

**"Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in Disasters:
A Feminist and Human Rights Perspective"**

**Submitted to:
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Submitted by:



**Asian Disaster Preparedness Center
Bangkok, Thailand**

SECTION 1: PROFILE OF THE INSTITUTION

1.1 Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, Bangkok, Thailand (<http://www.adpc.net/v2007/>)

The Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) is a non-profit organization supporting the advancement of safer communities and sustainable development, through implementing programs and projects that reduce the impact of disasters upon countries and communities in Asia and the Pacific, by:

- *Developing and enhancing sustainable institutional disaster risk management capacities, frameworks and mechanisms, and supporting the development and implementation of government policies;*
- *Facilitating the dissemination and exchange of disaster risk management expertise, experience and information; and*
- *Raising awareness and enhancing disaster risk management knowledge and skills.*

At the recommendation of UN Disaster Relief Organization (UNDRO) - now known as UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA) - ADPC was established in 1986 as an outreach activity of the Asian Institute of Technology in Bangkok, Thailand, with the aim of strengthening the national disaster risk management systems in the region. In 1999, ADPC became an independent entity, which is governed and guided by a Board of Trustees (23 members representing 16 countries) and advised by a Regional Consultative Committee (32 members from 26 countries in Asia and the Pacific) and Advisory Council (100+ members from a wide range of agencies).

ADPC's *vision* is “safer communities and sustainable development through disaster risk reduction”

ADPC's *mission* is to reduce the impact of disasters on communities and countries in Asia and the Pacific by:

- raising awareness and enhancing knowledge
- developing and strengthening sustainable institutional mechanisms
- facilitating exchange of information, experience and expertise; and
- developing and demonstrating innovative disaster reduction practices

ADPC has developed and adopted the Strategic Plan in which all programs and projects are formulated and designed to achieve five GOALS in 2010 as follows;

1. Build and strengthen capacity of the member countries, International Agencies, NGOs and community in the Asia and Pacific region
2. Facilitate Partnerships and Exchange of Experience in the region
3. Recognition as a Proactive and Responsive Regional Resource Center
4. Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction into Development
5. Achieve Quality Service through a team and thematic / sector approach as given below:
 - a) Public Health in Emergencies (PHE)
 - b) Urban Disaster Risk Management (UDRM)
 - c) Disaster Management Systems (DMS)
 - d) Climate Risk Management and Early Warning (CRM &EW)

In accomplishing its mission, ADPC develops and implements cross-sectoral programs and projects in the following disaster risk management thematic areas:

- **Climate Risk Management (CRM)**
 - Reducing the vulnerabilities of communities to climate risks and using climate as a resource by applying climate information to crop and water resource management
 - Institutionalizing and building capacity of partner institutions to generate, interpret, translate and communicate climate forecast information with sufficient lead time to enable communities and governments to anticipate and manage risks instead of responding to recurring disaster

- **Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM)**
 - Institutionalization of the community based disaster risk management in the policy, planning and implementation of the government ministries and departments and the that of the donors in target countries
 - Implementation of innovative programs to explore new dimensions in the CBDRM practice;
 - Development of frameworks and tools to support the work of decision-makers and practitioners
 - Development of databases and publications to map the CBDRM practices in various regions
 - Development of new training tools to enhance the capacity of practitioners
 - Development of a regional information and technical support center on CBDRM practices
 - Continued support to the ACDM and other regional entities for promoting CBDRM practice

- **Disaster Risk Management Systems (DMS)**
 - Strengthening and building the capacities of national, provincial and local disaster management systems, and promoting regional cooperation by supporting and enhancing the effectiveness of existing mechanisms

- **Public Health in Emergencies (PHE)**
 - Developing more effective policy, procedures and guidelines for emergency management by the health sector
 - Assisting health agencies, both government and non-government, in health emergency preparedness, mitigation and response

- **Training Resources (TR)**
 - Regional courses, which ADPC conducts every year periodically, to improve the knowledge and skills of professionals on various aspects of disaster management in the light of regional disaster management needs
 - Program based courses, under which ADPC develops and institutionalizes courses at the national level in different countries with the collaboration of national level training organizations on specific aspects of disaster management
 - Special courses tailored to suit the needs of particular groups of professionals to enhance their capabilities to meet the requirements of their disaster management programs; typically developed upon request from governments, international and UN agencies, NGOs and private sector

- **Urban Disaster Risk Management (UDRM)**
 - Reducing human, social and economic losses in cities, resulting from disasters
 - Building stakeholders' capacity
 - Facilitating structural and non-structural interventions
 - Effective emergency response planning process

Towards strengthening its operational efficiency and effectiveness, ADPC has enhanced its capacity to develop and manage regional disaster risk management programs, which now constitute a major component of its operational activities, working in close collaboration with and building the capacities of national and local partner institutions.

