

# **A Qualitative Brief on Disaster Risk Management Initiatives from 2009 to 2011; As Outlined in SAP [2009-2013]**

## **Executive Summary**

Disaster risk management sector has shown significant progress in terms of disaster risk reduction, mitigation and adaptation. As disaster risk reduction is everybody's business, public awareness is one of the key focuses in the efforts to disaster mitigation. In general, stakeholders have been able to identify the capacities that our communities having towards their own resilience as well as the vulnerabilities most critical in nature.

NDMC has finalized the drafted DM Act and is now ready for submission to AG Office for further review on the compliance with the existing laws before it reaches the parliament. This is one of the most crucial works with regard to disaster management institutionalization in the Maldives. This comprehensive draft is generated through expert consultations and through multi stakeholder consultations at different levels.

Advocacy and sensitization programs have been developed; concept notes and program outlines have been formulated in the efforts to promote disaster management legal frameworks.

National level framework on disaster risk reduction and climate change integration has been formulated with the direct assistance received from UNISDR. Strategic National Action Plan (SNAP) has now been endorsed by the government of Maldives. Drafted SOP's for some of the key stakeholders and will be tested soon in those government departments.

Over 75% of the target islands have disaster focal points and disaster focal points have also been established in all regions. This program is led by the Ministry of Education. Integration of DRR in all sector policies and mainstreaming DRR efforts all across sectors,

workshops and seminars were conducted. These discussions and the outcome of these workshops have contributed immensely to the efforts to incorporate DRR in all sector policies.

Disaster risk profile of Maldives has been developed and is available for disaster risk management use since 2006 and is revised as appropriate. Apart from this, UNDP Maldives has completed CBDRM plans in 37 islands where Care Society has done CBDRM in 4 islands. Also, cost benefit analysis of disaster risk mitigation measures has been done in 4 selective islands.

Public awareness campaigns have been conducted and Rakka Campaign (2009) was one the programs conducted at nationwide. DRR and CCA have been incorporated in the National Curriculum and the text books for teachers and students were drafted by the Ministry of Education.

## **1. Policies & Outcomes**

**P1.** *Disaster Management and mitigation institutionalized and strong institutional base for implementation created.*

National framework on DRR & CCA integration is approved by the government & is on implementation. Disaster Management Act has been drafted & is ready for submission to the parliament through AGO. Therefore, [P1] has demonstrated a significant progress over the last two years under consideration. However, both technical and financial constrains have been encountered imposing slowdowns and difficulties to the process.

**P2.** *National early warning system for safety and security of Maldivians through information, monitoring, dissemination and coordination.*

Regular warnings are provide by MMS for the National Disaster Management Centre and the timely weather updates to make people more prepared against possible extreme weather events. NDMC through media and professional networks disseminate instructions

required for such an event expected. These weather data is recorded, analyzed, stored and is made available.

Proper dissemination mechanism is not in place yet in the Maldives; therefore, media is the main source to communicate warnings to the larger population. Therefore, development and establishment of an early warning dissemination system is urgently required. This also has been identified as one of the key challenges to disaster preparedness.

**P3. Culture of safety and resilience built at all levels in the country through innovation, knowledge and education.**

Creating awareness on the issue is the key focus. Several campaigns, simulation exercises and drills have been conducted in different regions at community level. Evaluation on the effectiveness of these programs is under way. Public awareness campaigns conducted are still inadequate to cater for the larger population. However, the financial constrains limit the scale of operation in terms of public awareness and advocacy.

**P4. Underlying risks to life and property from natural or man-made hazardous events reduced.**

In order to reduce the underlying risks to people and property, there are actions taken by various government agencies co-ordinated by National Disaster Management Centre. For examples, National Building Codes (MHE) and Disability Act (MOHF) have been formulated as key milestones in this sector of preparedness. However, adequate analyses have not yet been done in order to assess the underlining risks of the possible hazard events to property and critical infrastructure.

