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*Disaster Management in Cambodia
Community Based Disaster Risk Management in the case
of Drought in Oral District*

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Community Based Disaster Risk Management in the case of Drought
in Oral District

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Ms. Chhoun Nareth

Abstract

This article seeks to examine whether the existing Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) in Cambodia helps the community to cope with drought in Aroal district, Kampong Speu province. It also discusses the challenges and possibility to improve CBDRM in order to minimize the impact of natural disasters in terms of the loss of property, livelihoods and lives. The Cambodian government considers CBDRM as an integral part of its rural development program to alleviate poverty.

This paper focuses on five important elements that can contribute to strengthening the CBDRM, these elements are decision making, local participation, local resources, stakeholders' involvement and knowledge/capacity building. The research findings revealed that the CBDRM to a certain extent, helps people mitigate risks to disasters in the case of droughts and floods. Based on the empirical data from two case studies in Cambodia, the CBDRM complements the efforts of existing institutions such as the local authorities, NGOs and community-based organizations in helping people cope with drought. However, there are some key points for improvement. To be more effective, there should be additional budget allocation from the national level specifically for disaster management. At the same time, the government should develop a long-term strategy, especially for the case of drought, such as building irrigation systems, etc.

Keywords: *Cambodia / CBDRM/ Oral District/ Drought / NCDM, CCDM*

1. Introduction

Disaster is the global and regional concern which damage the poor and vulnerable the most (WB website). There is no country that is immune from disaster, though vulnerability to disaster varies although governments as well as international organization around the world are putting disaster risk management into their policies and implementation.

One of the most costly natural disasters, drought is identified as a disaster and could be a recurrent phenomenon. It is expected to become more frequent and severe, with increasing water demand due to population growth, as well as limited and uncertain water supplies due to climate change and variability (Fontaine and Steinemann, 2009). Reducing disaster losses has been a primary concern of governments and organizations all over the world. The International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) was adopted in 2000 by the United Nations in order to guide and coordinate global partners committed to the task of building resilient communities to achieve sustainable development (UNISDR, 2011).

The Royal Government of Cambodia considers disaster management as a key component of its social and economic planning. Floods and droughts have caused serious damage and loss to Cambodia, and threaten the Royal Government's efforts to enhance the economy and well-being of Cambodian society. Cambodia's resources have to be shared across a wide range while it very limited of development programs such as roads and bridges, and relief for affected communities. It is clear that natural disasters have worsened poverty in Cambodia and thus effective disaster management would be an important contribution to poverty reduction. Since majority of the people are living in rural areas which accountable 80% of population and those people are the most vulnerable is compare to urban. Government of Cambodia see community based disaster risk management is the good approach to minimize the loss of life, property which engaged people in the decision making process.

Drought had been classified as natural disaster and it impact to agriculture heavily. The increasing temperature is making this year 2015/2016 is worst in 50years (ACAPS note 2016). Keo Vy, the spokesman of the National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM), told the press that around 18 the 25 provinces in Cambodia were severely affected by drought and about 2.5 million people were affected across the country as estimated by the NCDM (Cambodia Daily, April 2016).

In Cambodia, the government considers CBDRM as an integral part of its rural development program to alleviate poverty (ActionAid International, 2006). CBDRM is seen as the way forward in minimizing enormous loss of life, property and livelihood. The government of Cambodia implement community based disaster risk management as the strategy that builds upon existing capacities and coping strategy of communities to collectively design and implement appropriate and doable long-term risk reduction.

1.1. Objective and Research Questions

This research aims to examine whether the existing CBDRM helps vulnerable communities cope with drought and discusses the possibility of improving the CBDRM. In order to achieve this objective, the paper poses three research questions as follows:

- 1) To what extent does the CBDRM mechanism help communities cope with drought?
- 2) What are the capacities and limitations, challenges and opportunities that need to be addressed at the community level?

2. Methodology and Study area

This research employed a qualitative approach using primary and secondary data. 31 In-depth interviews, four focus group discussions (FGD) and observations were the primary research methods along with the use of documents such as national and international journals as secondary sources.