ADPC's work is primarily focused on the Asian region, where it has implemented programs and projects, and provided technical services and training in the following countries in Asia:

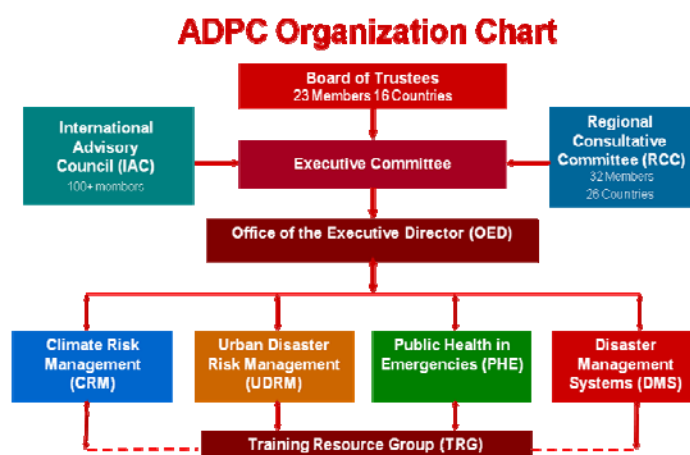
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|---------------|--------------|-----------|-------------|
| - Afghanistan | - Bangladesh | - Bhutan | - Brunei |
| - Cambodia | - China | - India | - Indonesia |
| - Japan | - Korea | - Lao PDR | - Maldives |

- Malaysia
- Pakistan
- Thailand
- Mongolia
- Philippines
- Timor Leste
- Myanmar
- Singapore
- Vietnam
- Nepal
- Sri Lanka

ADPC's disaster management training courses, however, have also received participation from Africa, Australia, Europe, New Zealand, Latin America, the Middle East, the South Pacific and North America (e.g. United States and Canada).

ADPC formulate and implement programs and projects at regional and country level to promote increased awareness, knowledge and adoption of disaster risk reduction practices so as to mainstream disaster reduction as an integral part of the development process at community, national, sub-regional, regional and international levels. **Capacity building** is one of the major goals of ADPC which helps to build and strengthen the capacity of countries, organizations, communities and individuals to reduce the impact of disasters. Capacity building is an integral part throughout ADPC history. Partnerships and networks among and across communities, sectors, institutions, and countries and facilitate exchange of experiences, practices and lessons learned is considered is the core of ADPC policies, programs and projects. All programs and projects being designed and implemented should have elements of partnerships and exchange of experience. Moreover, ADPC is committed to be a proactive and responsive regional resource with international organization status promoting disaster reduction, supporting and supported by countries of the region, while accessing and integrating international best practices and resources to achieve ADPC goals through its ongoing and future programs and projects.

1.2 ADPC Governance, Structure and Human Resources



ADPC is governed and guided by a Board of Trustees and advised by a Regional Consultative Committee and Advisory Council. In 2005, ADPC was endorsed as an inter-governmental organization, with Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand as founding members.

The Asian Disaster Preparedness Center currently has over 100 staff from 18 different countries. ADPC develops and implements disaster risk management programs and projects by providing technical and professional services in formulating national disaster management policies, facilitating the development of institutional mechanisms to support disaster risk reduction, capacity building of disaster management institutions, program design for comprehensive disaster risk management, post-disaster assessment, public health and emergency management, land-use planning, disaster-resistant construction, and the planning of immediate relief response and subsequent rehabilitation activities. ADPC has extended its operation through its country project offices in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Ho Chi Minh City and An Giang in Vietnam, Khamuane in Lao PDR, and Prey Veng, Yangon in Myanmar and Phnom Penh in Cambodia.

ADPC also facilitates, maintains and operates a regional early warning facility to cater to differential needs and demands of countries to address gaps in the end-end multi-hazard early warning system through its office at Pathumthani, Thailand.

SECTION 2: THE PUBLIC HEALTH IN EMERGENCIES

ADPC's Public Health in Emergencies (PHE) team aims to improve health outcomes of communities at risk of emergencies and disasters. In collaboration with our partners, PHE develops and implements capacity building projects and training programs which address continuing and emerging challenges in health emergency management at regional, national, sub-national and community levels. PHE programs help to strengthen health emergency management systems by building relationships between health disciplines and by integrating the health sector into community-wide disaster management systems.

PHE Activities

ADPC offers training and capacity building programs across the breadth of health emergency management. We offer project services by drawing upon the collective expertise of PHE and other ADPC teams, and our extensive network of technical experts who apply their knowledge and experience in the development, delivery and review of joint projects.

ADPC provides diverse quality learning opportunities for health managers, technical specialists, facilitators and community health workers to build their knowledge, skills and attitudes for managing health risks and public health consequences of disasters, communicable disease emergencies and conflict situations. PHE programs help to strengthen health emergency management systems by building relationships between health disciplines and by integrating the health sector into community-wide disaster management systems.

PHE Training Program and Projects

With our institutional partners and an extensive network of health emergency management specialists, ADPC has developed and implemented training courses and projects in countries and communities around the world.

