

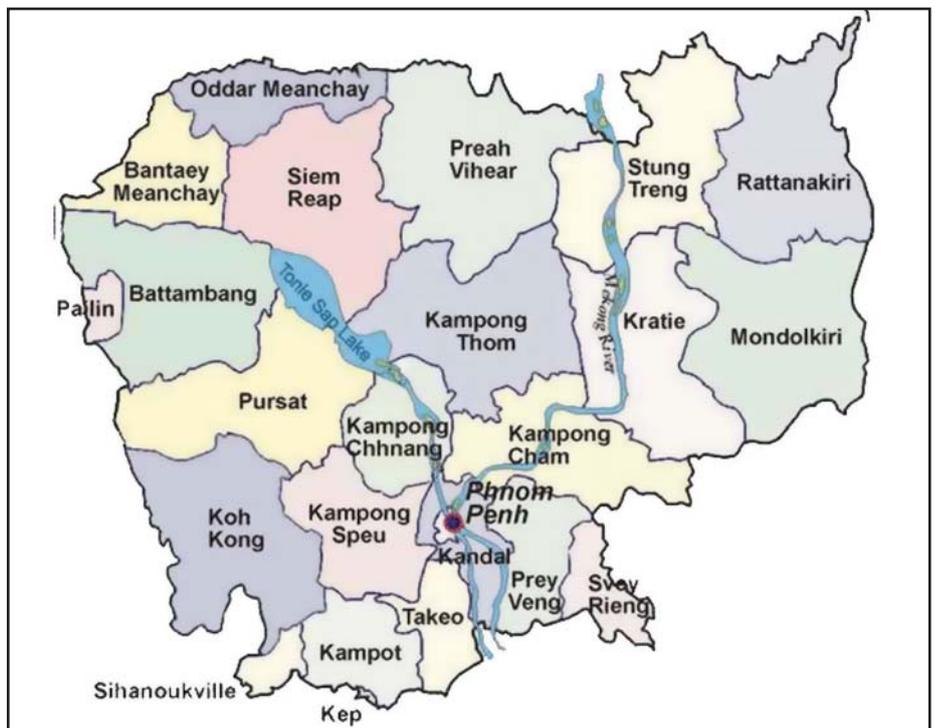
Sustaining the Flood Preparedness and Emergency Management System in Cambodia

Creating the momentum for mainstreaming

ABSTRACT

This case study highlights an initiative undertaken to integrate flood risk reduction measures into formal local government development plans. It is based on the experience of the “Flood Emergency Management Strengthening (FEMS)” project, implemented by the MRC Secretariat with support from the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) in two of the most flood-prone provinces in Cambodia: Prey Veng and Kandal. The study highlights the steps undertaken towards achieving this integration and the critical role that disaster risk reduction awareness and advocacy among stakeholders, including non-disaster government officials, played in the process.

While the initiative has not yet led to a full and comprehensive integration into local development planning process, invaluable experience and significant learning has already been generated. A way forward has clearly emerged making flood risk reduction main-streaming a more concrete and achievable objective in the near future. The study also highlights some of the constraints encountered in the process and identifies several key success factors that make for an effective mainstreaming initiative. Together with continued efforts towards further strengthening the capacities of local government officials to manage flood emergencies more effectively, the development of more specific tools and guidelines for mainstreaming at the commune level remains at the core of future efforts.



For generations, flooding from the mighty Mekong River has been both scorn and blessing in the lives of Cambodian people, particularly among the communities living on its floodplains. In normal years, the overflow of water from the Mekong River deposits fertile silt on the lands upon which hundreds of communities depend upon for their livelihood. At other times, however, flooding becomes excessive and results in damage or destruction of an already fragile network of physical infrastructure (e.g. schools, health centers, roads and bridges).

The greater cause of concern comes from the economic and social shocks that result from floods. The country's poverty statistics show that 90% of the poor live in rural areas where they depend primarily on subsistence farming and fishing for their livelihoods. Hence, it is the poor households that are most vulnerable to floods. Even a small flooding event can wipe out what few livelihood assets poor households have, sinking them deeper into poverty. Taken in this context, poverty reduction in the Mekong area is directly linked to the vulnerability of households to the adverse effects of floods.

