

Safer Cities 29

Case studies on mitigating disasters in Asia and the Pacific

Experiencing Good Governance with People's Participation: A Synergetic Approach for Disaster Risk Management in Matara, Sri Lanka

Good urban governance is the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a city's affairs in a manner that improves public service even as it follows principles of providing access and participation to all. Because the institutional and legislative systems for disaster risk management are the same structures and systems of governance, then improvement in one can improve the other. This case study is the story of a city who was governing itself well, and turned its attention to managing its flood risk by tackling the difficult tasks of municipal reform, integrating disaster risk reduction (DRR) in land use planning, and improving transparency by increasing public participation in DRR.

A performance evaluation of local authorities is a regular annual process of the Ministry of Local Government and Provincial Councils in Sri Lanka. Each year the Ministry, with the support of the Provincial Councils, accomplishes performance evaluations of all local authorities (municipal councils, urban councils and *pradeshiya sabas* or village councils). The evaluation uses 78 performance indicators that cover office management and administration, service delivery, good governance, role of local authorities to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and disaster risk management (DRM) interventions. Matara MC won the award for 2009 for its excellent performance.

With this award as a reflection of the municipal council's commitment to public service for its people, it is no wonder that it turned its attention to managing the flood risk that affects the city's people and economy.

Disaster risk management is certainly part of what is entitled under urban citizenship. The Matara Municipal Council had to cooperate with several stakeholders in order to get a comprehensive picture of the city's disaster risk, and then shared the information back to its public. It thus promoted the transparency of vital information and participation of its stakeholders with one risk management activity, and also improved its governance by integrating DRR into its key functions.

Good Urban Governance

"Urban governance is inextricably linked to the welfare of the citizenry. Good urban governance must enable women and men to access the benefits of urban citizenship. Good urban governance, based on the principle of urban citizenship, affirms that no man, woman or child can be denied access to the necessities of urban life, including adequate shelter, security of tenure, safe water, sanitation, a clean environment, health, education and nutrition, employment, public safety and mobility."

Good urban governance is associated with the eight principles of sustainability, subsidiarity, equity, efficiency, transparency and accountability, civic engagement and citizenship, and security; these norms are regarded as interdependent and mutually reinforcing (UN HABITAT, 2000).



Abstract

This study describes the proactive approach of the city council to mainstream disaster risk reduction concerns within local governance. Good governance followed the integration of DRR roles for the community and other stakeholders, as these promoted transparency and participation.

What's inside

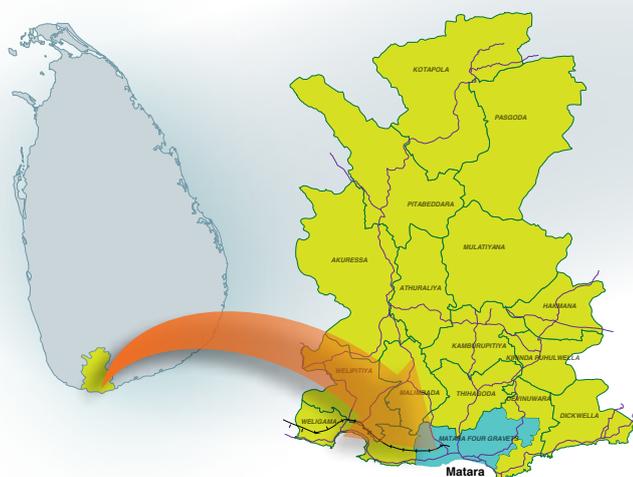
- 📁 Profile of Matara
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- 📁 Promoting Transparency and Participation – DRR with Matara's Citizens



Profile of Matara

Matara District Map

Figure 1



Socio-Economic Profile

The city is catering to the commercial needs of a large district predominantly dependent on agriculture, fishery, perennial crops and some industries for livelihoods. The rapidly urbanizing city has its employment generation through the commercial sector (77%), industry (16%), agriculture (4%) and others (3%).