- Inter-regional and National Public Health and Emergency Management in Asia & the Pacific (PHEMAP) courses. These courses focus on improving the management and coordination abilities of public health emergency managers in their roles as risk managers, program managers, operations managers and leaders. The PHE Team has also conducted two (2) National PHEMAP Course Coordinators' Workshops to strengthen the linkages between the Inter-regional and National PHEMAP courses and provides support for national PHEMAP courses in Asia.
- Public Health in Complex Emergencies (PHCE) course is designed for health personnel working with refugees and internally displaced persons in complex emergencies.
- Program for Enhancement of Emergency Response (PEER) Phase 3 aims to promote and enhance regional disaster preparedness training and capacity-building programs within the Asian region.
- Hospital Emergency Preparedness & Response (HEPR) course assists health service managers and medical personnel with health facility planning and managing large numbers of casualties.
- Basic Emergency Response Course (BERC) which combines training of trainers and community level training to build health and medical emergency response capability in communities (associated with ADPC projects on Urban Disaster Risk Management).
- Management of the Dead and the Missing in Disasters (MDM) workshop addresses the multi-sectoral dimensions of managing missing persons and dead bodies, such as disaster victim

identification, management of health risks, cultural traditions for burials, and psychosocial support for relatives.

- Scoping study on the psychosocial and disaster mental capacities and capacity development activities in Asia
- Nutrition of Children and Mothers in Disasters (NCMD) course which enables participants to train other health staff on managing nutritional needs in disasters.
- Disasters and Development (D&D) course for health and development professionals and focusing on integrating health emergency risk management and sustainable development.
- WHO Fellowships and study tours for senior health officials from the regions, e.g. Myanmar, DPR Korea.

Epidemic and pandemic preparedness has been an increasing focus of our activities, and has brought new partnerships and projects such as:

- Strengthening Community-based Management of Avian and Human Influenza (AHI), a knowledge generation project, with our partners in the AHI-NGO-RC/RC Partnership, namely CARE, IFRC and IRC
- Health Care Facility Emergency Preparedness and Response to Epidemics and Pandemics (HCF-EPREP) which strengthens health care facility emergency planning for communicable disease emergencies, with a focus on pandemic influenza
- Emerging Zoonotic Diseases which focuses on the development and testing of tools for assessing risk and capacity assessment tools
- Exercise Management for Public Health and Animal Health professionals
- Development of a training package for managing health risks of deliberate use of biological, chemical and radiological agents (BCR)

Key funding partners

The PHE team acknowledges the financial and in-kind support from many national government, international, academic, private sector and non-government organizations. In recent years, the following donors have supported PHE projects:

- APEC, ASEAN & Kenan Institute Asia (Exercise Management)
- Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and Asian Development Bank (ADB) (Community-based Management of AHI)
- AusAID (Emerging Zoonotic Diseases, Australian Youth Ambassadors for Development Program)
- Japan International Corporation of Welfare Services (PHEMAP)
- Royal Government of Norway a (PHEMAP)
- Rockefeller Foundation (Zoonotic Diseases)
- USAID (Public Health in Complex Emergencies, Psychosocial Support, Exercise Management, Program for Enhancement of Emergency Response)

Key partners

In addition to our donor partners, the PHE team has consolidated long-standing partnerships and continues to develop relationships with organizations working in public health. In addition to the program activities listed above, the following formal partnership agreements have been established:

- PHEMAP: an MoU between WHO-SEARO, WHO-WPRO and ADPC was extended in June 2006 for 3 years.

- Public Health in Complex Emergencies: an MoU was signed by ADPC, American University of Beirut Faculty of Health Science (Lebanon), Makerere University School of Public Health (Uganda), International Rescue Committee and World Education Inc.
- Thammasat University: an MoU was signed with the new Faculty of Public Health at Thammasat University, Thailand.

ADPC is a partner with CARE, International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Rescue Committee in the AHI-NGO-RC/RC Asia Partnership. PHE has also built relationships with Ministries of Health and UN organizations (including FAO, UNICEF and all levels of WHO - WHO country offices, WPRO, SEARO, Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (EMRO) and with WHO Headquarters in Geneva). The PHE team is also working closely with NGOs, other Ministries and schools of public health.

Key project countries

The PHE team has welcomed participants to our training courses from over 25 countries in Asia, Africa, Middle East, Europe, Pacific and the Americas. Our recent projects have focused on Bhutan, Cambodia, China, DPR Korea, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Lao PDR, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Tunisia and Vietnam.

The Public Health and Emergencies Team of ADPC has developed innovative initiatives and accomplished achievements for the development of the public health sector and public health systems.

SECTION 3: GENDER-SPECIFIC ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PHE'S PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS: LESSONS IDENTIFIED

Gender-specific issues are considered as one of the most important cross-cutting themes of the PHE's capacity building programs and projects as well as with the other Team's in ADPC. Whenever possible, ADPC advocates to our partners and training participants, the importance of tackling these issues in a multi-sectoral approach involving various stakeholders.

