

**DISASTER MANAGEMENT POLICY, LEGAL AND
INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND PLANS IN CAMBODIA**

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Asian Disaster Preparedness Center
PO Box 4 Klong Luang Pathumthani 12120 Thailand

CONTENTS

- I. Country Background
- II. Major Hazards in Cambodia
- III. Preparedness for Emergency and Response
- IV. Five year Institutional Development strategy of NCDM
- V. Two Year Plan of Action for NCDM Development

I. Country Background

Location of The Country

Cambodia is situated between the latitudes of 10-15 North and Longitudes of 102 and 108 East and covers an area of 181,035.00 sq. km. It consists of 20 provinces, 4 municipalities, and 172 districts. Bordered on the North and West by Thailand, North by Laos and East by Vietnam. The South and West have around for 38% of the country land area in which 80% is devoted to rice production but also include upland crops/plantations, shrub and grasslands, flooded forests and urban and barren lands. Mountain forest covers 62% of land area and includes evergreen, dense, mixed and secondary forests and woodlands of scattered trees.

Climate

1. The climate in Cambodia is tropical, dominated by two monsoons:

- The Southwest monsoon presents the rainy season that lasts from mid-May to the end of October.
- The Northeast monsoon presents the dry season that lasts from October to April.

2. Rainfall

The average annual rainfall in mountainous areas in the East ranges from 2,000.00-3,000.00 mm. The Southwest coastal areas experiences around 4,000.00 mm of rain a year, whilst in the plain area, the average annual rainfall is only 1,400.00-1,600.00 mm. However, annual rainfalls fluctuate very much (monthly fluctuation is also high).

Annual flooding

25% of the plain area on average is flooded annually by the Mekong River and its tributaries and local downpours (rainfall-runoff is often blocked by the high water level in the Mekong River and Tonlesap Great Lake).

Population

The estimated population of Cambodia is about 12 million. Density of population is estimated at 51 persons per sq. km. The sex imbalance is estimated at 52.2% female and 47.8% male. 7.7% of the population live in urban areas, 6.9% live in main towns and 85.4% in rural areas.

II. Major Hazards in Cambodia

1. Floods

In Cambodia there are two main types of floods: **flash flood and river flood**. They frequently occur during the rainy season (South-East Asian monsoon). Coastal floods rarely hit the country. The floods are mainly caused by deforestation, erosion of riverbanks causing the riverbed shallower. Cambodia still lacks appropriate irrigation systems. Otherwise, the domestic rainfall is heavy in mountainous areas, North and West of Phnom Penh Capital. The Early Warning System has been improved with the collaboration of MRC and the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology. The collection and dissemination network of disaster information has been established to share with all concerned agencies, both a national and sub-national levels.

Through the flood disaster in 1996, 2000 and 2001, a lot of work has been done by NCDM and the government in terms of disaster preparedness and mitigation, and relief assistance.

2. Drought

The imbalance in the distribution of monsoon rainfall over recent years has resulted in drought condition in some parts of Cambodia. During the rainy season from May-November, a dry spell of 10-20 days can give rise to extensive drought and damage to paddy field. Some areas in Cambodia have been affected by prolonged drought from 1997 to 1998 and in 2001, a number of districts in Northwestern provinces have been affected. Cambodian people would face food shortage and poverty if this disaster continued to exist.

3. Fire

The forest fire is very rare in Cambodia. In 1997 there was one case occurred in Kirirum mountain, but it was a small scale disaster which lasted for a few days. But frequently, Cambodia is affected by house fire, especially in the big cities, and the fire fighting engines are not sufficient for all provinces. In 2001, there were 46 cases of house fire that destroyed 3,316 houses, including 5 death and 20 injured.

4. Riverbank erosion

In 1997 the flow of Mekong River has caused riverbank erosion in Kandal, Kampong Cham, Prey Veng provinces and in Phnom Penh City. The current of water has carried along with it houses, fruit trees. Cambodian people living on the riverbank are facing hazards of bank erosion and they are not equipped with appropriate measures of prevention and reduction. This crisis continues to occur every year in the above provinces.

