GUIDANCE NOTE

Establish and Manage
Information Resource Center
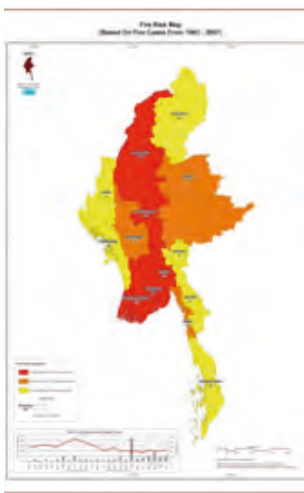# **for Disaster Risk Reduction**
at Township Level

Contents

Please note, the target audience for this Guidance Note is:
- Nay Pyi Taw Information and Public Relations Department (IPRD)
- Regional/ State and District offices of Information and Public Relations Department (IPRD)
- Township offices of Information and Public Relations Department (IPRD)
- Other government departments
- Development partners

Background: Disasters and Disaster Risk Reduction in Myanmar

Myanmar is exposed to multiple natural hazards. Its coastal regions are exposed to cyclones, storm surges and tsunamis while major parts of the country are at risk from earthquakes and fires. The rainfall-induced flooding is a recurring phenomenon across the country while some parts of the country are exposed to landslide and drought risks. When vulnerable people, property, and systems are exposed to these natural hazards, the risk of disaster is high. One of the worst natural disasters in living memory in Myanmar is the Cyclone Nargis (2008).

Fire areas

Flood areas
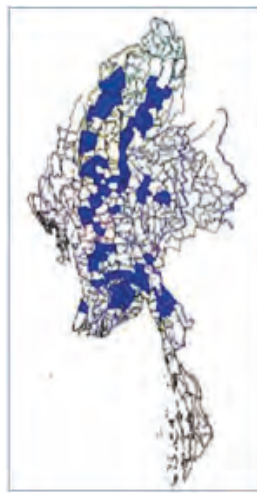
Forest fire areas

Cyclone areas

Earthquake areas

Drought/dry zone areas

In order to reduce the disaster risk, in recent years Myanmar has focused activities to prevent and prepare for disasters in the country. Compre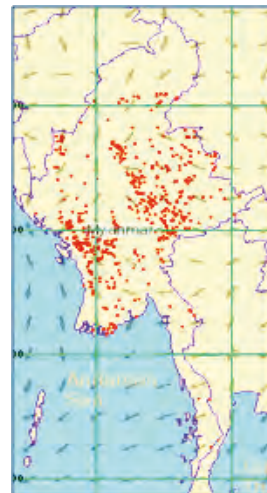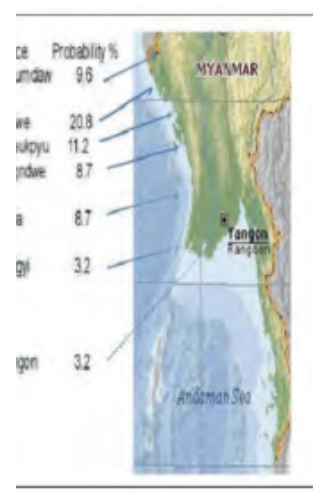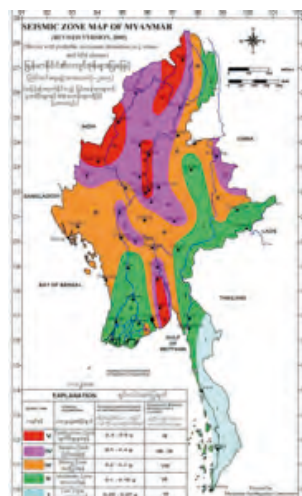hensive disaster risk reduction activities have been initiated by the Government of Myanmar and the development partners – at the national level, the regional levels, the township levels, and the community and village levels. Key initiatives include:

- The Government's "Myanmar Action Plan on Disaster Risk Reduction (MAPDRR)"
- The activation of the National Natural Disaster Preparedness Central Committee and Working Committee
- The drafted Disaster Management Law
- Partnerships between the Government and development partners including the "Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group"
- The revised Disaster Management Course for government officials
- Community-based Disaster Risk Reduction (CBDRR) in many villages
- Activation of Township Disaster Management Committees and preparation of Township Disaster Management Plans
- Mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into different development sectors.