Aoral district, Kampong Speu was selected for this research because they are known as drought-prone and about 95-99% of populations in those areas depend primarily on agriculture for their livelihoods (Oral district report 2013). Importantly, these area have long operated CBDRM and so local authorities have experiences as well as represent of local NGOs whom are working on that areas are actively working to promote CBDRM in that areas. Aoral district is one of the eight districts in Kampong Speu province which is consists of five communes and it's located in the northwest of the province which is 53 kilometers from the city hall. Ta Sal commune consists of 17 villages which is divided into two part including upstream which is account to 8villages and downstream contain of 9 villages but the upstream is the most affected area by drought and following by flood and typhoon. Reaskmey Samaki is the new commune that had been established in Aoral district which is consists of eight villages and it's about 20 kilometers from district office. Because the

security concern, people are moving out from this commune after 1979 and they come together again in 1996 when the stability is announced.

2.1 CBDRM concept and process

The concept of Community-based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) has emerged during the past two decades in South East Asian countries. The promoters these concept included NGOs, citizen's organizations, humanitarian agencies and government departments in different countries in the region.

In 2001, there is the first phase of Partnerships for Disaster Reduction-South East Asia Partnerships for Disaster Reduction-South East Asia has been working with governments, civil societies and communities to promote (CBDRM) in Southeast Asia for extend Cambodia, Thailand, Philippine and Vietnam. Community based disaster risk management implies not only the involvement of communities and local people in the decision-making and implementation of the total disaster management principles (from risk assessment, mitigation, preparedness, response and rehabilitation), but also in the application and adaptation of local indigenous risk-coping wisdom and knowledge into risk reduction. It is proposed to provide the communities and the people with the primary responsibility and sense of ownership of their overall protection and resiliency from natural disasters.

In the CBDRM Process, a thorough assessment of the community's hazard exposure and analysis of their vulnerabilities as well as capacities is the basis for activities, projects and programs to reduce disaster risks along with relevant stakeholders as well as committee disaster members. Normally, the communities are involved in the process of assessment, planning and implementation. This approach will guarantee that the community's real needs and resources are considered. There is more likelihood that problems will be addressed with appropriate interventions, through this process.

The CBDRM process has seven sequential stages, which can be executed before the occurrence of a disaster, or after one has happened, to reduce future risks. Each stage grows out of the preceding stage and leads to further action. Together, the sequence can build up a planning and implementation system, which can become a powerful disaster risk management tool.

2.2 CBDRM in Cambodia

In Cambodia, Community based disaster risk management (CBDRM) name differently is depend on organization and community based organization of their projects implementation. For extent, Oxfam America calls it as “Community Risk Reduction Program”. The program of the Cambodian Red Cross (CRC) is “Community-based Disaster Preparedness” or CBDP. While the Lutheran World Federation Cambodia implements the “Community-based Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation Project”. The disaster management institutions call it differently but they all accept it as community-based disaster risk management or CDBRM program.

Moreover, the various exchange of information among the countries enabled the sharing of common experiences in CBDRM among governments. There is unanimous agreement that implementing the CBDRM approach has advantages. Perhaps, the most important is that it increases people’s ownership of the program. According to Oxfam, the participants themselves identify the risks, and then their options to reduce those risks and finally the inputs available to them. This way, as Cambodian Red Cross found out, the community understands better their CBDP program. The big difference noted is that people before see disaster-related programs on need-basis or when there is disaster. With CBDRM, the program has been integrated in the community development plans. Here is some of the NGOs and CBOs that implement CBDRM activities which is includes: Cambodian Red Cross (CRC) Oxfam (GB), ZOA, Dan Church Aid, Prasac, JICA, UNICEF, UNDP, WFP, MRD, MOWRM, MOAF, MRC, AAH, LWF/CWS, CARE International, Seila, Cambodian Social Funds. (Community-based disaster risk management for local authorities: ADAP 2006).