**P5. Disaster preparedness strengthened for effective response at all levels.**

Initial concept papers & management responsibility of a Disaster Relief Fund has been drafted & is in the discussion for further development. There is a major difficulty with the

financial system upon establishment of a Disaster Relief Fund which needs to be studied further. Establishment of a DRF is an essential pre-requisite towards preparedness and effective response to natural disasters. Series of workshops and consultative briefings have been organized by the National Disaster Management Centre.

**P6. Disaster risk reduction integrated in climate change adaptation and vice versa.**

Integration of DRR and CCA has obtained attention and focus at all levels. SNAP would be the guiding principles for the actions to be taken in this regard. Importance and effectiveness of DRR & CCA integration needs more and more focus at all levels. In fact, DRR and CCA are dealt with in separation yet in the Maldives. However, the global trend is that it should be combined to manage.

**2. National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) and its major Responsibilities**

Central co-ordination for disaster management, disaster risk reduction, mitigation and adaptation is the main function of National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC). There are remarkable achievements; National Framework for integration of DRR & CCA has been formulated & approved by the government of Maldives which is now budgeted for implementation. DRR Unit specialized for disaster mitigation measures has been established within the centre and is in the process of institutionalization. Disaster Management Act (Bill) has been drafted & finalized for submission.

Formulation of the Act, however, has been delayed due policy changes at times. When the structure changes or when the status or the position changes, there is a need for revisions to be made to the draft. This process has drag on to many years without having it submitted to the parliament.

The formulation of Disaster Management Act has been the most important thing in the (SAP) priorities as institutionalization of a fully fledged disaster management mechanism in the Maldives. In this regard, a comprehensive draft has now been formulated and is at proof reading stage.

The national framework for disaster risk reduction (SNAP) has been formulated and endorsed by the government of Maldives. SNAP<sup>[1]</sup> was formulated in 2009 and was endorsed by the government early 2011.

### **3. Performance and Achievements**

Disaster risk management strategies have been operational on the basis of the framework derived from SAP where the implementation of DRR policies has shown significant improvements over the last two years. Individual key stakeholder institutions have performed the activities/responsibilities outlined in the SAP mandatory to them.

There were deviations observed at times due to lack of policy frameworks specific to some areas of operation as well as due to limited resources available for carrying out some of the operational activities as outlined in the Strategic Action Plan (SAP). SOP's are required by the all institutions and a community in general, however, due to resource constrains, a limited number of SOP's are in practice. Therefore, difficulties emerged often & hindered the effective implementations. USAID has given us the green signal on their financial and technical support in formulating the National Disaster Management SOP in 2012. Despite all these challenges, basic guidelines and documents have been drafted for expected programs in 2012.

Financial resource constrains have been the major difficulty encountered in the process of implementing specific strategies outlined in the Action Plan. Allocated budgets in 2009 and 2010 had been effectively used and had shown a good performance rank. Budget approved for some of the activities were not sufficient due to high cost of transport from islands to Male and between atolls. Whole sum of allocated budget has not fully released from the financial authority with reference to Economic crisis and other cash flow difficulties.

Key stakeholder group comprises of various relevant government & non-governmental organizations who work very closely & collectively towards DRR and CCA integration, advocacy and training. Stakeholder consultations and contributions are significant and are

on the increase at a constant pace. Therefore, implementation among all sector agencies has strong linkages and partnerships.

An informal Platform has already been formed & is functional regarding disaster risk management, mitigation and adaptation.

In addition to local organization partnerships, UN system supports the disaster management, risk reduction and mitigation initiatives in the country. UNISDR has always been a partner to National Disaster Management Centre and other relevant government organizations in this regard, both, technical and financial. SNAP formulation is a landmark achievement of such a strong partnership. Capacity development and training opportunities received from international partners have been shared among stakeholders on priority basis in terms of the need.