Social and Demographic Profile in 2007

Table 1

Total Population	76,254
Male	34,326
Female	36,709
Total Land Area	21.2 km ²
Total No. of Wards	15
Number of Households	15,497
Number of families	15,838
Government Buildings	570
Commercial Buildings	4,130
Roads/ Total Length	111.00 km [Asphalt - 95km, Gravel - 06.4km, Concrete - 10.1 km]

Geographical Location of the City

Matara is a city located on the southern coastal line of Sri Lanka, around 156 km away from Colombo. It is the district capital of the Southern Province and a rapidly developing urban commercial center of southern Sri Lanka. Matara is nestled between Galle and Hambantota, the other districts of the Southern Province. The total population of the Matara district is around 800,000 in 2007, out of which 76,000 people live in the city. In addition to the resident population, Matara serves around 200,000 daily commuters to the city: those seeking various services from the city and crossing the city to reach other destinations.

Running through the city is a highway connecting Colombo with most southern areas of the country that congests the city. Matara City's land area spreads over 21.2 km² with 15 electoral wards or local units, the lowest village level administrative unit which comes under the purview of the local authority administration.

One of the main rivers originating from the central hills, Nilwala River (river of blue clouds) flows through the city to meet the Indian Ocean. Matara is full of natural scenic beauty, an attraction to the tourists. The sandy and safe beaches are an asset where the fishing industry too is flourishing and providing a source of income and supply of fish. The combination of these multi-faceted natural resources has made Matara a popular tourist destination.

Nilwala Ganga River and the Associated Disaster Risk

The third longest river in Sri Lanka, Nilwala River, originates from the hill country in Deniyaya and Rakwana and reaches the sea at Matara. Major floods in Sri Lanka are associated with two monsoons: southwest monsoon from May to September and northeast monsoon from December to February. During the monsoon seasons, the Nilwala River carries floodwaters from the upcountry hills and freely flows over low-lying terrain often causing severe damages to crops, agricultural lands and the urban built-up areas covered by the city. The area north of Matara City and its suburbs often experience overflow from the highly silted river.

A number of structural flood protection schemes such as dykes and earth dams were built to minimize the damages and losses. As a result of the dyke construction for Nilwala in 1979, many of the flood vulnerable areas were converted into safe land for living and agriculture. However, in 2003, floods of a 50-year return period breached the dyke at several places and flowed over settlements and lands, destroying 1,607 houses and affecting 43,750 people.

The main cause of flooding in Matara is the high annual rainfall in the upper catchment areas and associated frequent flash floods, the inadequacy of drainage infrastructure, and poor maintenance of the drainage system. The pumping station built at Thudawa north controls the stagnant floodwaters in low-lying areas by pumping out excess water to the river. However, when periodical maintenance does not take place as planned, the system fails to function, thus keeping the inundation for weeks. Rapid urbanization and high rate of migration exacerbate the flood disaster risk almost every year despite the structural mitigation measures already taken.

Past Disasters in Matara

The Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004 was the worst ever disaster faced by the city in its history. The entire coastal area, a place for famous tourist attractions and fishing industry, was washed away. The tsunami destroyed hotels and guest houses and damaged boats and fishing gear. Many people gathered at the Sunday morning market were among the victims who perished in the tsunami wave. Many of the dead were outsiders who came to Matara city or were passing through on that fatal day; 462 Matara residents lost their lives, 1862 were injured, 2205 houses were damaged and 22,943 people were affected.

The eastern part of the city has elevated areas and minor landslides occur during heavy rainfall. Due to the geographical location of the

Past Disaster Events in Matara

Table 2

Year / Disaster	Houses Destroyed	Affected People
2003 Flood	1607	43750
2008 Flood	437	1972
2005 Landslide	9	45
2004 Tsunami	2205	22943 (462 dead)

city which is very close to the most southern part of the country and the wide opening to the Indian Ocean, cyclone risk cannot be ruled out, though there were no serious devastations due to severe winds reported in the recent past. Floods and landslides are closely

associated with rainfall and this is reflected during the southwest monsoon season of April to July which also brings periodical flooding to the city.



Mainstreaming DRR into Local Governance and Development Planning

Urban local authorities in Sri Lanka struggle to provide basic services for their constituents. Capable of generating only a little local revenue, they usually depend on grants from the central government. In this context, creating a safer environment becomes important to ensure the safety of the city's population and to encourage private sector investment. Disaster risk management is an integral part of achieving sustainable development by a city.