As a result of these initiatives, more institutionalized disaster risk reduction systems are in place at the policy level with the legislation framework, and disaster risk reduction capacity at sub-national and local level is more strengthened. However, there is a need to ensure the plans and policies are translated into actual practices, and moreover, should be sustainably implemented in the long term ("mainstreamed").

It is essential that local risk reduction activities, in townships and villages, have systems to ensure continued activities, when individual projects are completed. Through various risk reduction activities, large amounts of valuable local and national DRR information were distributed in different townships. However, there is currently no common platform for sharing this information at this level.

A sustainable mechanism for disaster risk reduction information linkages and dialogue between the township level and village levels is necessary.

This need for support to local mechanisms for long-term disaster risk reduction is identified as a priority in the Government's MAPDRR – under the Component six ("Community based Disaster Preparedness and Risk Reduction").

In many countries in the Asia-Pacific region, it is a common challenge that local disaster risk reduction activities are not sustained. Local information-sharing platforms could significantly help sustain Myanmar's risk reduction efforts, and moreover, could be an important initiative to demonstrate to other Asia-Pacific countries.

Information and Public Relations Department & Disaster Risk Reduction

For information management activities in Myanmar, the main activities are conducted by the Information and Public Relations Department, Ministry of Information. The roles and objectives of IPRD are presented below, alongside the extensive organizational structure:

The Objectives of Information and Public Relations Department are:

1. To disseminate news which public should know and reduce false information
2. Public to have knowledge
3. Public have the practice of utilizing public communication materials.
4. People to believe in news disseminated by news media after consideration and to be able to apply positively in their community
5. Public relation activities in whole country especially for border area development
6. Public relation activities relating natural environment
7. Public relation activities on news of disease and drug affecting world population
8. For sustainability of libraries and library science
9. Public relation in natural polities