5. Storms

Storms and Typhoon also hit some provinces of Cambodia. By the end of 1997, Linda Typhoon hit **Pou lo wei** island causing wreckage of 81 fishing boats and hundred of victims. In 1999, 2 cyclones hit one district of Phnom Penh City and another district of Kandal province causing destruction of nearly 500 houses. From April to August 2000 a series of monsoon storms hit five provinces causing hundred of houses collapsed and

damaged. In 2001, six provinces/municipalities were hit by storms that destroyed 743 houses, six school buildings, two temples, including one death and 11 injured.

III. Preparedness for Emergency and Response

Disaster Management is a top priority regionally, as well as internationally, regardless of whether the cause of disaster is natural or man-made. Disaster management, preparedness, and mitigation, together with an effective emergency response mechanism are major defining objectives of the NCDM. In order to achieve such strategic objectives, the NCDM will strengthen the capacity of the different levels of existing Committee for Disaster Management (CDMs). Similarly, the NCDM intends to establish such committees where they do not already exist in an effort to ensure efficiency in joint disaster management.

In 1995, as a result of the country's experience with regularly occurring disasters, the Royal Government of Cambodia established a National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM). The NCDM's responsibilities are defined in terms of, not only with providing timely and effective emergency relief to the victims of disasters, but also with developing preventive measures to reduce loss of lives and property. This will be accomplished by applying scientific and technical knowledge to mitigate disaster. In the Royal Government's second terms of office, the Prime Minister made an amendment to the old Sub-Degree by preparing a systematic mechanism that guarantees efficacy and accuracy for implementing disaster management.

Organizational Structure for Disaster Management

A. The Organizational Structure at the National Level

With reference to Sub-decree N° 54 dated 14 June, 1999, of the Royal Government of Cambodia, the membership of the NCDM is as follows:

1. Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Cambodia (PMO)	President
2. Minister of Interior (MINT)	Vice President
3. Minister of National Defence (MND)	Vice President
4. Council of Ministers' Office (CMO)	Member
5. Minister of Economy and Finance (MEF)	Member
6. Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MFAIC)	Member
7. High Ranking official, an Honourable member to the Committee in charge of special coordinating mission	Member
8. Minister of the Water Resources and Meteorology	Member
9. Representative of the High Command of the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces	Member
10. Secretary of State for the State Secretariat for Civil Aviation	Member

Furthermore, all Ministries and Institutions concerned shall collaborate closely with NCDM when necessary in an emergency situation.

Additionally, the National Committee for Disaster Management shall adopt the CRC as its main partner with which to jointly conduct relief operations in times of disaster.

Lastly, the National Committee for Disaster Management is a National Institution of the Royal Government. It has a General Secretariat that acts as an implementing unit within NCDM Headquarters in order to provide advice to the Royal Government on the issue of Disaster Management.

B. The Organization of the Structure of the Provincial/Municipal Committee for Disaster Management

At the Provincial/Municipal level, there shall be a Committee for Disaster Management (CDM) with the following membership:

- The Provincial/Municipal Governor as President
- The Deputy Governor as Vice President
- The Chiefs of each relevant Government Department as Members

The Committee shall establish a secretariat in order to facilitate the operation and coordination of work to be undertaken.

C. Organization of the Structure of the District Committee for Disaster Management

At the District/Precinct levels, there is a District/Precinct Committee for Disaster Management with the following membership:

- The Governor of the District/Precinct as President
- The Deputy Governor as Vice-President
- The chiefs of each relevant office of the District/Precinct as Members

The committee shall establish a secretariat in order to facilitate the operation and coordination of work to be undertaken.

Before the flood, preparedness for NCDM meant the yearly allocation of 400,000,000 riels to NCDM operations and contingencies annually, withdrawing up to 400-800 metric tons rice reserve from the Ministry of Commerce for relief operations³, and the conduct of training for a core team of trainers composed of 17 government officials (11 NCDM, 6 from other Ministries). Additionally, NCDM has recently conducted 2-day Refresher Training Course for the Core Team of Trainers, A 2-day national workshop in Phnom Penh from July 26th to July 27th, for Strengthening Capacity in Disaster Management for 25 permanent Secretaries coming from all Provinces and Municipalities of the country and the training courses for 4 PCDMs in Prey Veng, Kampong Cham, and Kandal and Pursat. Overall, the extent of the severity of the flood 2000 exceeds the very modest flood preparedness measures of NCDM to reduce the impact of flood. This level of preparedness was even way below the response requirements of the flood if 1996, when estimates of damage was about US\$ 85 million affecting 13 provinces/ municipalities. Indeed there were relative improvements on the capacity of NCDM⁴ with regards to responding to the flood of 2000, compared to their response in 1996. But these improvements were not commensurate to the scope and extent of required responses in both events. An important lesson is that the RGC must be able to improve their response in future potential disasters by being engaged in preparedness planning and improvement of emergency response capability