Disaster risk management is not a direct responsibility of local authorities. However, they may manage risk by exercising the powers that do fall to them. The new National Policy on Local Authorities approved by the Sri Lanka Parliament in December 2009 states that the "Local Authority is the planning authority at local level", and empowers it for local land use planning, environmental pollution control, building approval process etc.

Local authorities, play a very important though unseen role in DRM under their development regulatory role. Nevertheless in the present local authority practices, no emphasis is given to DRM mainly due to the lack of awareness and resources limitations. Therefore, PROMISE identified the need to advocate urban local government institutions to undertake DRM interventions, which was a neglected subject by the city authorities at the inception of the project.

PROMISE in Matara

The main objective of the project was to reduce the vulnerability of urban communities through enhanced preparedness and mitigation for hydro-meteorological disasters in urban local authority areas. The project covered all wards of Matara. Its activities to achieve the objective were:

- 1) Hazard, vulnerability and risk assessment and development of city hazard map
 - Hazard identification and city hazard mapping
 - Vulnerability and capacity assessment, risk assessment and draft city action plan
 - City action plan workshop to present the draft city hazard map and action plan
 - Training on participatory planning to consolidate the land use plan recommendations
- 2) Training and public awareness
 - First responders training for community members
 - Training of a fire platoon
 - School safety program

- Governance and Urban DRM training workshop at city level
- 3) Community-based mitigation and preparedness
 - Community participatory mitigation activities and implementation
 - Developing a fire emergency response plan and training
 - 4) Advocacy for mainstreaming disaster risk management
 - Review of Municipal Council by laws
 - Land use plans overlaid with disaster risks

The Asia Foundation (TAF) was the implementation partner of the program and National Building Research Organisation (NBRO) was the technical adviser, and the Disaster Management Centre (DMC) acted as the coordination partner of the project.

City Hazard Map (above) & Matara Risk Profile (below)

Figures 2 & 3



Reforms to the Municipal By-laws with DRM Elements

Local government is the first responder and the one responsible for community development and sustainable DRM measures. Empowerment of the local government is a priority in order to encourage decision making that involves citizens and all key stakeholders at the local level. Risk reduction at the local level depends on good local governance; particularly the political decision making and formulation of policy and enforcement related to land use planning, regulatory controls, zoning and construction standards.

Therefore, as a part of mainstreaming of DRM into local governance, municipal council by-laws need to be revised to incorporate DRM, to give more authority to implement risk management strategies. The Federation of Sri Lankan Local Government Authorities (FSLGA) was involved in a legal consultancy for the Southern Provincial Council to study and make recommendations to review and reform the existing local authority bylaws. PROMISE captured this opportunity to extend the scope of this consultancy to incorporate a disaster dimension to the Matara

Municipal bylaws relevant to development regulations. This is the first ever effort in Sri Lanka to incorporate DRM into the local authority bylaws and is an important initiative towards the objective of mainstreaming DRM in the local authority system.

The study reviewed provisions in the local authority laws applicable to disaster management, provisions in existing bylaws pertaining to regulating the construction industry, proposed land use plans, building controls, and proposed special regulations for the development of the construction industry in Matara along the



Southern Expressway Corridor. The findings of the study together with the draft bylaws proposed under this assignment have been presented to the stakeholders at two workshops and the final draft is already in the process of formal approval by the Southern Provincial Council.

DRR Intervention in Land Use Planning

PROMISE was instrumental in integrating DRM into the local land use planning in Matara city. The Sri Lanka Urban Development Authority (UDA) has developed a land use plan for Matara and was in the process of approval when PROMISE entered Matara. PROMISE has developed ward-based risk maps, overlaying the multi-hazard maps with land use distribution and demographic data. As a prominent factor, land use patterns in the urban built-up areas link with DRR on a different scale while indiscriminate planning is evident in disaster-prone areas creating high vulnerability.

In Sri Lanka, updated land use maps and information are available but a proper process has not yet evolved to develop vulnerability maps to the scales that are meaningful in local-level planning. It is unfortunate that the combination of land use plans and multi-hazard maps are not jointly considered in decision making processes. A land use map could provide comprehensive and visible proof of inappropriate land use practices.