(Note: unofficial translation)
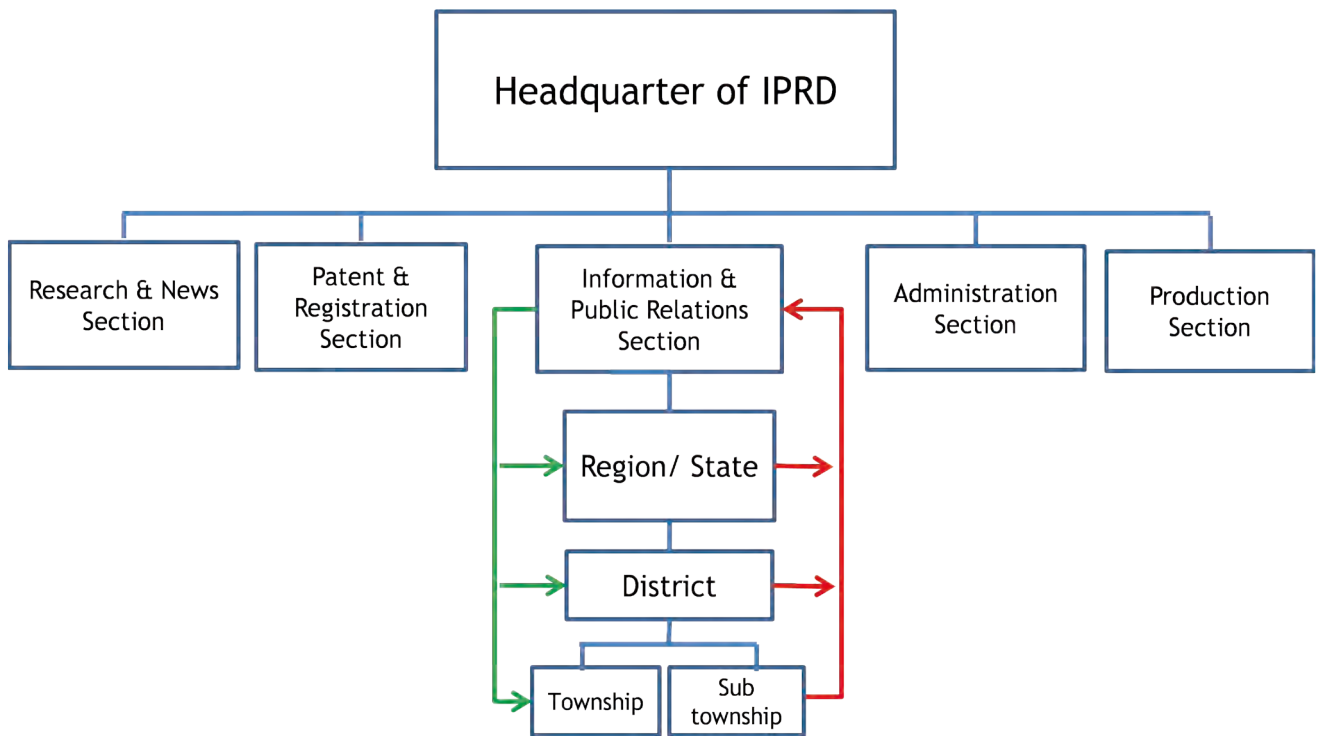
Specifically for information management for disaster risk reduction, the Government has identified the Information and Public Relations Department as a nodal agency. According to the Standing Order on Natural Disaster Management (2009), by the National Disaster Preparedness Central Committee (activated in May 2013), the Information and Public Relations Department has several responsibilities for disaster risk reduction. These responsibilities include:

a)   Carry out awareness activities on natural disasters through wall posters, mobile libraries, talks, pamphlets and advertisements;

b)   Cooperate with local authorities for disaster preparedness activities.

Therefore, IPRD, alongside other Government department and development partners, has an important role for reducing disaster risks in Myanmar. IPRD may lead for activities relating to information management.

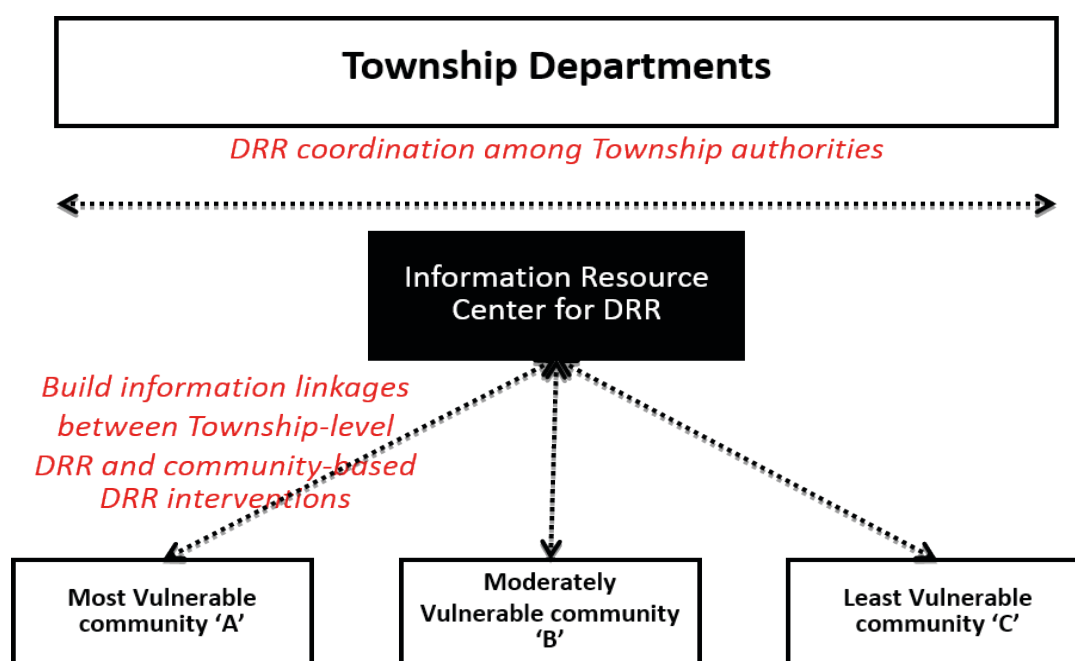# What is an Information Resource Center for Disaster Risk Reduction?