Some of these specific lessons identified in the implementation of the PHE's programs and projects were as follows:

- 1) Mainstreaming gender issues into public health programs and projects – the ability to advocate gender issues in our programs/projects and training courses with the national governments and to the training participants is proven effective.
- 2) Partnership building is important – as in the case of the community-based avian and human influenza (AHI) project, cooperation with other organizations and linking of existing community-based AHI activities (i.e. trainings, AI awareness promotion using IEC materials, etc.), solicit support and involvement of a broader range of stakeholders other than the school community and government (e.g. NGOs, Red Cross/Red Crescent Movements, UN and other international/local organizations implementing AHI related projects) in the project is also essential to increase the likelihood of project success and sustainability. This will avoid duplication, maximizing time and other the limited resources. It is therefore important that partnerships are fostered in order to share strengths and overcome weaknesses.

Related to the above point, the AHI awareness-raising messages need to cover to a wider-community beyond the school compound and involve other local community groups such as religious, farmers and women-based organizations. Members of these women-based organizations can be trained and in turn will provide an informal avenue for teaching other women and mothers avian influenza (AI) messages, animal raising techniques, disseminating up-to-date information on disease management, channeling assistance to communities, and strengthening linkages between stakeholders.

In a context where women are primary involve in poultry-raising, targeting women in efforts to promote healthy and sustainable backyard poultry farming can increase their capacity to protect the livelihoods and health of their families and potentially raise the status of women within the community.

3) Targeting primary school children as ‘learning agents’. They can learn life-skills to protect themselves and can play an important role in disseminating key risk reduction messages to their family members and friends in the community. Young children are regarded as ‘excellent multipliers’ and if appropriate strategies are applied in awareness building (in primary schools), they can have a major impact to the local communities.

4) Changes in awareness, attitudes and behavior can not be achieved over a short-time period and needs different approaches. Young children are regarded as the most receptive group when aiming for behavior change – they learn a lot through imitation. Key messages taught in school such as personal hygiene promotion (e.g. proper hand washing techniques) needs to be practiced rather than merely dictating it. The school needs to provide an ‘enabling environment’ (providing hand washing facilities in the school) to promote hand washing at appropriate times.

5) Project monitoring and evaluation using focus group discussions with separate groups of audience such as with children only, men and women are proven more effective and promotes openness especially in a culture where children are not allowed to give their opinions in the presence of their parents or elders nor question the views of their parents or elders in the community or in patriarchal society where women are not allowed to voice their opinions. Project implementers will be able to validate the information gathered from the different view points.

6) Gender-based and sexual violence issues are given strong emphasis in our training courses; the need to understand that men and boys (aside from women, girls and elderly people) are also subject to gender-based violence and other forms of sexual violence. Therefore, the welfare of men and boys is of equally importance in designing gender-based programs and projects especially in disaster situations where people will be displaced in the aftermath of a natural disaster or civil strife.

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Lending a Voice to the Most Vulnerable: Mainstreaming Gender Issues in the Flood Preparedness Programs

1. INTRODUCTION

It is estimated that 29.2 % of the households in Cambodia are headed by women. The percentage of women-headed households is higher in rural areas (29.3%) than in urban areas (28.4%). Some are widows, a result of decades of civil violence. Others are divorced or have been abandoned by their husbands.

Though not all women-headed households can be labeled poor many of them tend to have smaller land holdings, are more vulnerable to losing their land in the event of economic shocks and have higher rates of child labor than male-headed households. They are likely to have less benefit from development or any humanitarian related interventions due to two causes: (1) the customary linkages to official government hierarchies, which are, in turn, linked to male-dominated status hierarchies, and (2) if the community consultation is performed, male as the decision making figure in the community prevents women from actively participating. Those obstacles deprive women-headed households from direct assistance as well as critical information with regards to development and other humanitarian activities.

Kandal and Prey Veng provinces in Cambodia have played host to a growing numbers of flood risk reduction projects by non-government associations in partnership with the local disaster management authorities, with the aim of reducing the risks posed by the annual Mekong floods. Many of them are targeted at the local community in general and a few of them at specific groups of the community who are considered substantially vulnerable such as elderly, ethnic minorities, children and women.

“Women-headed households are discriminated and isolated within the community and, many times, have to rely on their relatives for support in times of crisis because they have limited recovery options such as access to both economic and humanitarian aids. In terms of social standing, they are at a very low level and have very little rights in the society.”