Under the implementation of PROMISE, NBRO made a study of the positive and negative factors in existing land use and recommended guidelines for DRR. From the study, an action plan per ward was also developed that presents more precise data on physical information on housing and infrastructure, economic exposures, social system and environmental factors and can be used to suggest technical solutions for settlement planning.

The land use plan for Matara developed by the UDA adopted normal urban development principles but lacked the DRM dimension essential for sustainable urban development for a city like Matara that is vulnerable to several hazards. In the meantime, in another initiative of the Mayor, a study has been conducted by the Moratuwa University on the drainage system of the city, which produced several recommendations to reduce flooding of the vulnerable areas. PROMISE attempted to visualize a broad scenario of the flood risk and to cluster the possible solutions brought by prominent agencies under three different initiatives:

- Land use plans developed by UDA;
- Drainage study and recommendations for drainage improvements by the University of Moratuwa; and
- Multi-hazard risk map developed by NBRO under PROMISE.

Flood Prone Zones and Settlement Planning Guidelines

Table 3

Zone	Risk Level	Remarks	Guidelines
1. Prohibited Zone	Higher	No development is allowed Activities that do not require occupancy of the land is possible Need to conduct resettlement programme	
2. Restricted Zone	Medium	Landslide signs are shown	Limited building development Limited agricultural activities Restrictions on population densities Restrictions on land use
3. Warning Zone	Lower	Near a landslide hazard area	Early warning system Retaining walls

The final output was a set of land use recommendations with ward-based risk maps for the city. Effective implementation of this output will depend on institutionalizing it with the organizational setup responsible for the city's development. A set of guidelines were prepared for settlement planning. Therefore, overlaid maps in Matara will guide the city and facilitate the identification of physical planning gaps to prevent disaster risks in the future.

A workshop was held in August 2010 to present the findings of the coordinated activities, create awareness of the DRM responsive land use recommendations and on the risk map, and to guide the city administration in participatory development concepts in city planning. Decision makers and responsible officials for implementing land use and planning functions were among the participants.

Seminars on Urban Governance and DRR for City Officials

PROMISE initiated a series of seminars for the awareness of officers of both central government institutions and local authorities in managing the disaster risks in local areas by working together to integrate DRM at the local level. There was no clear understanding in the available in the new legal provisions facilitating them to perform their DRR mandate.

As a follow up of the above reforms and with the intention of demonstrating the ways of mainstreaming DRM in local government system, PROMISE, together with the support of FSLGA, organized a series of seminars covering three of the most disaster prone provinces: Southern, Central and Eastern. The objectives of the seminars included:

- Drawing the attention of Provincial policy makers and local authority officials to the importance of incorporating DRM in local planning;
- Highlighting the important role to be played by the local authorities in DRR as the local planning authority;
- Creating awareness on available legal provisions to engage in DRM activities by introducing bylaws; and
- Improving the capacity of local authorities to perform better in their mandated role in sustainable development and environmental management by improved awareness.



Chief Minister for Eastern Province addresses gathering on Urban Governance and DRR

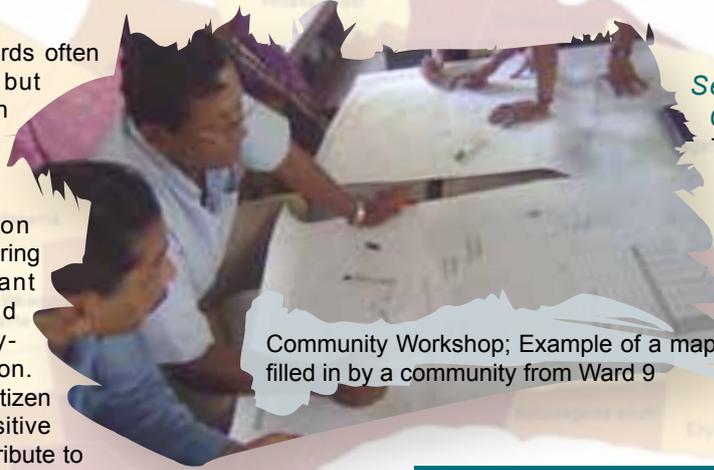
The seminars covered topics advocating the implementation of DRM activities as part of the mandated role of the local government in sustainable development and environmental management. The program was supported by the Office of the Commissioner of Local

Government (OCLG), NBRO and DMC. The seminars drew political attention of provincial leadership and were presided over by the Chief Ministers of the respective provinces.