A township "Information Resource Center for Disaster Risk Reduction" is a long-term platform to store and share all materials and documents related to disaster risk reduction in the township. It is a government-owned mechanism, operated by the Information and Public Relations Department (IPRD), and with the support of government departments and development partners.

Local risk reduction activities, in villages and townships, are particularly important. Through various activities in many Townships, valuable local and national plans, guidelines, and public awareness materials will be produced. It is essential that these information resources remain available at the Township level and in the villages, for government officials and the general public. Therefore, the Information Resource Center supports coordination among townships department, and information linkages with communities.

The objectives of an Information Resource Center are:
- Build information linkages between township-level disaster risk reduction and community-based disaster risk reduction interventions
- Support continued disaster risk reduction coordination among township authorities
- Act as a platform for township disaster risk reduction materials
- Add to existing information management mechanisms
- Manageable mechanism, implemented in the long-term with external resources

Figure 2: Dual purpose of the Information Resource Center for DRR at Township level

Kungyangone Township's Information Resource Center

A demonstration 'Information Resource Center for Disaster Risk Reduction' is established in Kungyangone Township, operated and managed by the Information and Public Relation Department – with the guidance of GAD and coordination with other departments. See Figure 2. It was agreed that the Information Resource Center would build on existing information management systems; not create a separate system.

In Kungyangone Township, the Information and Public Relations Department already operates a successful Town Library, and a Mobile Library which travels to most villages in the Township. Therefore, it was agreed that the Information Resource Center should add to this existing system. In Kungyangone Township, the Information Resource Center is integrated with the Town Library and Mobile Library.

IPRD in other townships may have a Town Library, Mobile Library, and other existing assets to share information in the township. The Information Resource Center is flexible and can make use of any of these systems, depending on local conditions. Township IPRDs should use their expertise and creativity to establish an Information Resource Center in the most appropriate place.

Figure 3: Kungyangone Township, Yangon Region: a demonstration Information Resource Center

Demonstration Township: Kungyangone, Yangon region

Kungyangone Township is located in Yangon region. Due to its topography, the township is exposed to a variety of hazards, namely: cyclone, fire, flood, forest fire, storm surge, tsunami, and earthquake.

Kungyangone has experienced several disasters in the past, and was severely affected during Cyclone Nargis in 2008. As a result, over the last few years, the township authorities and villages have worked hard to reduce disaster risk, with the support of development partners.

Through these activities in Kungyangone, disaster risk reduction plans, risk assessments, and awareness materials were produced. In addition, many other materials which are relevant to Kungyangone were prepared by national government and development partners.

However, there was no central location in Kungyangone Township, where these materials can be stored and shared between township authorities, and the general public. Therefore, a demonstration "Information Resource Center for Disaster Risk Reduction" was established by the Kungyangone Information and Public Relations Department.

What should be kept in the Information Resource Center?

The Information Resource Center for Disaster Risk Reduction is a Township platform for DRR-related materials. Through many initiatives of the Government of Myanmar and development partners during the last few years, a large variety of information resources were produced.