Currently, there is a sub-decree on Farmer Water User Communities (FWUCs) will provide the CBDRM-FWUC with a firm basis upon which we can build some new groups (and strengthen existing ones) at District, Commune, and Village levels. This is the two year project 2016-2017 of CBDRM as the role model to other provinces within Cambodia. The project call “The Community-based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) and Farmer Water Users Community (FWUC)” Support (henceforth the CBDRM-FWUC) is a consulting assignment corresponding to Component 3 of the Greater Mekong Subregion: Flood and Drought Risk Management and Mitigation Project (GMS-FDRMMP). The intention is to ensure the management and use of the irrigation systems in an effective and sustainable manner in Pursat province and later to be followed as best practiced model in Cambodia.

2.3 National Committee for Disaster Management in Cambodia

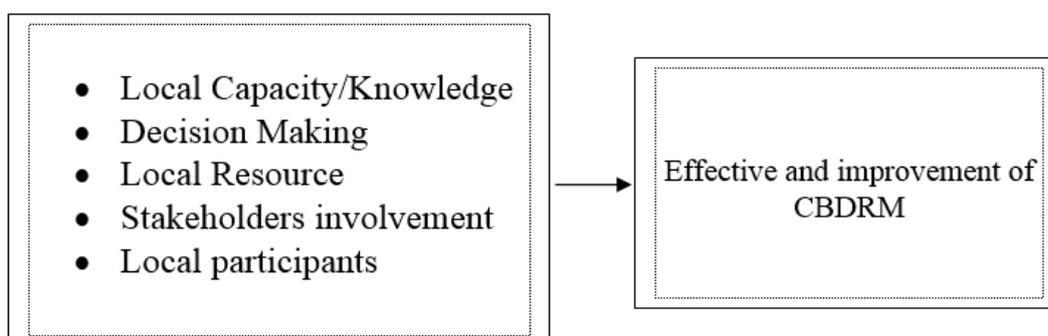
The National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM) is Cambodia's leading authority for disaster management and response in 25 provinces. It is divided into national and sub-national levels. At the national level, it consists of 22 members from different ministries, the Cambodian armed forces, the Civil Aviation Authority and the Cambodian Red Cross. The sub-national level is comprised of the provincial, district, communal and village levels. The members consist of provincial governors and councilors, district governors and councilors, commune chiefs and commune councilors.

At the national level, the NCDM mainly work on policy and regulations related to emergency preparedness, relief, and coordination, while various government ministries and the sub-national level, especially the commune level, as well as other international organizations such as the Cambodian Red Cross (CRC), are responsible for implementation.

This is very important for Cambodia to adopt the Law in regards with disaster management in order to rearrange the structure, role and responsibility of NCDM. Having strong laws in place provides a basic on which to undertake all aspects of disaster risk management, and to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable and disaster-affected communities. Moreover, His Excellency Mr. Ros Sovann, National Committee for Disaster Management and Chair of the ASEAN Committee for Disaster Management (ACDM) for 2015 also highlight the significant of having disaster management law to implement within the region as well as country. As the result the law of disaster management is adopted in 2015.

3. Framework:

The paper is going to discuss of five element including local capacity/knowledge, decision making, local resource, stakeholders involvement and local participations are the key important to help and improve the process of Community-Based Disaster Risk Management. The framework of the study is come out from the concept of CBDRM, decentralization and deconcentration and local participation.



4. Discussion and Findings

In Cambodia, government consider Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) as the strategy to reduce vulnerability at sub-national level especially commune and village level. CBDRM is mainly operated by NGOs and CBOs while the exiting of commune committee disaster management and it create while the exiting decentralization and deconcentration in Cambodia. This creation is the channel for relevant stakeholders such as local organizations, the private sector, and local participants to work closely with committees for disaster management at the community level in order to reduce the vulnerability of the local people. The CBDRM attempts to increase the sharing of information and the interaction among participants by providing various training from relevant stakeholders including the national level of the NCDM, line ministries, and local NGOs. The goal is to make the villagers as well as the local authorities aware of preparedness, resilient and vulnerable such as coping strategies, choosing the right crop during drought.

Currently, only Life with Dignity (LWD) is working on disaster management such as preparedness (early warning system) and resilience. Within the two communes, Life With Dignity (LWD) is a local NGO who have been present in those areas since 1997 with a broader focus than disaster risk management. They venture out to focus on Disaster Risk Reduction since 2002 with specific programmes and trainings to community by working closely with local authority such as commune chief, councilor and village in order to identify the communes or villages mainly affected by drought.