Promoting Transparency and Participation – DRR with Matara’s Citizens

The adverse impacts of hazards often cannot be prevented fully, but their scale or severity can be substantially lessened by various strategies and actions collectively referred to as mitigation. Mitigation measures encompass engineering techniques, hazard resistant constructions, training and awareness and community-based DRM institutionalization. Involving the different DRR citizen groups can increase the positive impacts of mitigation and contribute to good governance (Iglesias, 2011).



Community Workshop; Example of a map filled in by a community from Ward 9

Setting Priority Actions with the Communities

The community is at the forefront of any kind of natural disaster. They are the ones that suffer, respond and at the same time, the beneficiaries of correctly identified and implemented mitigation and preparedness activities. Communities, no matter how poor and underserved, have traditional knowledge about their environment, their culture and their ways of coping with disasters.

Risk Assessment and Development of the City Risk Profile

PROMISE commenced its work on November 2009, with a workshop held for national and local officials to discuss and agree on project activities, strategies to be adopted and the process of implementation. During these discussions, participants realized that risk variations among the wards are not significant, the possibility of using “Pura Saba” during the process and the need for a systematic approach. As a pre-requisite to these workshops, a study has been conducted to collect the secondary information relating to hazard history.

Subsequently in December, all 15 wards of Matara were grouped into three and separate community meetings were held to identify ward level hazard, vulnerability, risk and capacity with the community’s participation. Pura Sabha members in the area played a significant role in collecting and updating information from the past and conveying the message of the project to the community level. The primary objective was to understand the existing situation in relation to hazard, vulnerability and risk and ward-based group work was used as a participatory risk assessment tool.

This participatory risk assessment was a collective achievement of disaster management stakeholders such as DMC, the District Disaster Management Coordinating Unit (DMCU) of Matara, The Asia Foundation (TAF), the Municipal Council of Matara, NBRO, and most importantly the community in the area. Adding GIS technology to the hazard maps developed at community ward level workshops, NBRO carried out a comprehensive desktop study using GIS technology and from this produced a draft city hazard map.

With participation by all, the PROMISE team was able to verify the secondary information relating to hazard history and hazard vulnerability assessment, to analyze future risks, to identify vulnerable communities, to assess capacity of the community and to analyze the land use pattern related to disaster dimensions of each ward. Therefore, the secondary objective to prepare the base to develop an action plan and a city hazard map has also been fulfilled. The action plan and multi-hazard map makes the on-site risk situations transparent and readable for decision-makers and residents alike to portray clearly the priority needs and actions.

Sample map used for community risk mapping

Figure 5



Example of a Risk Map: Ward 9

Figure 6

Ward No: 9- Thudawa North, Thudawa South, Thudawa East	
Hazard	
Capacities	Matara Vidyalaya was the identified evacuation centre which can accommodate 1000 persons. It has the facilities of water, electricity and sanitation.
Mitigation Activities	Addressing the issues of Nilwala Ganga flood control project, developing the housing construction guidelines, prohibiting the land fillings were the identified the main mitigation activities in the ward.

Although this knowledge is usually undocumented, it could be elicited through the participatory assessment process. PROMISE highlights the need for communities to understand the risk and to find their own way for mitigation and preparedness.

In that context, the project helps them in this process; in setting up priorities, making them participate in the decision-making and implementing of selected activities. The draft city hazard map and city action plan were presented in a workshop comprising of city officials headed by the Mayor, other disaster management-related stakeholders and the community. They reviewed and verified hazard and vulnerability levels of their respective wards and set priority actions for DRR and mitigation activities for implementation. The analysis was presented in ward-based multi-hazard risk maps which detailed the hazards, capacities and vulnerabilities. Transparency, equity and participation by all were maintained throughout this process.