In addition, many Townships have benefited from disaster risk reduction projects. As a result, Township-specific documents are often available, including: Township Disaster Management Plans, village risk assessments and action plans, and location-specific public awareness. All of these materials can be shared in the Information Resource Center.

It is recommended to keep three categories of information resources:

1. **Guidelines and Plans.** These include any (approved) disaster management plans in the Township or the Township villages, key national plans and frameworks, and other guidelines.

2. **Public Awareness Materials.** These include disaster risk reduction public awareness and education materials – for the general public and township authorities.

3. **DRR Projects and Activities.** These include information about any disaster risk reduction projects in the Township, the project locations, and dates of events.

Disaster Risk Reduction Information Resources

Guidelines and Plans

Examples include:

- Township Disaster Management Plan
- Village Disaster Management Plans
- Myanmar Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction
- Standing Order for Natural Disaster Management
- Sectors-specific technical guidelines.

| Township Disaster Management Plan | Village Disaster Management Plans |

## Public Awareness Materials

Examples include:

- Posters
- Booklets
- Leaflets
- Multi-media (video or audio)
- Training materials
- Manuals and 'how to' guides

DRR Projects and Activities

Examples include:

- Project plans and activities in the Township
- Workshop dates in the Township
- Project locations in the Township

Project Plan: Disaster Risk Reduction (2012 - 2014) in Township 'X'
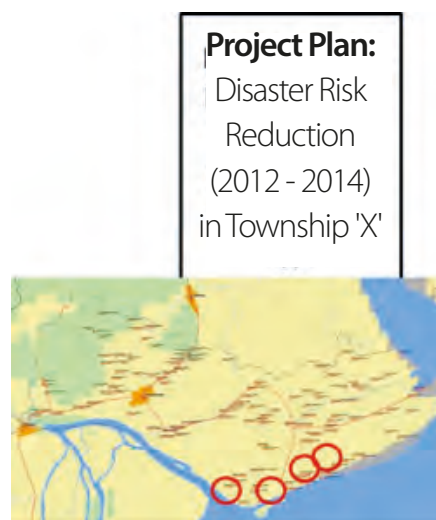
How to organize the information resources

The Information and Public Relations Department can arrange the three categories of information in a cabinet in the Town Library, or other available furniture. These are arranged separately to the normal library categories. For the Mobile Library, plastic boxes or other containers may be used:

Figure 5: Kungyangone Township's Information Resource Center, in the Town Library.

When the Mobile Library is in the village, the Township IPRD may also decide to read aloud some of the information resources, to help local people understand. If available, a computer projector can be used to show videos for disaster awareness.

Who is responsible to manage the Information Resource Center?

In line with roles and responsibilities for information management in Myanmar, the Information and Public Relations Department, Ministry of Information, is leading to establish the Information Resource Centers for Disaster Risk Reduction. Therefore, at the township level, it is recommended that the Information and Public Relations Department establishes and manages the Information Resource Center.

How will the township Information and Public Relations Department encourage visitors from communities, government departments, and the general public? This requires IPRD staff's expertise and creativity for effective information-sharing. It needs trainings for effective information dissemination.

Although the Information and Public Relations Department leads the activity, the information resource center requires the support of the Township General Administration Departments and other Township departments. Many new and existing DRR-related information resources are often already available with different Township departments.

For example, the Agriculture Department may have leaflets about drought-resistant crops, and the Fire Department may have posters about cooking safely. Township departments should provide copies of such DRR-related materials. Similarly, non-government organizations implementing DRR activities in the Township may have prepared public awareness materials and supported villages to make disaster management plans. The non-government organizations should be requested to provide extra copies for the Information Resource Center.