THE INSIDE STORY

■ The Mainstreaming Initiative	2
■ Lessons Learned	7
■ The Way Forward	7

INTRODUCTION

In response to the situation faced by communities affected by the Mekong floods, particularly in 2000, 2001 and 2002, the Mekong River Commission (MRC) embarked on a comprehensive six-year “Flood Management and Mitigation Program” (FMMP) with the aim of “People’s suffering and economic losses due to floods are prevented, minimized or mitigated, while preserving the environmental benefits of floods.”

This objective is to be attained through the implementation of five key components, namely: (1) Establishment of a Regional Flood Management and Mitigation Center; (2) Structural and flood proofing measures; (3) Mediation of Trans-boundary Flood Issues; (4) Flood Emergency Management Strengthening; and (5) Land Management.

The implementation of Component 4 of the FMMP, “Flood Emergency Management Strengthening” (FEMS), is being undertaken by the MRC with support from the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) and with funding support from the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ).

The objective of the project is “Emergency management systems in the riparian countries are more effectively dealing with Mekong floods”. The overall output of the project is to “enhance the competence of civil authorities at various levels, emergency managers and communities in flood preparedness and mitigation.”

The project was launched in September 2004, and had a duration of three years ending in December 2007. It was implemented in two of the most flood-prone provinces in Cambodia: Kandal and Prey Veng. Two districts within each province were selected for pilot implementation: Peam Chor and Sithor Kandal districts in Prey Veng Province; Leuk Dek and Lovea Em districts in Kandal Province. The four districts are located on the floodplains of the Mekong River and are among the most flood-prone in their respective provinces.

One of the primary outputs of the project was the formulation and development of provincial and district Flood Preparedness Programs. The ADPC facilitated this



process by providing technical assistance and support to local stakeholders consisting of local government officials at the various levels. Consistent with prescribed disaster management structure in the country, focal points within the PCDM and DCDM were designated and acted as key implementers for all project activities.

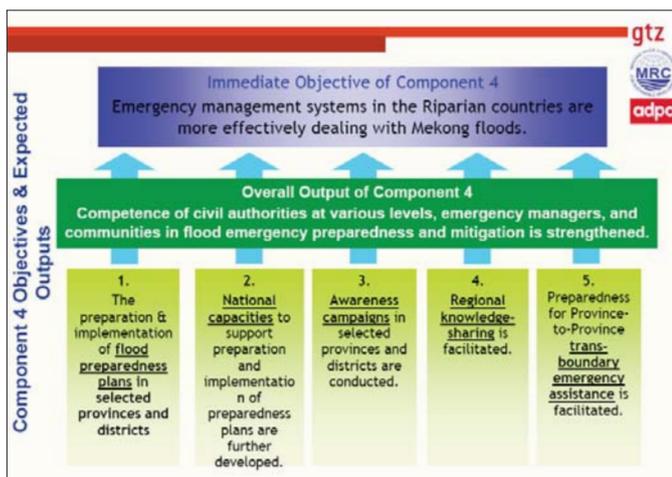
The active participation of the National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM) was evident from the start of the project with a similar designation of a focal point and the establishment of a Technical Support Unit (TSU) within NCDM that would provide similar support services to other provincial local government units in the future.

After a series of meetings, consultative and planning workshops all provincial and district flood preparedness programs were finalized in February 2006. This represented a milestone in the history of flood preparedness and emergency management in the targeted provinces and districts as they had finally formulated flood preparedness programs for the very first time.

1. THE MAINSTREAMING INITIATIVE

After the provincial and district flood preparedness programs had been prepared, Mr. Hul Chamroeun, the focal person of the Provincial Committee for Disaster Management (PCDM) of Prey Veng province, observed a significant improvement in terms of the coordination and working relations between the different line departments of the provincial government. However, he was fearful that the lack of financial and material resources would prove to be an insurmountable obstacle towards the project implementation and that without resources, the interest and enthusiasm that had been generated would wane.