Excerpt of the Matara Action Plan				
Ward No.	GN Division	Hazard	Capacity / evacuation	Mitigation
1	Walgama, Walgama Meda, Walgama N, Wewahanduwa	Floods, minor landslides	Mahanam school, temples with power, water and sanitation	Improve drainage system Reforestation Law enforcement for illicit land clearing Technical inputs for land stability at landslide prone area

Local Partnerships for Structural Mitigation

In the city's action-planning workshop, a number of structural mitigation activities were identified and prioritized by the community representatives together with the city officials. Activities in this priority list will be taken up for implementation under the proposed four-year development plan for Matara. PROMISE selected two promising priority mitigation activities affecting highly populated areas in the city for implementation. The selection criteria for projects were: a) The number of houses and extent of land area protected from inundation; b) The preparedness of local community-based organizations to participate; and c) The fund limitations of the project.

The two projects were: 1) Improvements to the earthen canal from Wellawatta to Nawimana Road up to the second culvert. An approximate length of 600 meters of the canal was cleaned, de-silted and widened for allowing uninterrupted flow of surface water; and 2) Improvement of the Piladuwa Ganga Mawatha first cross canal. An approximate length of 100 meters of the earth canal was improved by deepening and constructing a square drain with reinforced concrete lining.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by the Matara Municipal Council (MMC) and community-

based organizations (CBOs) prior to implementation of the two projects. The MOU was developed to assure the roles and responsibilities of the DRR stakeholders in Matara: 1) the design, technical assistance and construction machinery/ tools were provided by the MMC; 2) *pura sabhas* – community-based organizations – shared in managing the two projects and maintaining the drains in the long run; 3) the Community Development Department of the MMC processed the Council approval for the projects and mobilized the CBOs; 4) the Public Works Department executed the projects with *pura sabhas*, CBOs and the public.

After the successful implementation of these two projects, the Disaster Management Center (DMC) offered funding for two more projects under their annual budgeting.

Capacity Building for DRR: First Aid, Fire, and Emergency Response and Training

Training and awareness creation of the vulnerable communities is very helpful to effectively undertake risk reduction measures and to achieve the objectives of DRR. In any disaster, volunteers provide an immense help in dealing with rapid on-set situations. The trained communities responding complementary to enhanced in-house capacity of MMC in DRM, would improve rapidity and efficiency of emergency responses, while helping disaster prevention through community awareness.

The leadership of Matara was keen to form a volunteer force as the city is now well equipped with a recently acquired a complete set of fire fighting and emergency response machinery, equipment and tools. The time has come to support the city by formulating a team of 'Community Respondents'.

Volunteers were selected mainly from vulnerable areas of the city to complement the MMC's emergency services to rapidly and efficiently operate in those areas. The selection of trainees was based on the reasonable education, physical ability and leading capacity in an emergency situation to conduct responsive action. The volunteers plus a few officers from the Disaster Management Unit were trained in basic fire fighting, prevention of fire accidents through improved awareness, incident management plan, casualty management plan, recovery position, incident management, emergency response, first medical respondents, first aid etc. Both the Fire Services Department of the Colombo Municipal Council and St. John Ambulance (an NGO) were the trainers.

The Mayor of the Matara Municipal Council plans to establish an emergency volunteer force within the Municipal Council to take leadership in an emergency situation. The members would be selected from the best performing volunteers who participated in the above training programs.

"The implementation strategy adopted in this project included creating community ownership and awareness on mitigation infrastructure by involving people in implementation and will improve sustainability" stated by Community Development Officer Mr. K D Ratnayaka.

"Wellawatta, Nawimana abandoned canal was neglected by the authorities for last five decades. The recent improvements to the canal and the drainage system relieve about 40 houses, which go inundated during the rains several times a year. Thanks to the PROMISE and the staff of the Asia Foundation, 50 years untouched canal now flows freely taking our misery of floodwaters to Nilwala. This evolved as a result of strength of forming and working in a group rather than an individual. This is really a great achievement of the people of this area," added Mr. Stephen the Chairman of the Citizen Committee of the Weragampita.