Requesting and Receiving National DRR Information Resources

Most DRR-related is therefore available in the Township, through different government departments or non-government organizations. However, the Government of Myanmar and development partners have developed a large collection of disaster risk reduction materials, and continue to develop new materials. For township Information and Public Relations Department to request and receive information resources, the procedures are:

- IPRD prepares list of new township level Information Resource Centres.
- List of new township level Information Resource Centres has to be reported to RRD.
- RRD Headquarter will coordinate & collect information from Government Departments or DRR-Working Groups every 3 months (as necessary in emergency).
- Relief and Resettlement Department will send requested information to IPRD Headquarter. IPRD Headquarter then sends information directly to the responsible person from the township Information Resource Center.
- Townships have to report to IPRD Headquarter the list of information received.

The diagram explains the institutional arrangements for the Information and Public Relations Department to manage the township Information Resource Center:

Figure 6: Institutional arrangements for replicated Information Resource Centers in other Townships of Myanmar.
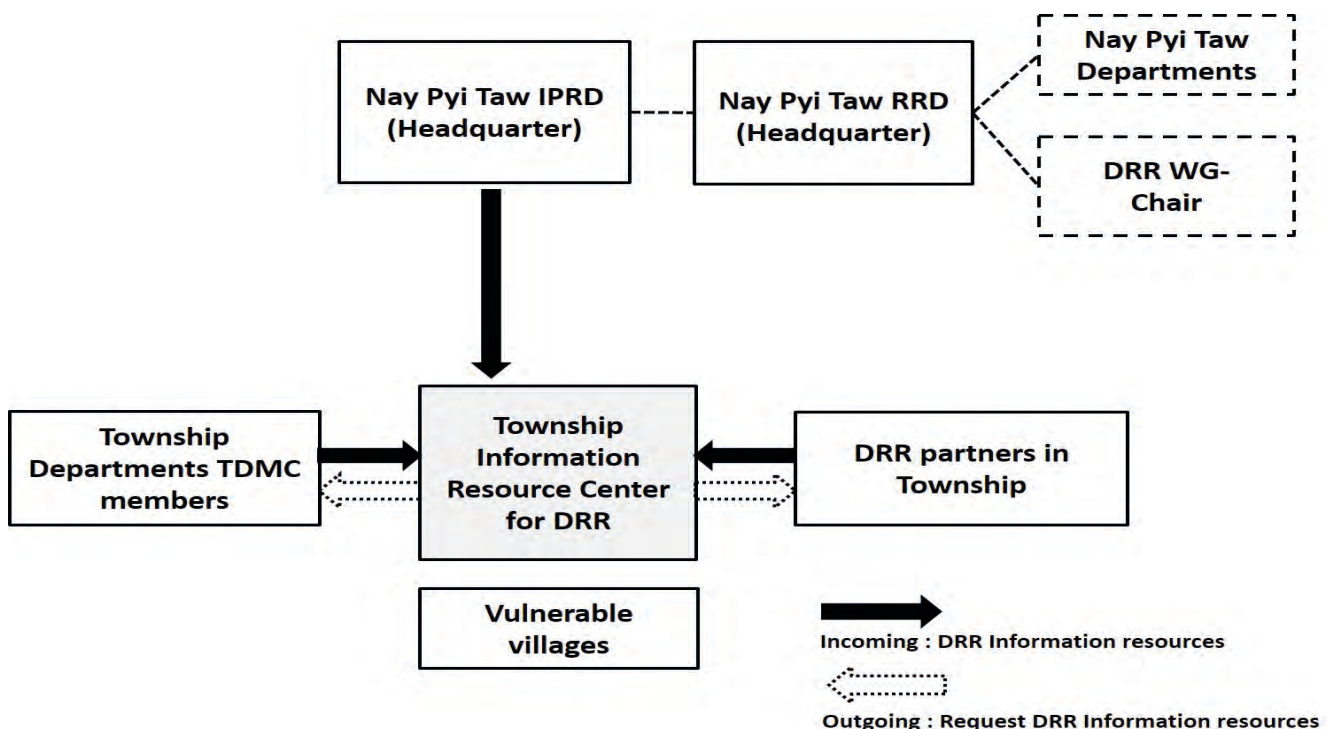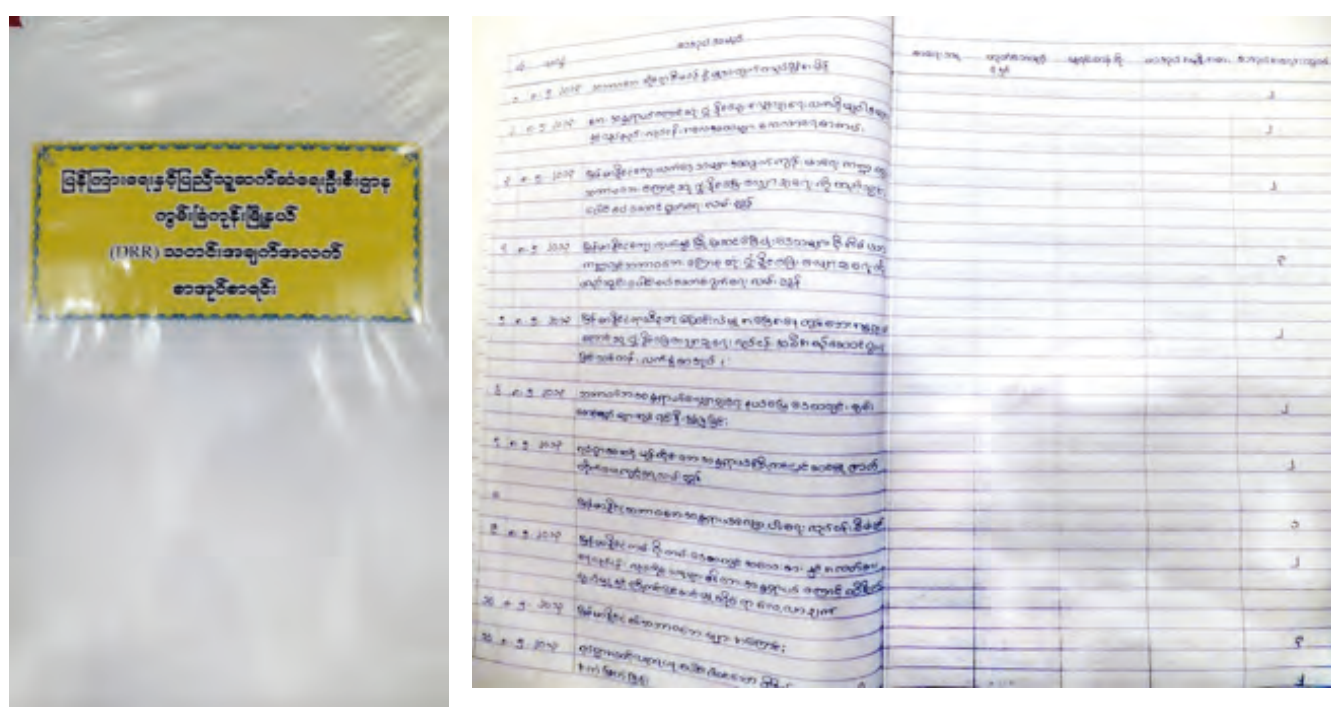