The challenges of disaster response in Cambodia could be addressed through three actions namely:

- Leadership and effective coordination of various Ministries and organizations' action in timely and urgent manner, based on the disaster situation.
- Identification, training and equipping a "Disaster strike force" within the military forces of Cambodia who are strategically located to respond and assist civilian population quickly and efficiently.
- Assisting vulnerable communities in preparing plans and acquiring "Disaster resistant" community infrastructures such as pagodas, schools that will help them cope with floods and other type of disaster.

From January to April 2001, a significant activity was conducted by the Royal Government of Cambodia involving a participatory assessment of the capacity of the National Committee for Disaster Management. With funding from ECHO, the Federation the Cambodian Red Cross and NCDM engaged experts from the Philippine based **International Institute for Disaster Risk Management (IDRM, formerly the Asia Pacific Disaster Management Center-APDMC)** to lead a team to conduct the assessment of NCDM and in the development of a long term and medium term strategy for RGC. The high government leadership recognized that the catastrophic flooding in 2000 demonstrated

clearly the need for changes and actions to reduce the potential impact of future disasters in Cambodia. From this assessment process, a ***Five-Year Institutional Development Strategy for the Royal Government of Cambodia's National Committee for Disaster Management*** was approved by Government, Ministries, Governors, IOs, and NGOs who attended a series of consultation workshops. The document also contains a **Two-Year Action Plan** that indicates the first steps. The President of NCDM stated that the strategic document is a clear and realistic plan for the Royal Government of Cambodia to develop the capacity for disaster management responsibilities and the wide range of policy, organizational and operational issues. He further declared that the RGC stands ready to implement the ***Institutional Development Strategy*** in close cooperation with the international community with a view to making disaster management an integral part of sustainable development initiatives in Cambodia. In June 2001, the document was presented by the First Vice President of NCDM at the **Consultative Group Meeting**. In response, the donor community participating in the CGM further highlighted the need to enhance Cambodia's disaster management capacity, based on well-coordinated mechanisms between Government and the donors. It should be noted that pledges made by the donor community include financial support to the NCDM Institutional

NCDM's next set of priorities is to coordinate actions for rehabilitation. These include the following:

1. To coordinate with technical ministerial institutions and all level of authorities and continue to cooperate with the Social Fund of the Kingdom of Cambodia by encouraging them to rehabilitate agricultural.
2. To coordinate and closely cooperate with international organizations, non-governmental organizations, Mekong River Committee in researching, studying and finding out the appropriate measures on how to better manage release of water from the Mekong River particularly in areas where the channel is narrower.
3. To continue to perform monitoring and implementation of roles and responsibilities under the Circular N^o 2 dated July 2nd, 2001 and achieve improvement of the capacity of the National Committee of Disaster Management.
4. To cooperate and consult with international organizations, non-governmental organizations with offices in disaster prone provinces and with other institutions of the Royal Government in collecting and evaluating data on disaster situations and improve NCDM's ability to prepare useful and timely reports necessary for decision making in emergency relief and rehabilitation.
5. To solicit support from international donors and NGOs in implementing the important steps of the RGC's Five Year Institutional Development Strategy and Two Year Plan of Action for NCDM Development.
6. To promote human development in fundamental aspects of disaster management such as in methodologies and techniques to perform central coordination of disaster management tasks.
- 7 To develop job descriptions and provide training programs to staff in cooperation with international organizations and non- governmental organizations here in Cambodia and with other international training institutes.

IV. Five Year Institutional Development Strategy of NCDM

A. Coordinated Disaster Management

Effective Disaster Management is a carefully planned and implemented set of actions by different organizations that control resources that are critical in reducing the impact of disasters. Resources include: qualified personnel, transport, evacuation centers, early warning, relief supplies, emergency health assistance, restoring livelihood and many others. There is no single organization that can respond the variety of urgent needs of affected communities.

