the project targeted the worst five out of 26 affected villages, namely Tha Htay Gone village, Kyone Lhut Thit, Kyone Lhut Gyi, Nga Man Chaung and Patat/Kansu villages. These five villages were also recognized as affected communities which received the least humanitarian support. The project envisages benefiting 1,889 villagers (438 households).

The needs assessment found that the targeted villages were still mainly suffering from livelihood, water, and sanitation concerns. For example, the pond in Kyon Hlut Gyi village, a source of safe drinking water supply for 24 villages, was flooded with saline water. Draught animals and agricultural inputs were also needed.

To address the most immediate needs, the TCG, under ASEAN's leadership enlisted the expertise of Mingalar Myanmar (MM), a local NGO that has wide experience on livelihoods support and Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM). To highlight ASEAN's sense of solidarity, six ASEAN Volunteers from Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia and Myanmar were deployed to targeted villages in Hay Man Village Tract. By living and working together with the communities, the ASEAN Volunteers have promoted an ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community in the region and to support the villagers in project implementation.



Conserving for the future. As part of the CBDRM approach of this project, the ASEAN Volunteers were involved in the different phases of growing mangroves - from the nursery to the process of re-planting in the identified habitat.

Mangrove Increases Community Resilience

Large-scale destruction of mangroves contributed heavily to the damage inflicted by Cyclone Nargis. The PONJA reported about 16,800ha of natural forest and 21,000ha of forest plantations were damaged, with an estimated cost of K 14 billion. Loss of environmental services of the natural mangrove forests is estimated at K 46 billion. (1 USD = 1,100K)

Cyclone Nargis that struck Myanmar is a grim reminder of natural hazards in the country. It is believed that the force of the Cyclone could have been greatly lessened and much loss in life and property damage would have been averted if healthy mangrove forests had been conserved along the coastlines of the Delta.

Coastal planning to ensure a protective buffer zone where habitation is discouraged is one way to reduce damage from future cyclones. Other methods include early warning systems, evacuation plans, effective communication and transport infrastructure, and storm shelters.

Effective mangrove ecosystem restoration is strongly encouraged. However, it needs constant monitoring and follow-up, which responsibly includes the local communities that must be included in this restorative process.

The Project

In order to address the immediate needs identified, ASEAN and Mingalar Myanmar designed a comprehensive approach to integrate livelihood support and build community resilience. The project activities include: Community-based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) trainings, Mangrove Planting, Livelihoods support and Village Infrastructure Development from January to August 2009. The Norwegian Fund for Disaster Assistance contributed USD 199,040 to implement the project activities.

A series of CBDRM trainings were conducted in five villages to strengthen village capacities in reducing their vulnerabilities and risks to natural hazards. During the CBDRM trainings, ASEAN Volunteers facilitated the formation of village disaster risk management committees to sustain the project development.

For disaster preparedness and mitigation, mangrove planting interventions were introduced to the communities. The ASEAN Volunteers assisted in planting mangroves in the river banks that were severely destroyed by the Cyclone. The project also provided a Training of Trainers on mangroves

nursery, planting techniques and preservation. A Mangrove Preservation Committee was also formed in each village to oversee the implementation of this activity. The mangroves plantation is reported to be essential to reduce disaster risks and improve the ecosystem restoration and rehabilitation of the Delta region.

After conducting village meetings and needs assessment, **livelihood support initiatives were provided to 436 households in five villages.** The support helped the villagers better plan for their livelihoods. In addition, the ASEAN Volunteers were also involved in evaluating the project outcomes for possible future interventions to build the communities' resilience.

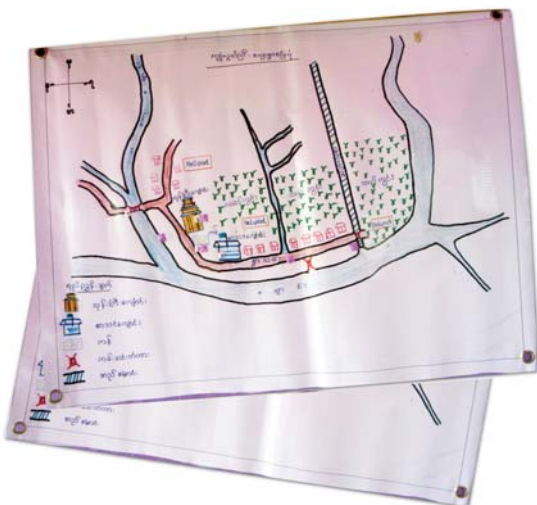
The five villages also benefitted from the development of village infrastructures. Through a series of village meetings, **each village was given the opportunity to identify its infrastructure priorities.** The ASEAN Volunteers also facilitated a cash-for-work approach to build the infrastructures identified, which strengthened community ties and participation by working together in building the village infrastructures.