The Pura Sabha

This is a ward-level committee comprised of community members, a ward development officer of MMC, heads of religious institutions such as Buddhist temples and churches and representative from CBOs. Its purpose is to include the community in the local decision making and development processes including when identifying and analyzing problems, recommending solutions, compromising when necessary, implementing solutions, and monitoring. Agencies such as Matara District Disaster Management Coordination Unit, service providers of Water Supply Board, Roads Development authority, Health Department. etc. have very close coordination with *pura sabhas* for ward development activities.



Left to right: Mr. Stephen, Chairman of Citizen Committee, Welewatta; Volunteers at First Aid and Emergency Response Training; Audience of awareness raising program at St. Servatius College

Preparedness for an Emergency: Awareness at School Level

A systematic approach to disaster risk education and school safety is an urgent need as school children are among the most vulnerable segments in a disaster and should therefore learn to protect themselves. School children and teachers are very powerful in their capacity to raise awareness and encourage change in their families and the community about disasters, risk reduction and preparation for emergencies.

If the children are aware of the causes and consequences of disasters, it would eventually lead to raise public awareness on DRR.

Some of the schools of Matara city were given training on tsunamis including evacuation drills by the District DMC in several occasions after the 2004 Tsunami. However those activities were confined to the schools in the coastal zone. Therefore, similar training and safety measures have been introduced under PROMISE for the schools in flood prone areas too, which are away from the coast zone.

Under this activity 45 children from three major schools at Matara Municipal Area (Janadhipathi Vidyalaya, St. Servetus' College and St Thomas College) have been offered awareness/ training on hydro-meteorological DRR measures. The training was focused on monitoring of weather for prediction of floods and response mechanisms at the school level. Simulation exercises have also

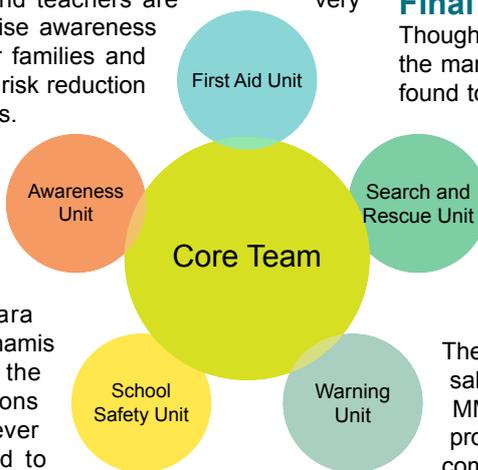


Figure 7 School Disaster Management Unit

been included in this program. This training was organized jointly by the NBRO and Matara District Disaster Management Coordinating Unit in collaboration with the Municipal Council and the Provincial Ministry of Education.

Final Note

Though DRM was an area which was not legally recognized within the mandate of the Local Authority system, strategies can still be found to introduce the DRM concepts to the operational scope of the MC.

The project was able to address the capacity needs awaited by both MMC and community organizations. The community leaders were helpful in organizing venues for awareness programs. MMC too offered their resources to the project activities.

The project offered many activities for the MMC and the *pura* sabhas to work together, bringing the communities close to the MMC. The MMC and communities claimed ownership of the project as seen from the beginning. By intuition and experience, communities facing frequent disasters and are aware of the importance of disaster prevention and regard the project as a blessing to them. The communities voluntarily and very positively participated in project activities.

“Through the experience of my mayorship, I learned that the participatory process of exchanging DRM information and ideas is very much effective in consensus building and agreeing for acceptance by decision makers and key beneficiaries such as community. Matara will continue this dialogue further, while implementing the city development plan”

S M W Upul Nishantha
Mayor, Matara City

Lessons Learned and Recommendations



- Local communities in vulnerable areas are looking for opportunities to improve the disaster resilient capacities within them and the local authorities are the best vehicle to take forward such initiatives.
- Creating ownership by involving the stakeholders without creating dependency is important in sustainability of outcomes.
- Political commitment is one key factor in achieving success of any development activity. The Mayor of Matara has provided an exemplary leadership in all the project activities conducted with the community. His close coordination with Southern Provincial Council and other DRM stakeholders including FSLGA facilitated efficient delivery DRM outputs of the project and consolidation of outcomes within the municipal institutional setup.
- Selection of proper local implementing partners helped efficient implementation of the project. In this case, TAF, whose main area of focus is reforming, capacity building and local governance, has brought in an effective synergy. Both the project and the implementation partner sharing a common mandate has resulted in enhancing implementation capacity.
- The FSLGA who has already engaged in the legal consultancy in the southern Provincial Council for reforms of municipal by laws was commissioned under the project to bring in necessary reforms in the DRM sector. It is beneficial to be aware of parallel activities or projects in the surrounding and to be adaptive to join hands with such initiative to bring about useful synergies.