In this section, researcher will discuss on the process of CBDRM had been implemented by LWD and the significant of these five elements contribute to the improvement of CBDRM based on the conceptual framework including local knowledge and capacity, decision making, local resource, people participation and relevant stakeholders by discussing the case of drought in two communes and villages, last but not least we will see how the present of CBDRM could help community to cope with drought. In the end of discussion and finding, research will reflect and answer the research questions and the objective of the study.

4.1 Local capacity and knowledge:

As the literature states, capacity and knowledge are tools that can be used to cope with disasters, especially with respect to CBDRM implementation. Transfer of knowledge, increasing capacity, and sharing information are crucial for preparedness, emergency response and recovery and this knowledge is expected to help reduce vulnerability (MPBI: 2011). In this sense, local capacity and knowledge refer to coping abilities as well as human knowledge, skills and capabilities.

In the two communities, local people receive trainings from community-based organizations, local authorities, line ministries and the national level. The training primarily focuses on coping strategies, specifically what is needed to prepare before drought hits and choosing the right crop during a drought. Moreover, people also receive training on how to share information with the appropriate parties before and during a crisis.

4.2 Decision making

In the concept of CBDRM, one of the principle points is placing people at the heart of the decision-making process and the implementation of disaster risk management activities. In this stage, the knowledge and capacities of the community committee for disaster management, which includes the commune chief, police officers, health officers, elders and monks, are used in the decision-making process to ensure the participation of many people. In this concept, the people, especially the most venerable ones, are encouraged to participate in decision making; however, in reality, the decisions are made by those possessing the financial resources while the budget allocation is not exit.

In the CBDRM structure, local people are the ones who make decisions, especially at the village or community level. Meanwhile, the local people and village chiefs are the ones who gather the information related to disaster such as the households who impact by disaster such as flood, drought and storm. Invariably, the decisions are made on the basis of the money available from the government (for instance, every year commune chiefs propose building irrigation canals in order to reduce vulnerability of agriculture productivities, household impact, yet the funding must be approved at the national level).

4.3 Stakeholder's involvement

Stakeholder's involvement is seen as crucial for the success of CBDRM, which is a complex operation involving resources beyond the local capacity. Community-based disaster risk management has been acknowledged and used successfully in many regions around the world. However, the participation of stakeholders and civil society in decision-making integrate into policy, planning and implementation is rarely been seen. Stakeholder involvement is a time-consuming, resource-intensive exercise and requires strong skills. More importantly is cooperation with local authority.

Successful programs have taken all stakeholders on board, understood local peoples' needs and requirements, and had strong consultation and social mobilisation (expert comment; Qazi 2010: 132).

It is very difficult to achieve an effective CBDRM during a crisis without involvement from the various stakeholders, especially local organizations, yet they also plays important role in preparedness and recovery. The case study suggests that people see local NGOs as the primary source of funding for disaster management activities. During disasters, the local people contact local NGOs such as LWD directly because they can get support in a timely manner; they also request aid at the community and national levels, but this process is more time-consuming. While bureaucracy system is taking long time to ask for emergency respond, social media become the best channel for local people to interact directly to the top management by shorter time. For example there is a case in this areas that prominent monk in a local community used Facebook to call for intervention from Prime Minister Hun Sen. On the following morning, the provincial level authorities immediately took action. (Facebook in Cambodia is become a crucial channel for local people or vulnerable people interact or express their opinion to receive quicker help, not even disaster issue since the Prime Minister host his page).

4.4 Local participation:

Local participation is agued to be important for CBDRM. Participation can allow the citizens to take part in the governance process by communicating their need for development, idea on how to give the solution to local problems could be provided thus giving a better sense of involvement and ownership. People in the communities are expected to be actively

engaged in the identification, analysis, monitoring and evaluation of disaster risks in order to reduce their vulnerabilities and enhance their capacities.

In focus group discussions (FGDs), participants revealed that people in the villages engage in community disaster management to some extent, such as sharing information, making phone calls to local authorities, and participating in volunteer groups that take immediate action.