Hence, it did not come as a surprise that when the workshop for reviewing provincial and district flood preparedness program was conducted, local officials expressed



“...having played the lead role in bringing them together in the planning process, the line departments were expecting the PCDM to provide the financial resources required to implement the flood preparedness plans ... to me this highlighted the need to integrate flood risk reduction into the development plans of the various line departments.”

Mr. Hul Chamroeun,
PCDM, Prey Veng
Province

similar issues particularly on to how the plan that was so painstakingly developed could move forward and be sustained. The scarcity of resources, prevalent in practically all rural areas of the country, gave rise to serious doubts in the minds of other local officials as well on whether their plans would ever move forward.

One of the key answers to the issue discussed in the workshop was mainstreaming. The need for integrating the flood preparedness plans into formal local development plans was extensively discussed. While the original design of the FEMS project did not explicitly contain a component for disaster risk reduction mainstreaming, the commitment and political will demonstrated by the provincial governments so impressed the ADPC that it fully supported them to embark on a path of mainstreaming.

After a year since it was first discussed in the workshop and subsequently pursued, the elements of the mainstreaming initiative undertaken can be identified and described as follows:

Awareness raising: establishing a common understanding of flood risk reduction

The flood risk reduction orientation and planning activities conducted at the start of the FEMS project served the objectives of mainstreaming very well because it created the broad-based awareness and understanding of flood risk reduction necessary to initiate disaster risk reduction mainstreaming.

Local government officials cannot be expected to fully participate and “own” the mainstreaming process if they do not fully appreciate and understand the relevance of disaster risk reduction in their own development agenda. To assume that government officials already understand or will readily accept the concepts and principles of disaster risk reduction is a critical obstacle in the mainstreaming process.

What is Mainstreaming?

The word mainstreaming is derived from the metaphor of a small isolated flow of water being drawn into the mainstream of a river where it will expand to flow smoothly without loss or diversion.

Therefore “mainstreaming risk reduction” describes the process to fully incorporate disaster risk reduction into development policy and practice. It means radically expanding and enhancing disaster risk reduction so that it becomes normal practice, fully institutionalised within an organization's development agenda.

- Mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction, Tearfund, 2005

Decentralization: the enabling environment

The current decentralization program of the national government of Cambodia, called the “Program to Support Democratic Development through Decentralisation and De-concentration (PSDD),” provided the enabling environment from which the mainstreaming initiative was launched. This meant that the mainstreaming initiative could be linked with existing national government development policy and strategy. The PSDD focuses on strengthening governance, participation and accountability at the local commune levels by providing them with responsibility and control over their own development including access to financial resources, although relatively small at present.

Formal and informal linkages with the PSDD program in the two provinces were quickly initiated and continuously enhanced. Local administrative officials and facilitators of the PSDD program were provided with a formal orientation on disaster and flood risk reduction and its relationship with development was emphasized.

Their understanding and involvement in the disaster risk reduction mainstreaming effort further increased by their consistent participation in all of the seminars and workshops conducted under the FEMS project and constant interaction

“We fully support the integration of disaster risk reduction into local commune and district development plans because we have seen for ourselves the effects of ignoring the reality of flooding ...in Lovea Em district, for example, the road that was built during the dry season was almost completely destroyed when the flood season came”.

Mr. Yam Saveung, Senior Provincial
Program Advisor,
Kandal Province



with their counterparts at the PCDM and District Committee for Disaster Management (DCDM).

Advocacy: from thought to action

Much of the foundation for the mainstreaming activities undertaken was made possible by the proactive advocacy efforts of the provincial and district disaster management officials with technical guidance and support of the ADPC. Of particular significance was the attendance and lobbying of the PCDM and some DCDM officials from the provinces of Kandal, Prey Veng, Takeo and Svay Rieng during the national planning workshop of the PSDD program hosted by the Ministry of Planning.