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About the Partner

The Asia Foundation (TAF) is a non-governmental organization committed to the development of a peaceful, prosperous, just, and open Asia-Pacific region. The Foundation supports programs in Asia that help improve governance, law, and civil society, women's empowerment, economic reform and development, and international relations. The main focus of The Asia Foundation programs in Sri Lanka is Local Governance. TAF's Governance programs support local initiatives aimed at strengthening the effectiveness and responsiveness of governance in Asian countries. Projects and activities under the Foundation's Governance Programs in Sri Lanka are pursued within a wide range of areas, including: conflict management, legislative development, access to justice, decentralization and local governance, development of central executive institutions of government, civil society development.

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About the Project

PROMISE SL in Matara ran from October 2009 to August 2010 promoting the reduction of disaster vulnerability of Matara urban communities through enhanced preparedness for and mitigation of hydro-meteorological disasters. The project implementing partner in Sri Lanka is The Asia Foundation (TAF), whose main focus is local governance, and has added disaster risk reduction to the areas it supports. The project activities are:

- 1) Hazard, vulnerability and risk assessment and development of city hazard map
- 2) Community based mitigation and Preparedness
- 3) Training and public awareness
- 4) Advocacy for mainstreaming disaster risk Management

Other collaborating institutions are:
Municipal Council of Matara
Disaster Management Centre (DMC)
Matara District Disaster Management Coordinating Unit
Federation of Sri Lankan Local Government Authorities
National Building Research Organization

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- SC 28: *Building a Community-Centered Disaster Resilient City: Jamalpur City, Bangladesh*

Safer Cities is a series of case studies that illustrate how people, communities, cities, governments and businesses have been able to make cities safer before disasters strike. The series presents strategies and approaches to urban disaster mitigation derived from analyses of real-life experiences, good practices and lessons learned in Asia and the Pacific. This user-friendly resource is designed to provide decision-makers, planners, city and community leaders and trainers with an array of proven ideas, tools, policy options and strategies for urban disaster mitigation. The key principles emphasized throughout Safer Cities are broad-based participation, partnerships, sustainability and replication of success stories.

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PROMISE

During the implementation of the Asian Urban Disaster Mitigation Program (AUDMP), ADPC recognized the importance of interventions in urban areas and accordingly identified Urban Disaster Risk Management as one of its core thematic areas of work, experiences from which have also guided the selection of the target secondary cities. ADPC has developed 'Strategy 2020 for Urban Disaster Risk Mitigation in Asia' which aims to reach 200 cities by the year 2020.

The need to minimize the destructive impacts of these hydro-meteorological events on the vulnerable communities, particularly the urban communities and the economic infrastructure through enhanced preparedness and Mitigation is therefore the main trust of the present intervention in implementation of the Program for Hydro-Meteorological Disaster Mitigation in Secondary Cities in Asia (PROMISE).

ADPC considers PROMISE program as an opportunity to associate with many communities living in Asian cities vulnerable to hydro-meteorological hazards with the aim of reducing the impacts of such events and demonstrate innovative applications for community preparedness and mitigation.

This case study documents the efforts under a specific program objective to *increase stakeholder involvement and further enhancement of strategies, tools and methodologies related to community preparedness and mitigation of hydro-meteorological disasters in urban communities.*



The Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) is a regional resource center dedicated to safer communities and sustainable development through disaster risk reduction in Asia and the Pacific. Established in 1986 in Bangkok, Thailand, ADPC is recognized as an important focal point for promoting disaster awareness and developing capabilities to foster institutionalized disaster management and mitigation policies.

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