The Township Information and Public Relations Department (IPRD) may report progress to the Township Disaster Management Committee (TDMC) and copy to Information and Public Relations Department Headquarter. The TDMC may then report progress to the State/Region Disaster Management Committee (SDMC).

How can the Township IPRD establish and manage the Information Resource Center?

The township Information and Public Relations Department establishes and manages the Information Resource Center for Disaster Risk Reduction. In Kungyangone Township, the Information and Public Relations Department recommended several templates in order to help the administration of the Information Resource Center. These are similar to existing general templates.

A.   **Book List.** This provides details on the current materials available in the Information Resource Center (Town Library or Mobile Library).

Figure 7: Example Book List, from Kungyangone Information Resource Center.

B. **Reader Registration Book.** This allows the Information and Public Relations Department to record visitors to the Information Resource Center, and their age and occupation.

Figure 8: Example Registration Book, from Kungyangone Information Resource Center.
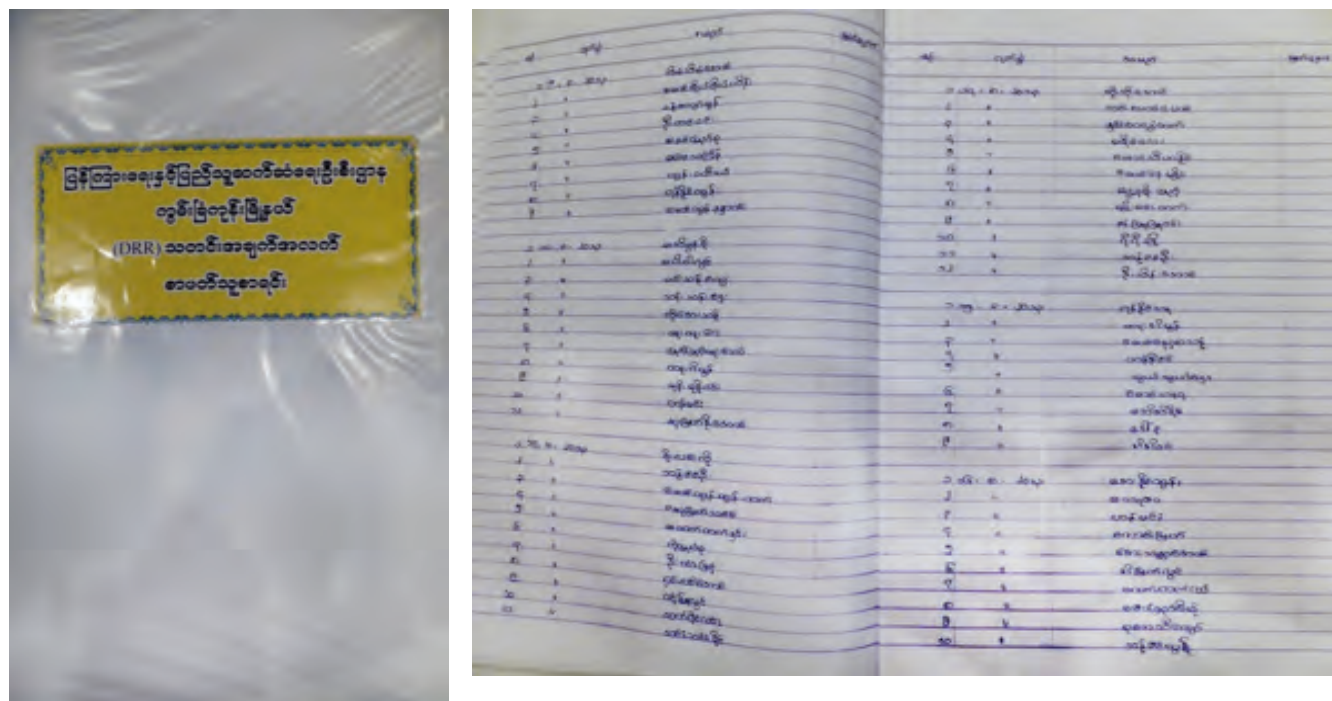
C. **Reader Comment Book**. This allows the visitors to provide feedback, and will help the Information and Public Relations Department to improve the Information Resource Center.

Figure 9: Example Comments Book, from Kungyangone Information Resource Center.

Annex of templates

A. Book List.

No	Date	Book Title	Author	Date of Publication	Original price	Category	Number of Books

B. Reader Registration Book.

No	Date	Name/Age/Occupation/Address	Remark

C. Reader Comment Book.

No	Date	Name/Age/Occupation	Comment	Signature