Actions before disasters strike such as planning, training of personnel, stockpiling of relief materials, building of flood resistant pagodas and schools and designating them as evacuation centers and many others covered under the prevention-preparedness-mitigations aspects of disaster management are proven to be affective in reducing loss of lives, and properties. They are also more cost effective in relation to post disaster action.

Post disaster rehabilitation offers the opportunity to do "better" and be more effective. While the focus of rehabilitation efforts is on infrastructure, any rehabilitation program should also include rebuilding and strengthening disaster management institutions such as the NCDM.

By learning from previous experience, coordination from various organizations does not only prevent or reduce damage but also minimizes overlapping of functions, duplication of actions and avoiding unnecessary waste of scarce resources.

When organizations works together under the cohesive strategy and action plan, they not only become more efficient, but their assistance is timely and appropriate in meeting the urgent needs of the community affected.

Organizations will work better in the future if their relationship, roles, responsibilities are well understood and more importantly, a coordinating body such as the NCDM is acting as a convenor and facilitators for cooperative actions.

In all these phases, cooperation and participation of various organizations, particularly of an "effectives RGC inter-ministerial system in disaster preparedness, response and rehabilitation" is very important in reducing the effects of disasters to Cambodia's communities.

B. The Institutional Development of RGC's National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM)

Purposes:

- a. An effective RGC inter-ministerial coordination system in disaster management including prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and rehabilitation.
- b. Reducing the effects of disaster to Cambodia's communities

The National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM) is the Royal Government of Cambodia's inter-ministerial system under the sub-degree issued by the Prime Minister. NCDM consists of various levels: 1) the policy making body. 2) the Secretariat who manages day to day affairs and 3) the local leadership in the provinces and districts. In this document, they are referred to as one organizational system-the NCDM.

It is important to note that the purpose of NCDM is not to create and unnecessary bureaucracy. It is not a threat to existing Ministries and organizations. It will be developed to harness collective and high level leadership among the Government Ministries. It will be developed to minimized overlapping of functions and avoid duplication and waste of resources. It will be developed to provide "bridges" and "linkage" between organizations.

More importantly, NCDM will be developed to serve a larger purpose: To reduce the effects of disaster in Cambodia. This larger purpose is an aspiration common to all, including those with focus on national development and sector themes like environment protection, local level institutions building, poverty alleviations, flood security, improvement of access to water, health and sanitation. Disaster such as flood, storms, and drought impact on development and set back accomplishment. On the other hand, "unplanned" and unsustainable development programs can increase vulnerability and may put poor communities in greater risk exposure to impacts of disaster.

Furthermore, the NCDM inter-ministerial system will be developed to address coordinated actions before, during and after disasters. NCDM will be developed to be effectively involved in disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and rehabilitation as mandated by the Royal Government of Cambodia.

C. The Institutional Development Framework

To achieve the purposes, NCDM will require support for its growth and institutional development. This set of support will build on the accomplishments of the UNDP supported Capacity Building Project of NCDM.

The proposed institutional development framework uses the following principles:

1. Cooperation and coordination are critical factors for the success of the strategy.
2. All relevant stakeholders are participants in developing and implementing disaster management solutions.
3. NCDM will have to be assisted to undergo stages of growth, but the process must be flexible enough to achieve continuous change and improvement. Some interventions may be implemented earlier, as indicated in the framework, after careful review of the relationship with other sets of interventions.
4. The set of interventions listed are not rigid. The process should allow insertions of new program interventions when the need is identified and opportunities are available.
5. Political will and support to NCDM will make the difference between success and failure.

It is noteworthy that with the objectives set above the several international organizations have initiated strong support to NCDM for 2002. The **Federation** and the **Cambodian Red Cross** continued to be our closest partner in these objectives. In addition, the **UN-DMT** has expressed potential support to NCDM in continuously engaging the team of aspects from the **International Institute for Disaster Risk Management (IDRM)** to assist NCDM in 2002.

In order to ensure achieving a fruitful and meaningful result in 2002, the National Committee of Disaster Management is expressing its commitment in performing its mandated roles under guidance of the Prime Minister. NCDM will strive to work in cooperation with other Government Ministries, international donors and organizations, non-governmental organization and the provincial and district level committees, in performing effective disaster management duties and contribute to poverty alleviation strategies as mandated by the Royal Government of Cambodia.