Outcomes

Community Based Disaster Risk Management Training

The Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) training significantly raised community awareness on disaster risk management and strengthened the capacities of villagers and community leaders, which are shared with neighboring villages.

In each village, CBDRM trainings were conducted twice. The first training was conducted for two days, which provided a common understanding on disaster risk reduction measures. Participants were oriented on some assessment tools such as Participatory Risk Assessment (PRA) and Participatory Vulnerability Assessment (PVA). It served as a platform for the villages to form village disaster risk management committees (VDRMC). The follow-up training was carried-out in four days, the VDRMCs were encouraged to make a SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat) analysis to design a village risk assessment, draw a village hazard and resource map, and make a Village DRM action plan.



<< **Community Hazard and Resource Maps.** A series of CBDRM trainings were facilitated by ASEAN volunteers. One of the results of the trainings are community maps, which enabled the villagers to be aware of their hazard risks, vulnerabilities and resources. This is a first step to build resilience to future disasters.

Learning about Early Warning. >> As part of the CBDRM trainings, the communities learned practical ways to understand early warning tools and how to act upon them.



Mangroves Planting

In order to raise community awareness on the importance of mangroves and to share knowledge on mangroves planting techniques, a series of Training of Trainers for proper mangroves planting techniques was provided.

A Mangroves Preservation Committee was also formed to ensure the mangroves plantation plan is implemented.

A total of 61,277 mangroves plants were planted in five villages. Several species of mangroves were introduced to ensure a higher percentage of preservation.

The following species were deemed to have a higher survival rate in the given environment: *Nypa Frruticans*, *Sonneria Caseolaris*, *Aegiceras Corniculatum*, *Heritiera Fomes*, *Barringtonia Gymnorhiza*, *Punt Tha Kar*, *Bruguieva Parviflora*, *Ceriops Tagal* and *Kandeliar Candel*.



Through this project, the ASEAN Volunteers have introduced conserving mangroves to reduce disaster risks and revive the ecosystems affected by the Cyclone. Village Mangroves Preservation Committees were also formed to ensure a regular monitoring and preservation. The project has demonstrated a good example of disaster mitigation initiatives for possible replication in other areas or of other agencies.

Livelihoods Support

Based on the community meetings, 436 out of 438 households received livelihood support packages in five villages. Two households later declined to receive livelihood assistance because they had already purchased farming animals. Among the most vulnerable households, livelihood support prioritised: women-headed, aged, disable, orphans, widow and widower.

The supported livelihood items includes chicken, piglet, duck, buffalo, fishing boat, fishing gear, sewing machine, carpenter tools and cash for small-scale trading and gardening/farm. After providing the livelihood support, the ASEAN Volunteers monitored and evaluated the project outcomes for further interventions to enhance resilience among the villagers. The results noted that villagers could earn better income, plan their livelihoods, and contribute to food security.



ASEAN Volunteers together with Mingalar Myanmar facilitating the monitoring and distribution of livelihood support packages to the most vulnerable villagers in five targeted villages of Hay man village tract.



Village Infrastructure Development

A total of seven bridges, three jetties, small dams improvement, five water ponds, four village roads improvement and five community centers were built in five villages.

Through the cash-for-work approach, the following infrastructures were built and/or renovated:

Kyone Lhut Thit village - pond renovation, jetty, village road improvement and community center as a primary school.

Kyone Lhut Gyi village - gasifier & electricity and community center.

Nga Man Chaung village - pond renovation, village bridge, village road, jetty, community center, and gasifier & electricity support.

Tha Htay Gone - village bridge, jetty, two ponds, village road, community center as a nursery school.

The project promoted community participation, as well as stimulated the community economy.



The involvement of ASEAN Volunteers in the project implementation is essential. They were able to encourage communities to openly express their needs and difficulties. The ASEAN Volunteers from different member countries (Thailand, Malaysia, Cambodia and Myanmar) living in the remote villages of Myanmar demonstrated a compassionate ASEAN. While the ASEAN Volunteers could share their respective cultures and background to communities, the Volunteers also get experience and knowledge about Myanmar people.