The objective of the workshop was to look at the experiences and learn from the lessons of the first five years of the implementation of the government's decentralization program "SEILA", the forerunner of the current PSDD program. It was here where the local officials proposed to the Ministry of Planning to include disaster risk reduction in local commune and district development plans, either as a 6th sector (on top of the five existing development priorities present in the current planning framework) or as a key cross-cutting issue.

The Ministry of Planning reacted favorably to the proposal and called on the ADPC to work closely with the National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM) to submit recommendations on how to move the mainstreaming process forward.

An equally significant event was that disaster risk reduction had found a well-placed and well-informed "mainstreaming champion" in the person of H.E. Hou Tang Eng, Undersecretary for the Ministry of Planning and former Secretary General of the Cambodian National Mekong Committee (CNMC) who expressed and, to this day, continues to provide full support to the integration of disaster risk reduction activities and projects into the development planning process.

Significant effort was also exerted to advocate and lobby for disaster risk reduction mainstreaming with the

most powerful development body in the province, the Executive Committee of the Provincial Rural Development Committee which is headed by the provincial governor, all the district governors of the province and NGOs operating in the province.

Training and technical support: enhancing knowledge and building skills

As the foundation for mainstreaming efforts was firmly established, activities turned more and more towards providing training and technical support. Appropriate training and technical support was provided in a cost-efficient manner by including the topic of disaster risk reduction integration and mainstreaming as an additional module in all of the subsequent training sessions and workshops conducted under the FEMS project. These orientations, training and workshops fall under the following categories:

DRR Workshop for PSDD development planning officers

Some 150 provincial and district personnel from the PSDD program were provided basic orientation and training on disaster risk reduction. The designated program focal point from the NCDM and key ADPC officers presided over the workshop where agreement was reached that the planning officials would also participate in the conduct of Community-Based Flood Management (CBFM) training for selected pilot communes intended for Commune Council members and the Commune Committee for Disaster Management (CCDM).

Understanding the local development planning process

Just as local development planning officials were provided with orientation and training on disaster risk reduction, the ADPC in coordination with the Ministry of Planning (MoP) conducted an orientation workshop for provincial and district disaster management officials (i.e., PCDM, DCDM) to



ensure that a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the local development planning processes was obtained.

The commune was identified as the lowest administrative level where an official planning process was conducted and where government decentralization efforts were focused. Flood risk reduction would therefore more ideally have to begin at this level.

Under this process, the PSDD provides technical assistance to each commune so that they are able to prepare a five-year Commune Development Plan (CDP) which is broken down into annual Commune Investment Plans (CIP). The CIPs are then discussed, deliberated upon and prioritized during a District Integration Workshop (DIW). Upon approval of the CIPs, monitoring and evaluation activities are undertaken to provide a reference for implementation and to guide future development efforts of the commune.