Sustainability has always been a key question in the efforts to DRR. However, it is very crucial to sustain the process. Disaster risk management should be sustainable. Establishment of a legal framework on disaster management along with the action plan could be an essential criterion to facilitate its sustainability and development. In general, disaster risk management sector as a whole performed several risk reduction activities but ad-hoc in its nature of carrying out such activities.

A proper system to co-ordinate these efforts would have sustained these initiatives as specified in the Strategic Action Plan of the government. There were institutional linkages in carrying out disaster management, risk reduction and mitigation activities in the country.

NDMC, UNDP, MRC, Care Society and other civil society organizations are in strong partnership and co-ordination in terms of disaster risk management, mitigation and adaptation. NDMC is also in partnership with UNISDR for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation integration. ISDR has been a potential donor agency and assist the system to partner with other potential donors around the world on DRR. UN ISDR has funded capacity development, disaster management institutionalization in the Maldives.

ISDR has contributed financial supports to NDMC on development of a national framework on DRR and CCA integration. Apart from the financial assistance, technical supports were provided immensely to SNAP formulation having given the experts to work with NDMC over a period of time.

#### **4. Key Issues encountered**

There are still a very limited number of technical staff specialized in the area of disaster management, mitigation and adaptation working for disaster risk management in the Maldives.

Legal establishment of some key stakeholder organizations such as National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) is still questionable. Numerous changes brought in the structure and the status of the National Centre itself is creating hindrance towards effective risk management establishments. Therefore, the government at the policy level should pledge its willingness and support towards institutionalization of a disaster risk management system in the country. For a strong institutional mechanism, disaster risk management should be established by **law** which is still in the draft stage. Institutional structuring and channel of command both **horizontal** and **vertical** have not yet been taken place in order to foster institutional communication linkages.

Financial and technical constrains have been the major issue in the implementation of the strategies as outlined in the SAP (2009-2013). Very limited financial resources have to be shared among a large number of small communities. This causes further financial difficulties in carrying out activities at grass root level which is something very crucial, indeed.

**NDMC 2011** has been the worst ever year in its history. Difference in political views at the top management has imposed many restrictions on the budgeted programs. Therefore, all the programs planned for the year have not been conducted having the budget given. At local level, different communities and community organizations impose restrictions to

carry out DRR activities as prescribed in the SAP as well as the SNAP due to difference in political view.

Differences in societal views also impose some degree of resistance and influence on community based DRM interventions.

Generally women's participation in the DRR initiatives especially in the public advocacy and awareness is more than that of men, in the current context. Weather data is collected by MMS through atmospheric monitoring. This data processing is done in the metrological department, stored and disseminated as and when needed for preparedness, awareness and other relevant purposes. Disaster risk information and climate change impact information are still not available effectively for the public consumption.

## **5. Key Lessons**

DRR as everybody's business, institutional linkages are crucial in carrying out interventions successfully as specified in the sector outcome statement in reference to SAP. Importance of DRR and CCA integration in the effort to disaster risk management, mitigation and adaptation is still an issue for many people. Community empowerment and CBDRM plans for individual islands where communities' active participation is essential for effectiveness.

DRR technical experts are important to stay with national focal point (NDMC) for constantly running DRR programs and central co-ordination as an important function in the whole of the DRR spectrum. Budgetary commitments are required for goal-oriented DRR and CCA integration initiatives in the country.

## **Closure**

Framework on co-ordination between key stakeholder organizations (an **incident command system**) is highly recommendable in order to achieve the targets as prescribed in the Strategic Action Plan (2009 – 2013). Similarly, Adoption of SNAP by all stakeholders and government ministries is essential in sustaining the DRR efforts to carry out



interventions outlined in the SAP as well as Strategic National Action Plan (SNAP) for DRR & CCA integration.

Formulation of Disaster management act and central disaster management system development with a well functioning National Platform as mandated in the HFA. Technical capacity development and ToT programs for local partner agencies working for disaster risk management, mitigation and adaptation. Capacity development for first response and expansion of weather radar coverage to enhance atmospheric monitoring and evaluation of weather related hazards are essential for institutionalization of DRM system.