1. What is Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction?

Community based disaster risk reduction approach focuses on engaging communities in building their resiliency to disasters. This approach aims to increase community awareness and ownership of Disaster Risk Reduction Initiatives. Importantly these initiatives need to be incorporated in the planning stages, at the local level and focus on strengthening local capacity to mitigate, prepare and respond to disasters.

2. Why is it important to focus on communities for DRR?

Communities are the first to be affected by disasters and they are the first to respond to disasters, so naturally, they should be the focus point for DRR.

In order to ensure we reach vulnerable groups, communities must be actively involved with DRR. Also, engaging communities and utilising their specific skills, knowledge and experience for DRR will lead to sustainable risk reduction.

3. How does a community achieve DRR?

In order to achieve DRR and increase community resiliency to disasters, communities need to have an understanding of their risks, the role and responsibilities of all actors, and the technical guidance on how to reduce risks. To do this, communities must be actively involved and committed to DRR. By utilising their own skills and knowledge from the initial planning stages, communities can own the process of achieving resiliency.

The Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development is supporting communities successfully implementation DRR in two ways. First, we are co-coordinators with the
IFRC for the NRRC’s Flagship 4, Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction. Under Flagship 4, nine minimum characteristics for a disaster resilient community have been agreed upon. Flagship 4 has recently launched a project tracking survey to track the progress of communities and VDCs against these characteristics.

We have also finalised the Local Disaster Risk Management Planning (LDRMP) guideline for communities. The LDRMP provides communities the tools for vulnerability and capacity assessments and to create local disaster management plans. In addition, the LDRMP creates a mechanism to channel resources for DRR to the VDC level.

4. What are the minimum characteristics for DRR? How were they developed and why are they important?

These characteristics are incredibly important, as they establish a standard for CBDRR projects in Nepal. The Government of Nepal, INGOs, NGOs, UN and the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement have agreed upon the characteristics. Each characteristic plays an important role in achieving resiliency now and sustaining it for the future. For example, having an organisational base at VDC level provides the basic foundation to plan and support CBDRR. While the Ministry of Home Affairs is the lead agency for preparedness and response, communities are the first responders when a disaster does strike; so, having community preparedness and response teams in place is crucial.

The 9 minimum characteristics are:
- Organisational base at Village Development Committee, ward and community level
- Access to DRR information
- Multi-hazard and capacity assessments
- Community preparedness and response teams
- DRR management plan at Village Development Committee and municipal level
- DRR funds
- Access to community managed DRR resources
- Local level risk reduction measures
- Community based early warning systems.

DRR management plans are important as they are the base guideline for VDCs to implement CBDRR. These plans must be developed and channelled through community mechanisms, such as the Citizens Awareness Centre, which are located in each VDC. However, we can have the best plan, but it means little if there are no dedicated funds for implementation. This is why ensuring DRR funds at the community level are allocated is a minimum characteristic.

Early Warning Systems are also critical for CBDRR. The Seti flood in 2012 is an example of when early warning have saved lives. Early warning is not just for floods; it can be utilised for landslides and fires, which pose serious risks to many communities in Nepal.

“Communities are the first to be affected by disasters and they are the first to respond to disasters, so naturally, they should be the focus point for DRR.”

-Chakra Pani Sharma
Giving communities warning to prepare and respond to a disaster can be the difference in saving lives.

5. Who is involved in CBDRR?

For CBDRR, communities are always the first and most important actor involved. Without active participation from communities, there cannot be successful CBDRR.

There are many actors in involved with CBDRR. This ranges from local government, civil society, NGOs and INGOs. The involvement of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies as Flagship 4 co-coordinator has been very important. From an implementation standpoint, the Nepal Red Cross Society has also been an active and important actor for CBDRR.

6. What are the short and long term goals for CBDRR?

In the short-term, the goal is to enhance the local capacity for immediate risk reduction and response.

For the long-term, the goal is to develop a community that is environmentally safe and disaster resilient; where infrastructure, development, management of natural resources is a process owned and internalised by the community. This long-term goal requires a comprehensive approach across all plans, policies and projects.

7. How can CBDRR projects become sustainable?

First, it is not about sustainable projects; there is no such thing as a sustainable project. Rather, it is about achieving a sustainable process.

If communities really understand the importance of DRR, they will prioritise it. When prioritised, communities will internalise DRR into their processes. This will ensure sustainability.

The issue of sustainability is a key challenge. Achieving community ownership, having them value DRR and changing the culture from response to risk reduction and preparedness is vital for ensuring sustainable CBDRR in Nepal.

8. How can others get involved with this work?

There are several ways to get involved. However, those interested in CBDRR must also show the commitment to the minimum characteristics of a disaster resilient community. This standard will ensure a level of resiliency that communities can trust.

There are 2 frameworks that can be utilised to engage others in CBDRR. First, interested actors can support the government budget process, which can then be facilitated through local grants to communities and local actors for CBDRR. Second, interested actors can become engaged with the Flagship 4 mechanism. For the private sector, supporting DRR funds for the community or the Prime Ministers Relief Fund, which can be mobilised at local levels, is another mechanism that can support CBDRR.

For more information, please visit the Flagship 4 Information Platform at www.nrrc.org.np