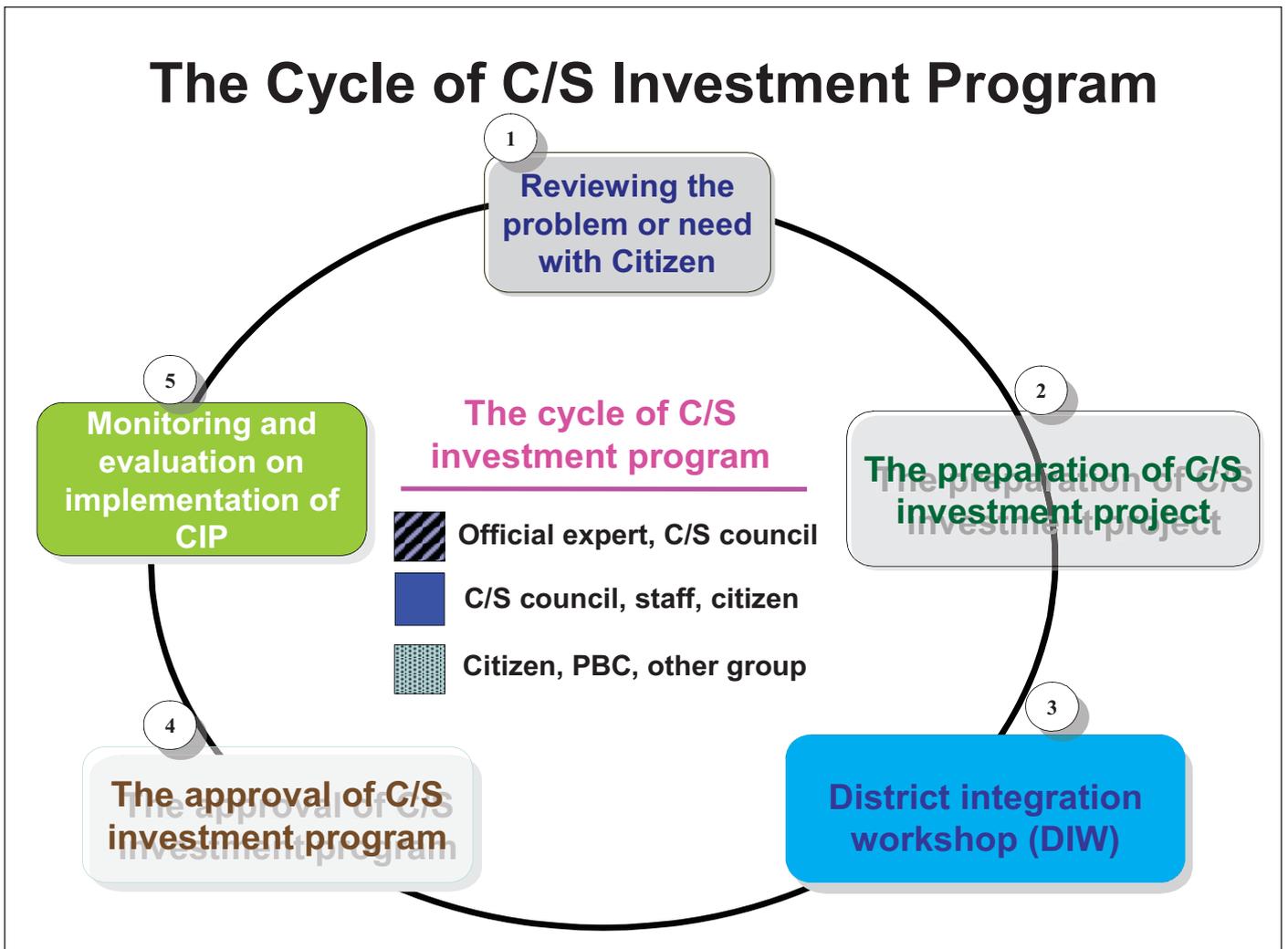
One of the key realizations attained was that the mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction should begin at the very first step of the commune development planning process, with the incorporation of hazard and vulnerability information and analysis into the socio-economic profile of the commune. Without a hazard assessment and risk analysis, it would be difficult to see how the next planning step of identifying community needs and priorities can compre-



hensively identify and address disaster risk reduction.

It was also evident that key methodologies and tools already in use by typical community-based disaster preparedness and risk reduction programs, including the participatory approaches used (e.g., PRA), already provide a sufficient foundation from which community residents and commune authorities can discuss and deliberate disaster risk reduction initiatives in the context of the community's overall development.

With good, sound knowledge of the key steps and processes undertaken in local development planning, local disaster



management officials were able to identify the appropriate tasks and timing of mainstreaming activities. This set of activities and learning were then incorporated in the training and orientation modules used in the “Community-Based Flood Management” Training of Trainers (ToT) participated in by PCDM, DCDM and other line department officials. These were also subsequently used in the actual trainings conducted in several pilot communes.

In addition, approaches to integrate disaster risk reduction into commune development plans were disseminated by Ministry of Planning officials during one of the regular meetings of the Cambodian Disaster Risk Reduction (CDRR) Forum. The CDRR Forum consists of international and local NGOs that are implementing disaster risk reduction projects in the country. The forum is regularly organized by the NCDM.