ASEAN Volunteers played significant roles in the project implementation. They actively facilitated village meetings, trainings, needs assessments, and project monitoring. ASEAN Volunteers work hand in hand with community in building roads, jetties and ponds. Comparing to other agencies assistance, “-that just come, give and go-” communities observed the uniqueness of ASEAN

In Tha Htay Gone village, the project provided a good opportunity to support the Muslim community. A small road and jetty were built, which provided a better access to a 100-year old Mosque constructed by their ancestors from Bangladesh.

>>



Learning

Volunteers presence in their village. They give more respect to the ASEAN Volunteers that stay with them, in good and challenging times.

The project has encouraged community to be more organized to reach their objectives. Village CBDRM Committee and Mangrove Preservation Committee have been formed in every village by community, to maintain the project achievements on infrastructure projects and mangroves plantation. This creates a sense of ownership and ensures the sustainability of the project.

Awareness on Disaster Risk Management and Mangrove Preservation has been widespread across the community. Community knowledge and attentiveness were enhanced after being involved in the community meetings.

The ASEAN Volunteers and communities also learned from the expertise of Mingalar Myanmar (MM) on mangroves planting techniques and disaster risk reduction. MM has been recognized as credible resource persons for CBDRM trainings at the national level.



Looking Forward

Replication of the CBDRM Initiative

The comprehensive approach towards CBDRM that was shown in Hay Man Pilot Project provided good result, in raising awareness on disaster risk, restoring the Delta ecosystem by mangroves plantation, giving livelihoods and infrastructures support, and also create sense of ownership when community formed the Village CBDRM Team and the Mangrove Preservation Team. Replication of this comprehensive approach is still needed in other areas.

Significant Roles of ASEAN Volunteers

The ASEAN Volunteers is welcomed by community. The young and dedicated volunteers from four different countries have shown how ASEAN gives love and care to the people of its country members. Besides, ASEAN Volunteers is the motor, the spirit and the good implementer to ensure the success of the ASEAN Pilot Project implementation. The trust on ASEAN Volunteerism has been built among Myanmar people. It is important to maintain the momentum.

Importance of Village Committee

The Village Committee has been formed to maintain sustainability of the project. They will make sure the mangrove will grow to protect their villages and also rehabilitate their ecosystem. The committee will

ensure that they will ready to assist and prepare community for possible disaster in the future. They keep expressing gratitude to ASEAN after getting knowledge and awareness, benefiting from livelihoods and infrastructures supports, also after seeing their village getting green and save. The committee will play important role in delivering and maintaining ASEAN spirits at the village level after the project ended. Keep maintaining and using them as spoke-person to replicate in other villages would be very strategic.

Challenges Ahead

The Hay Man project has shown good result, as well as promoting sense of ownership. However, people in this village are still struggling with basic issues, such as drinking water shortage, poverty, health and food security problem. Those issues can not be addressed only in a brief engagement. The project has contributed to ease some immediate concerns but the challenge still remain. A consistent monitoring of progress and involvement of the communities and local authorities could ensure sustainability of the project's initiatives.

REFERENCES

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- Proposal: Community Based Disaster Risk Management Project, 2009
- TCG Endorsed Project Progress Reports Hay Man Village Tract, 2009

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was established on 8 August 1967. The Member States of the Association are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam. The ASEAN Secretariat is based in Jakarta, Indonesia.

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ASEAN People-Centred Case Study in Southeast Asia, a series of thematic knowledge-sharing tool, is an evidence-based documentation and analysis on how the Peoples of ASEAN are brought at the centre of the communities to promote an ASEAN Socio-Cultural community.

It highlights the “*process of ASEAN integration and community building, which all sectors of society are encouraged to participate in, and benefit from*” (ASEAN Charter Article 1.13). The purpose of the case studies is to disseminate possible good practices and share vital lessons learned across the Southeast Asian region.

The case studies re-affirm the “*shared commitment and collective responsibility in enhancing regional peace, security and prosperity*” (ASEAN Charter Article 2.2b). It aims to enable the ASEAN community in acquiring and adapting innovative ideas of what type of initiatives could be feasible in a given context; and to assist the region in identifying the outcomes, benefits as well as the constraints when undertaking such an initiative.

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This project is implemented by the Peoples of Hay Man village tract, in partnership with the Tripartite Core Group (TCG) and ASEAN Volunteers



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