Local people in the two villages in the Reaskmey Samaki commune seem to be more active than those in Ta Sal in terms of engaging, contributing ideas, and participation. They work closely with a local NGO (Life With Dignity) and the village chief in order to share information about their areas. In the two villages, people migrating from other parts of the province received compensation to stay in these areas. There were some differences with regard to the knowledge of commune chiefs and village chiefs between these two communes and their leadership played an important role in fostering the level of local participation within the community; for example, while one commune chief is very old, he cannot hear properly and he study less than grade 7. In this commune, the two villages that I had interviewed one villages was drunk which I can not talk a lot with him. Another commune is very active, he finish grade 12, and he know how to communicate with local NGOs and meeting with the local people.

4.5 Local resources

The literature on decentralization suggests that resource availability is as important as capacity and decision making power for effective local governance, including the CBDRM. Local resources here refer to financial support and local labor contributions. Without resources, the activities and implementation cannot happen.

Thus far, there has been no budget allocated for community disaster risk management to implement activities in the CBDRM, especially emergency response. For this reason, the Cambodian Red Cross plays an important role in the case of flood, drought and storm.

Commune chiefs and other members of the community including commune councilors, village chief are members of the Cambodian Red Cross. They are responsible for contributing 40,000 riel annually, which equates to 13 U.S. dollars. This amount of contribution is for

emergency response when needed. Furthermore, the local authorities ask business people within the community to donate as much equipment and financial resource as they can.

5. Conclusion

In Cambodia, the government considers CBDRM as an integral part of its rural development program to alleviate poverty. CBDRM is seen as the way forward in minimizing enormous loss of life, property and livelihood. In disaster risk management at the sub-national level, Community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM) is a process in which at-risk communities are actively engaged in the identification, analysis, treatment, monitoring and evaluation of disaster risks in order to reduce their vulnerabilities and enhance their capacities.

There are however, no commonly adopted procedures and standards related to the practice of CBDRM with each organization using their own methodologies and strategies although the Joint Action Group (JAG) has been advocating for this with the NCDM and several initiatives has been started (NCDM report 2013). CBDRM in Cambodia name differently is depend from one to another organization but mainly they work at the grassroots level such as communes and villages by having a principle of identified communes, selected focal group, assessment and training.

With the present of Community-based disaster risk management, research finding revealed that to a certain extent it helps people to reduce their vulnerability to disaster in the case of drought by creating the space for external stakeholder including NGOs, CBOs involving in the community such as providing the training to local people as well as local authorities.

Based on the empirical data from the case study in Aroal district, Kampong Speu province in Cambodia, CBDRM complement the effort of existing institution such as local authorities which is call commune committee for disaster management, NGOs, and community based organization (CBO) in helping in the community. Moreover, With the presence of CBDRM in the community, the increasing number of people participation in sharing information and interaction is significant noted, with the training from relevant stakeholders including national level of NCDM, line ministries, and local NGOs; people as well as local authorities are aware of coping strategies such as what to choose the right crop during drought. The present of NGOs and CBOs is to active the structure and system of CBDRM that exit at the

crass root, yet the role of CCDMs and VDMG is to contentious activities which created by NGOs and CBOs.

In order to strengthen CBDRM in this case, budget allocation should be in place specifically in the case of disaster. CBDRM should be put as priority in commune committee for disaster management (CCDM), since it is implemented under this framework. Long term solution should be taken by building water canal within the communes to ensure transfer of water from nearby river or main canal in times of drought. To increase level of youth participation, more training should be conducted in order to make people understand their ownership to deal with the problem within their community as well as knowledge and leadership of leader.

The existing of law on disaster management in Cambodia is the possibilities for CBDRM improvement and the suitability of it as the law state clearly about the role, responsibilities, budget allocation, relevant stakeholders and capacity building. Yet, it is in the early stage for implement of this law since it was adopted last year 2015. Moreover, the law itself could help CBDRM sustainability while the NGOs or CBOs face out from that areas while the system and structure is there which the committee such as commune and villages could play a role as continues the activities.

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The World Bank: an overview on disaster risk management
<http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/disasteriskmanagement/overview>

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