Mrs. Hoy Sochivanny, Director, Positive Change for Cambodia (PCC)

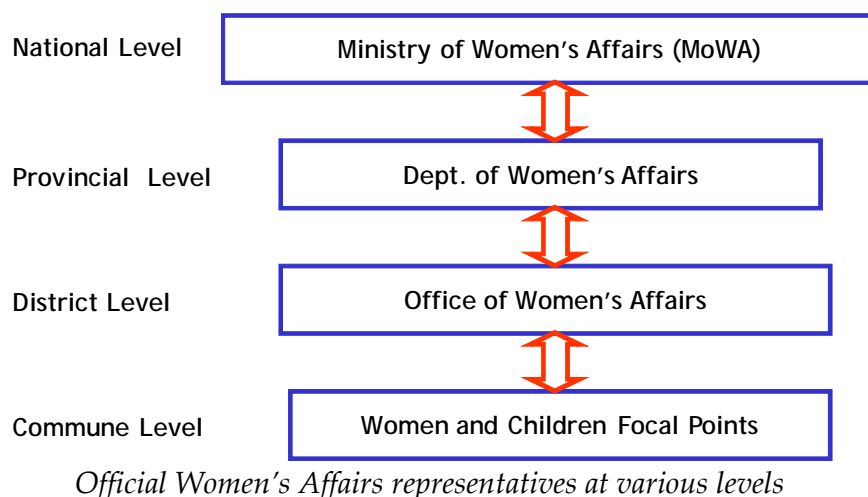
In Cambodia, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA) is the primary entity charged with developing policies for the advancement of women. However, it has been diagnosed that implementing gender sensitive programs in Cambodia is challenging since the available local capacity to maintain such programs is limited, particularly at the local levels. Therefore, one of the pre-requisites and an essential integral part of the programs become the capacity building of MoWA structure at the ground level, especially the commune women and children focal points as the ideal agents of change,

who are themselves part of the community possessing extensive knowledge of the local conditions.

In the second year of the Flood Emergency Management Strengthening (FEMS) project, the provincial and district Committees on Disaster Management (PCDM and DCDM) of the project target areas, Lvea Em and Leuk Dek districts in Kandal province and Peam Chor and Sithor Kandal districts in Prey Veng province, identified and initiated gender sensitive activities as part of the priority sub-projects under the implementation of provincial and district flood preparedness programs. The provincial and district Departments of Women’s Affairs (DWA) in the target areas took the lead with two major target groups identified as the beneficiaries: the women and children focal points at the commune level and poor women-headed households.

2. GENDER SENSITIVE FLOOD RISK REDUCTION PROGRAMMING FOR WOMEN-HEADED HOUSEHOLDS

The MoWA structure is represented at the provincial and district levels by Department and the Office of Women’s Affairs and at the commune level by the women and children focal points. The commune women and children focal points are mainly responsible for executing the mandate of the MoWA at the commune level focusing on four areas of education, health, empowerment of women in the economic sector, and legal protection of women (domestic violence). While MoWA is a member of the National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM-Cambodia) at the national level, the representative bodies of MoWA at the provincial, district and commune also serve as the members of disaster management committees at their respective levels.



Designing a Suitable Program: Identifying the Needs of Women-Headed Households

To design a gender focused program to benefit the poor women-headed households living in the flood prone areas, a study was commissioned under the FEMS project. The study, conducted by a Khmer Consultant, was carried out in two phases:

- **Phase I:** Conducting a desk research, compiling data from the secondary sources on the problems the women-headed households usually faced during the flood season.
- **Phase II:** Holding consultative meetings with selected commune women and children focal points, provincial and district Department of Women Affairs and PCDM and DCDM focal points in Prey Veng and Kandal Provinces. At the meetings, the results of the desk research were shared with the attendees to receive confirmations, corrections and suggestions based on the attendees' real life experiences.

General problems faced by women-headed households

- *Losing out on lands:* selling or having to abandon the lands due to low yields, leading to more debts.
- *Migration of male family members:* resulting in slow or no recovery from floods and droughts and women are forced to find jobs with minimal pay.
- *Handling more than one jobs to make ends meet* increases work load and negatively affect children's educations (they get pulled out of schools to help out or neglected. The effects are greater on girls than on boys).
- *Large household with small living space* affect their health, nutrition and sanitation.
- *Lack of access to formal and informal credit services* due to lack of household assets to be eligible for loans.

Specific Problems faced by women-headed households during floods

- *Increased burden of work:* on top of usual chores, have to ensure the family safety, foods, water, etc.
- *Low education and lack of skills* prevent poor women-headed households from obtaining steady jobs.
- *Food/water shortage resulting in malnutrition and poor health* due to lack of income and limited choice of work.
- *Low physical mobility:* most do not own boats or other means of transportation.
- *Limited access to health services* caused by their remote locations, in addition, have to keep on working be in sickness or in health.
- *Inability to provide continuous education to children:* the children have to miss the schools or leave the school to get odd jobs during flood season to contribute to already limited family income.

The three main causes increasing the flood vulnerability of women-headed households are:

- Lack of resources, hampering the ability to respond and recover from the impacts of hazardous events.
- Lack of knowledge with regards to flood risk reduction measures
- Limited access to information (not knowing where and how to find the right information), preventing them to prepare for any hazards on time.