Planning review workshops

A year after the formulation of provincial and district flood preparedness programs, a workshop for PCDM and DCDM members was organized in order to review the flood preparedness plan formulated, identify the strengths and weaknesses of the planning process, and prepare action plans for the initial implementation of the plans. As local officials expressed concerns on the ability to implement the flood preparedness plans produced, the need for integrating the flood preparedness plans into formal local development plans was extensively discussed.

The workshop led to the identification of practical approaches towards integrating flood risk reduction activities developed under the flood preparedness plans into the commune development planning process.

It was agreed that flood preparedness and mitigation activities and projects already identified in existing Commune Investment Plans would be endorsed by the PCDM and DCDM in the District Integration Workshops. A total of 26 activities and projects in the provinces of Prey Veng and Kandal were identified as flood-related. These ranged from preparedness (e.g., identification and maintenance of safety areas for both human and livestock, boats, river bank protection measures, establishing early warning, health and sanitation, animal vaccination, community savings groups), response (search and rescue training, evacuation boats, and medicine) and rehabilitation measures (e.g., village infrastructure consisting of roads, bridges, culverts, and dams, safe areas, and livelihood rehabilitation support projects).

CBFM Orientation for CCDMs

While each commune in the country is mandated to have a Commune Committee for Disaster Management (CCDM), in reality most of these committees only become functional in the aftermath of a disaster or flooding event. Hence, the conduct of Community-Based Flood Management (CBFM) training in four pilot communes conducted by a training

team from the PCDM, DCDM, members of provincial line departments and local PSDD staff who had already received a CBFM trainers training.

In these and future training at the commune level, mainstreaming of flood risk reduction into commune development planning will be a major topic of discussion. Integration of data and information generated through Participatory Rapid Appraisal (PRA) tools (e.g. hazard maps, capacity and vulnerability analysis, wealth ranking, etc.) utilized by both development and disaster risk management planners into commune profiles and its subsequent analysis and prioritization of community needs.

The Commune Committees on Disaster Management (CCDM) however, unlike their district and provincial counterparts, did not receive extensive guidance and support in the formulation of their own specific commune flood preparedness plans. Considering that the development planning process begins with Commune Development Plans, the lack of commune specific disaster or flood preparedness plans is arguably the weakest link in the mainstream-



ing initiative undertaken. In the context of Cambodia and of the current initiatives in decentralization, strengthening commune capacity for disaster risk reduction planning is imperative.

Learning and experience sharing

A good number of opportunities for ideas and experience sharing on disaster risk reduction mainstreaming were provided to local stakeholders and government officials through a number of local, national and regional training and workshop.

These include two “National Lessons Learnt/Experience Sharing Workshops “ and one Regional Workshop on “Innovative Approaches to Flood Risk Reduction in the Mekong Basin” held in Thailand. The participation of local government officials in other non-FEMS sponsored workshops and conferences was also actively encouraged.

2. LESSONS LEARNED

- The exercise of political will by the highest ranking government officials and line departments is a prerequisite to a successful mainstreaming initiative. Without the acceptance, participation and ownership of the local government officials and line agencies to reduce disaster risks within their sectors and spheres of influence, mainstreaming cannot be sustained.
- The successful identification of local advocates or “program champions” can have a significant impact in terms of local stakeholder ownership and greatly facilitates the mainstreaming process.
- Decentralization provides an enabling environment for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into official development plans and this is logically best undertaken at the local government level where responsibility and resources for development planning is vested. In the context of Cambodia, this is at the commune level.
- While decentralization holds much promise for mainstreaming disaster risk reduction, this is not likely to occur without significant efforts in awareness raising, advocacy and capacity building.
- Efforts towards building local capacity in disaster risk reduction are typically addressed to local government disaster management bodies and committees but for effective disaster risk reduction mainstreaming to occur it is imperative that institutional capacity for disaster risk reduction is likewise provided to all other government line agencies or departments (i.e., health, agriculture, women affairs, etc.)
- Mainstreaming should be addressed using horizontal and vertical approaches, through integration into the overall local government development planning processes and by integration into the departmental or sectoral plans of the various line departments.
- Given very limited resource mobilization potentials in rural areas of the country, mainstreaming into local development plans remains the most viable long-term resource allocation option for sustained flood risk reduction.

