



CAMBODIA

Strengthening National Capacities for Disaster Preparedness and Management

Disaster Context

Cambodia enjoys the benefits of the Mekong River that divides the country in two parts. The lowland regions bordering the river and the Tonle Sap Basin receive good-quality natural fertilizer, thus enabling various seasonal agricultural activities by the people living in those areas. The Tonle Sap Basin is also a major source of freshwater fish for the whole country.

Yet this source of livelihood is also a fertile ground for disasters. Not spared from global climate change, the river system has recently changed its regime. Floods have become more common. In 2000, flooding was reported to be the worst in 40 years. Greater than 350 people died, and 3.2 million (30 percent of the total population living in 21 of 24 provinces) were affected. The impact on the national economy was severe. Total damage was estimated by the government to be \$157 million.

Drought is also increasingly a problem. In 2002, it affected more than 2 million people in eight provinces, according to the National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM).

The NCDM plays a central role in coordinating and supplying emergency aid to affected people. However, substantive and managerial capacities need to be strengthened. The Ministry of National Defence, with its nationwide network, provides mostly logistic support when needed. The Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology plays an important role in forecasting and reporting water levels. A disaster management team comprising focal points from almost all ministries has been established to provide backup support as necessary.

The commitment of UN agencies under the framework of the UN Disaster Management Team in Cambodia is reflected in the UN Development Assistance Framework. The UN Disaster Management Team strategy combines both a rapid-response mechanism for emergency relief and rehabilitation based on a joint response plan, and a separate mechanism that addresses longer-term disaster mitigation and management capacity

requirements of the country. UN agencies appealed in October 2000 for emergency relief and initial rehabilitation and mobilized \$8.2 million against total needs of about \$ 11 million.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Cambodian Red Cross (CRC), with their active countrywide network, played critical roles after the floods by supporting emergency relief, health, water and sanitation. In addition, institutions such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank are implementing programmes to support the government on rehabilitation measures following the floods, including road rehabilitation.

Lastly, the Mekong River Commission Council approved in November 2002 its Flood Management Programme for the Lower Mekong River Basin Countries. Its main emphasis is on flood forecasting and early warning systems in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.

UN agencies in Cambodia are committed to supporting the existing government mechanisms, namely the NCDM, the CRC, and their networks throughout the country. The major areas that need to be addressed are:

- Coordination and genuine partnership with all stakeholders
- Capacity-building and training
- Access to information by the general population

Project Titles

- Capacity-Building for Integrated Disaster Management (CMB/96/008)
- Disaster Management (CMB/01/012/01/99)

Sectors

- Disaster relief preparedness and prevention
- Capacity-building

Funding

- CMB/96/008: UNDP contributed \$250,000 Special Project Resources, of which \$210,000 was spent from 1997 to 2000
- CMB/01/012/01/99: UNDP contributed \$30,000, UNICEF \$25,000, and WFP \$45,000 in support of NCDM and Provincial Committees for Disaster Management operations and capacity-building
- OCHA funded \$160,000 for emergency food assistance through the Resident Coordinator's System in 2002
- Within the context of the UN appeal, UNDP implemented the Shelter Programme (resource mobilization: Sweden, Denmark, Norway and OCHA) for approximately \$360,000 and ensured coordination through OCHA

Partners

- UN agencies (WFP, FAO, WHO, UNICEF)
- NCDM
- Bretton Woods Institutions and Asian Development Bank
- CRC
- IFRC
- NGOs
- Mekong River Commission
- International Institute for Disaster Risk Management
- Asian Disaster Preparedness Center

Programme Activities

The project on Capacity-Building for Integrated Disaster Management has assisted NCDM in building the capacity of relevant staff of its four departments. This three-year project started in 1997 and was designed to assist the government in building an integrated institutional framework for disaster management encompassing disaster preparedness and mitigation, emergency response, and post-disaster rehabilitation. Its assistance focused mainly on the following areas:

- Clarifying the respective roles and responsibilities of the national, provincial, and district committees on disaster management and secretariats that the Government is establishing, as well as establishing a disaster management coordination mechanism

- Ensuring that staffing at each operational level of the institutional framework of disaster management is properly prepared to meet the minimal requirements for an effective disaster management and coordination system, and strengthening national capacities in disaster management
- Preparing a proposal for strengthening the capacity of the CRC to carry out its emergency role response within an expanded national disaster management structure

Since April 2002, UNDP, UNICEF and WFP have co-funded an extended capacity-building project focused on developing NCDM capacities regarding aid coordination and damage and needs assessments. Following a three-year regional capacity-building project with the Mekong River Commission, UNDP is now developing an upstream approach towards supporting the National Mekong Committee's capacities in environmental governance and flood management and mitigation.