The study, when concluded in early September 2006, was shared with a wider audience at the Provincial Consultative Workshops. In Prey Veng, the workshop was attended by 14 representatives from provincial and district levels¹ and 20 women and children focal

¹ From Provincial and District Committees on Disaster Management (PCDM and DCDM) as well as from the provincial and district Departments of Women Affairs.

points from the commune level. In Kandal province, 14 provincial and district representatives and 22 women and children focal points took part in the workshop. In both workshops, the FEMS focal points from NCDM-Cambodia and PCDMs of Prey Veng and Kandal played the crucial roles as resource persons and facilitators alongside the National Consultant and the FEMS-ADPC project team.

The workshop featured two discussion sessions:

- **Session 1:** Prioritization of the needs of the women-headed households with regards to four major areas: livelihood sustainability during floods, health, awareness raising and participation in community decision making process.
- **Session 2:** Development of possible interventions that can be implemented at the commune levels to fulfill the needs and counter the difficulties of women-headed households.

One common recommendation that came up from both the workshops was that in order for the women and children focal points at the commune levels to take the lead, their capacity needs to be built first in two major areas: enhanced knowledge on flood risk reduction, mainly the community based flood risk reduction, and planning on how to disseminate the flood risk reduction information to the target groups of poor women-headed households.

Finalization of Specific Activities

Based on the suggestions and recommendations arose from the Consultative Workshops, two fundamental activities were unanimously endorsed by all concerned agencies:

1. To build the capacity of women and children focal points at the Commune Level.
2. To raise the awareness of the women-headed households on flood risk reduction by the women and children focal points.

The activities were put together with the aim of enabling the women-headed households to adopt proper and inexpensive measures to counter the flood impacts, to reduce the cost of recovery and stress thereby helping them to invest more time, money and efforts to concentrate on income generation activities during or outside flood season.

Involvement of a National NGO

The activities took into consideration nurturing the local talents and capacities for the sake of the sustainability of such initiative. In April 2007, Positive Change for Cambodia (PCC)², a local non-government and non-profit organization, was engaged to oversee the

² PCC was established to address the Right Based Need of Women in Cambodia. It works to ensure incorporation of Human/ Women/ Children Rights and the Gender Concept in Community Development projects and to build the capacity of community based organization (CBOs) and Commune councils (CCs) in partnership with local NGOs and Government at all level. PCC is a member of the NGO Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (NGO CEDAW).

implementation of the activities. The key responsibilities specifically were spelled out as working closely with women and children focal points in advancing their capacities and collaborating with provincial and district Departments of Women's affairs in facilitating and creating a conducive environment for the women and children focal points to undertake the activities aimed at poor women-headed households.

3. A COLLECTIVE PROBLEM SOLVING – WOMEN LEADING THE WOMEN

The impact of minimal understanding of disaster risk reduction in gender sector is apparent in the poor participation of women in risk management initiatives at all levels. In the months of July and August 2007, PCC facilitated the capacity building of the women and children focal points, making the most of the other on-going FEMS project activities – specifically the consultative district level action planning and the Community Based Flood Preparedness (CBFM) Orientation Sessions conducted for the Commune Council for Disaster Management (CCDM).

Facilitating the Participation of Women and Children Focal Points in the Action Planning Workshops

Undertaken as part of the monitoring process, four district level workshops were held one in each FEMS project target district under the leadership of DCDMs of Lvea Em and Leuk Dek districts of Kandal province and Peam Chor and Sithor Kandal districts of Prey Veng province, with technical support from ADPC. The representatives from DCDM line agencies and CCDM, particularly the commune chiefs, participated at the workshops. With support from PCC, 11 women and children focal points³ also took part.

The workshop oversaw preparation of district action plans for FPP implementation before the 2007 flood season and the involvement of the women and children focal points in the various discussions provides an opportunity for inclusion of WHH issues in both the revised district FPP as well as the 2007 action plans which were recommended to be incorporated into the commune development/investment plans (CDP/CIP) in the upcoming planning cycles.

Facilitating the Participation of Women and Children Focal Points in the Community Based Flood Management (CBFM) Orientation Sessions

In August 2007, four Community Based Flood Management (CBFM) orientation sessions were held in all four target districts of FEMS project. The sessions were jointly organized by Srer Khmer, a Cambodia NGO, in association with DCDMs of target districts and the CCDM members who were trained under FEMS project in 2006. The trained CCDM members served as the lead trainers to further disseminate and introduce CBFM concepts to the remaining CCDM members and commune women and children focal points. Facilitated by the PCC, altogether 19 women and children focal points⁴ participated in the orientation sessions. The sessions aim at producing more

³ 4 from Peam Chor, 2 from Sithor Kandal, 3 from Lvea Em, 2 from Leuk Dek.