3. THE WAY FORWARD

The initiative towards mainstreaming disaster risk reduction began in the late stages of the FEMS project and thus continues to be “work in progress”. While significant gains have been made, a number of suggestions and recommendations have been made by various stakeholders that should be considered when continuing or undertaking similar mainstreaming initiatives in the future.

The critical mass of mainstreaming experiences and lessons learned from the FEMS project can be translated into the development of specific mainstreaming guidelines and tools for commune, district and provincial officials including procedures for monitoring and review. In this manner, the potential for replication to other communes is significantly enhanced.

The facilitation of actual commune-level flood emergency management planning to more effectively demonstrate the

linkages of commune to district and provincial flood risk reduction plans and its integration into local development plans.

Funding support to commune disaster risk reduction activities and projects identified and prioritized through the PSDD mechanism (i.e., district integration workshop process) in order to provide local government units with the motivation and incentive to continue and further enhance the practice of integrating disaster risk reduction into the formal development planning process.

Active participation and advocacy of the ADPC, in coordination with other disaster management stakeholders in the country, for mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction at national and ministerial levels can significantly strengthen provincial and local capacities for disaster risk reduction in the longer term and should be pursued for a more holistic and comprehensive strategy.

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Safer Communities is a series of case studies that illustrate good practices of disaster preparedness and mitigation undertaken by either the government or non-government agencies with the goal of reducing the vulnerabilities and risks on the communities living in hazard-prone areas.

The series aims to provide decision makers, development planners, disaster management practitioners, community leaders and trainers with an array of proven ideas, tools, policy options and strategies derived from analyses of real-life experiences, good practices and lessons learned in Asia and the Pacific region, with a specific focus on reducing community risks and vulnerabilities and building more disaster-resilient and better prepared societies.

The first few case studies under the series have been developed under the Component 4 "Flood Emergency Strengthening" (FEMS) of the Flood Management and Mitigation Programme (FMMP) of the Mekong River Commission Secretariat (MRC). Therefore, the focus of these studies will be on flood risk management and their geographical coverage is limited to four MRC member countries of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam. However, good practices from other countries and other natural disasters are to be added over the years.

The Mekong River Commission Secretariat implements a Flood Management and Mitigation Programme (FMMP) designed to prevent, minimize, or mitigate people's suffering and economic losses due to floods, while preserving environmental benefits. FMMP has five components:

1. Establishment of Regional Flood Management and Mitigation Centre
2. Structural Measures and Flood Proofing
3. Enhancing Cooperation in Trans-boundary Flood Issues
4. Flood Emergency Management Strengthening
5. Land Management

The Component 4 "Flood Emergency Management Strengthening (FEMS)," of the FMMP has been implemented by the MRC with technical assistance from the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC) and funding support from the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), started from September 2004 to April 2008. The project target areas are in Cambodia and Vietnam, namely two provinces and four districts each in Cambodia and Vietnam. The project partners are the National Mekong Committees, National Disaster Management Offices and their local authorities at provincial, district and commune levels, concerned line agencies, mass organisations, Red Cross Societies, international organisations, local and international NGOs, etc.

Since 2004, FEMS has achieved the following:

1. Flood Preparedness Programs (FPP) in the target districts and provinces developed and implemented
2. Local and national capacity in support to the FPP development and implementation process built through training at local levels on community based flood management, damage and need assessment, search and rescue, emergency kindergarten management, swimming lessons for children, etc. and involving/participating in the project implementation
3. Public awareness on household safety measures at local levels raised, including school teachers' orientation and School Flood Safety Program for schools, identification of special needs of women-headed households, cultural performances, folk songs, distribution of flood booklet, posters, etc.
4. Local and regional knowledge sharing conducted through national and regional workshops as well as distribution of good practice documents

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