⁴ 7 from Sithor Kandal, 1 from Peam Chor, 6 from Lvea Em and 5 from Leuk Dek.

trainers/facilitators on CBFM at the commune levels, who can relay the knowledge to wider audiences in the community, especially the basic concepts of CBFM and the household level practical measures.

Formulation of Information Dissemination Action Plans

Following the CBFM orientation, district level action planning meetings were organized with the District Department of Women's Affairs and trained women and children focal points in the presence of provincial representatives from the Department of Women's Affairs. Altogether four meetings were conducted, one in each district. The meetings finalized the selections of target villages for conducting awareness raising activities for women-headed households as follows.

- Prek Changkran commune, Sithor Kandal district, Prey Veng province
 1. Praek Pnov village
 2. Ba Prey village
 3. Praek Changkran-Krom village
- Angkor Ang commune, Peam Chor district, Prey Veng province
 1. Angkor Ang village
 2. Veal Robang-Leu village
 3. Veal Robang-Krom village
 4. Prek Trong village
- Koh Ras commune, Lvea Em district, Kandal province
 1. Koh Ras-Krom village
 2. Koh Ras-Leu village
- Peam Raing commune, Leuk Dek district, Kandal province
 1. Peam Raing Leu village
 2. Peam Raing Kram village
 3. Thmei village

During the district level orientation meetings, the "Information Dissemination Action Plans " were prepared by the women and children focal points to be undertaken at the commune levels. The core activity of the Information Dissemination Action Plans was limited to arranging and organizing awareness raising campaigns exclusively for poor women-headed households in the selected target villages.

Implementation of Information Dissemination Action Plans in Selected Villages

The implementation of the Plans kicked off immediately afterwards with the convening of the very first public awareness raising activity in August 2007 in the village of Praek Pnov in Sithor Kandal district, Prey Veng Province. 25 women-headed households took part in the participatory event, facilitated by the district Office of Women's Affairs and the women and children focal points together with PCC. The activity included a video show on "Living with Floods" produced by OXFAM-Cambodia. The show focused on the general dos and don'ts at the household level before, during and after floods.

Immediately after the video, a Group Discussion was facilitated to bring out solutions for the difficulties faced by the poor women-headed households during the flood season. The participants were separated into 3 groups to look at before, during and after scenarios of the floods. It elicited the preparedness sense of the participants by encouraging them to list down various measures that could be undertaken at the household level during various phases of floods. Especially after watching the video, it was found that the participants developed a better understanding of these measures by discussing them in details. Moreover, the session afforded an opportunity for the

women-headed households to share and express their real life experiences and at the same time, made possible women and children focal points to apply the knowledge and skills they gained from their participation in CBFM orientation and FPP consultative process through active facilitation of discussions.

“Many of the participants (women-headed households) are illiterate so the video viewing was very effective with its visual messages. I was surprised and also satisfied with the Group Discussion specifically as the participants were able to deliberate and apply the concepts in view of their day-to-day situations.”

Mrs.Chheun Horn, Chief, Office of Women’s Affairs, Peam Chor District, Prey Veng Province

At the event, IEC materials produced under FEMS project were distributed to all the participants such as 3 posters on “Household Safety Measures” and 2 posters on “Prevention of Child Drowning”.

<i>Specific Household Level Flood Risk Reduction Activities Identified by women-headed households</i>
<p>Before Flood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use woods for constructing railing around the house;• Prepare boats or motorboats or rafts;• Planting vegetables for food at home (vegetable garden);• Stockpile food (for both people and livestock), fuel, medicine;• Know all the safe areas in the vicinity and the routes to them;• Follow the weather and water level information on radios and TV;• Keep important documents in safe places (away from water);• Prepare clean water for drinking (acquisition of pills, etc.).
<p>During flood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Take care of children so that they do not play in water and arrange for their send of and pick up from the school;• Equip boats with life saving materials such as life jackets or any other cheap floatable materials such as rubber tubes and car tyres;• Evacuate to safe areas if necessary;• Remove electric cable immersed in water with bamboo pole and avoid that area;• Be careful of poisonous animals carried by water such as snakes;• Drink boiled water and clean using soaps/powders.
<p>After flood</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clean and repair the house and the surrounding area;• Seek rice seeds and vegetable crops for re-planting;• Record all damages:• Use pills and other methods to make sure the water is clean for drinking and other usages;• Repair and rehabilitate critical infrastructure such as roads, bridges, etc.

Subsequently, similar half-day events were held in the remaining villages between September and August 2007. Totally around 344 women-headed households benefited from the public awareness raising events in eleven villages.

Spreading the Words: Designing a Brochure on Poor Women-headed Households and Floods

It is accepted that the causes of the issues of poor women-headed households and their needs/problems with regards to flooding not getting addressed in any of the development or disaster management plans were because of:

- ***Lack of relevant data on women-headed households:*** The inconsistent and insufficient data/information on women (no. of women headed households, how many women in the village own farmland, etc.) hampers the development of an efficient strategy to reach out to the women population at the grassroots level.
- ***Lack of knowledge with regards to women-headed household issues:*** In Cambodia, gender mainstreaming has gained momentum but it is not being fully integrated into disaster management sector. Many ministries, active in disaster management, have not developed gender-mainstreaming strategies and do not understand or take seriously the need to address gender disparities in policy development and implementation, hindering the access of women to available disaster management resources within the country. Many in Cambodia perceived the gender concept as 'a women's problem'.

In an attempt to eliminate that weakness, the provincial Departments of Women's Affairs in Kandal and Prey Veng provinces, with technical support from PCC, jointly organized a technical meeting to design a brochure. The main contents of the brochure would address special issues and needs of women-headed households in the context of floods and how the recurring annual floods of the Mekong are affecting various aspects of their lives. The target audiences for this material are the government line departments, who are members of Committees for Disaster Management, to raise their awareness on the subject. It is envisaged that with the improved understanding of the issues, more attention will be paid towards meeting the needs of women-headed households in the departmental plan as well as in the overall comprehensive development and disaster programs.

In late September 2007, PCC organized four district level consultative meetings with the provincial and district Departments of Women's Affairs. The objectives of these meetings were multi-fold; to present the women-headed household problems identified so far for the inclusion in the brochure, to look at the potential access to local financial services to be presented for incorporation in the CDP process and also to orient the personal from Women's Affairs departments on the preparation of proposals to seek additional external resources for the implementation of more gender sensitive activities. The meetings endorsed the production of brochure and realizing the need to consult the key beneficiaries of WHH on the activity, the meetings recommended undertaking of a short field mission. The missions took place in the seven selected villages in Sithor Kandal and Peam Chor districts of Prey Veng province. Though the coverage was limited to Prey Veng province, the Kandal provincial Department of Women's Affairs also actively took part in the mission. The final draft of the brochure was prepared at the end of the mission, making use of not just the mission findings but also based on the outcomes of the WHH related events.

Lesson Learned

- Provincial and district Department of Women's Affairs and Veterans have extensive experiences in implementing such activities related to domestic violence and health issues but not in disaster risk reduction. But their existing capacity and experiences can be of great benefits in implementing disaster risk reduction programs. Therefore, strengthening the capacity of existing women's affairs networks at all levels on disaster risk reduction should be a top priority initiative.
- Designing and executing programs targeting a specific vulnerable group of the community can generate new found interest and draw attention to the needs of such group.
- Enhancing the capacity of women and children focal points at the commune levels can ensure sustainability of disaster risk reduction initiatives and increase the potential replications of such practices in areas with similar problems.
- Facilitating close cooperation of disaster management committees and the existing women's affairs networks at all levels helps improve both the vertical and horizontal collaboration between the member line agencies of these committees.
- Engaging a local NGO in the role of facilitator sows the seeds for the development and implementation of more innovative program and support the local capacity building.

4. THE NEXT STEP

The provincial and district Departments of Women's Affairs in Kandal and Prey Veng appreciate the WHH-focused flood risk reduction activities, acknowledging the creation of knowledge base at the commune level through capacity building of the commune women and children focal points. However, they also express frustration in not being able to contribute to the hardships of the women-headed households with regards to their livelihoods. They realize that trainings alone cannot perform miracles for these poor women.

One key concern the facilitators of the awareness raising activities have is the mediocre attendance of the poor women-headed households at the awareness raising functions. Attentions should be given in organizing such activities to ensure that the community be provided with ample time to prepare for participation. This is even more important for poor women-headed families. For them to be able to set aside half-day or one-day of their time without any income generating activities is difficult.

At the same time, a high level of interest has already been stimulated on the flood risk reduction information sharing and this momentum should be maintained. Therefore, the lead agencies, provincial and district Departments of Women's Affairs, hope to be able to mobilize additional funding to carry on the flood risk reduction activities as well as complementary skill building trainings with the support of basic capital for the poor women-headed households to be able to make decent livings all year round.

Moreover, through the implementation of WHH-focused activities, the Women's Affairs departments at the provincial and district levels have improved their collaboration with the respective PCDM and DCDM secretariats. Nevertheless, this is still a far cry from ensuring a permanent partnership between the agencies. At the national level, there is not much cooperation between MoWA and the NCDM-Cambodia.

It has to be taken into account that the gender focused programs can sometimes unintentionally create misunderstanding and alienate potential partner institutions. To avoid such trap and also to live up to the expectation of the Women's Affairs structure to take the lead in gender focused programs in Cambodia, particularly in a sector like disaster risk reduction where resources are limited, assistance and understanding of the fellow members of committees on disaster management at various levels are imperative. Hence, over and above the continuous capacity

building of the Women's Affairs institutions at all levels, the awareness raising of all disaster risk reduction stakeholders on the gender issues should be seen as a continuous process integral to MOWA's responsibilities.

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