V. Two Year Plan of Action for NCDM Development

1. Disaster Management Policy and Implementation

The national policy for disaster management, which should have laid out the action for disaster preparedness and other activities, has undergone three revisions since it was first discussed in 1997. However, it is yet to be approved by the Council of Ministers and signed as an official document by the Prime Minister. Due to this, the policy as a basic and official guideline for preparedness and response actions at the provincial and district levels has not been disseminated. The ability of the RGC Ministries, provincial and district leadership to provide effective civil service is constrained due to inadequate understanding of specific roles and responsibilities, lack of clarity in "lines of communications" and criteria for decision making, planning and implementing. During the flood of 2000, it was widely recognized that the leadership of the Prime Minister and the personal actions taken by provincial Governors were crucial in the mobilization of resources to respond to urgent needs. However, the factors that contribute to positive results should be analyzed and written as guidelines provided by RGC leadership. These sets of guidelines must include actions before, during and after disasters and must be promulgated and issued as official government policy. During the feedback workshop, the consultation process, further revision and finalization of the policy and its effective dissemination (through official orders and training activities) at all levels is cited as the urgent and most important priority.

2. Disaster Management Information System

One of the most important lessons learned from the flood of 2000 is that there is an urgent necessity for improving inter-agency or inter-organizational coordination. As a starting point, if there is recognition that future-damaging disaster will happen, NCDM must be assisted to improve its capacity, system and procedures in damage and needs assessment and reporting. Such information is important if coordination is to be achieved..

3. Public Awareness and Community based on Disaster Preparedness

The lack of knowledge by the general Cambodian public and local officials about the severity of hazards that may affect them, associated risks, probable damage, and precautions to be taken is perhaps, one of the most significant gaps in present day efforts to mitigate the potentially disastrous effects of most hazards. The Assessment Team concluded that it is only when the dangers are understood by the people affected and when everyone is aware of the precautions that must be taken that an effective community effort can be mobilized to save lives and minimize the damage property.

NCDM however has not been engaged in a public awareness program or even a public awareness strategy or plan, an important fundamental in other countries with regular and severe natural and manmade disasters. Due to this, an important priority cited is to assist NCDM in identifying the need for public awareness, develop a medium term disaster awareness strategy and be equipped with financial and technical capacity to implement the strategy.

If implemented, the NCDM Disaster Awareness program can minimize loss of life, injury, suffering and property damage in a community:

- By reducing ignorance about hazards, their nature, and the consequences of their impact.
- By increasing public knowledge of the relationship of the severity of disasters to natural causes and manmade contribution,
- By increasing public knowledge about practical preparedness, measures
- By promoting and developing practical skills among the general public with a view to improving their response
- As a prerequisite to a warning system, the public must know what the warning means and what they should do when they hear it; and
- By achieving support for disaster plans, organizations and measures.

4. Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy

A strategy that is proactive is desirable especially for a country like Cambodia with limited resources to replace damaged properties due to recurring disasters. A disaster management strategy consists of analysis and planning for a wide range of issues corresponding to all aspects of disaster management, namely, prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and rehabilitation. The process starts with a hazard and vulnerability (risk) analysis, and an analysis of major requirements for coping with disasters. These requirements include short and long term measures and detailed support mechanisms to implement these measures. While the strategy development is concentrated in Cambodia, analysis may also include multi faceted (physical, political, environmental) relationship with other countries. The process may also include the information of emerging trends, approaches and technology in disaster management.

5. Specific Objectives-Two Year NCDM Work Plan

At the end of two (2) year NCDM would have acquired the following capacity and capability:

1. An approved and operational National Disaster Management Policy and Guidelines, well understood by implementors who have been provided training to perform their responsibilities;
2. A written Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response Plan at the national and provincial levels, developed by implementors who have been provided training to perform their specific responsibilities;
3. Initiation of the NCDM Disaster Management Information System, particularly the ability to gather information and damage and needs and report these on a timely and efficient manner;
4. The development and approval of a National Disaster Awareness and Community based Disaster Preparedness Program that identifies priorities, activities, roles and involvement of government, NGOs, academic institutions, media and international organizations.
5. The development and approval of a National Disaster Management Strategy that identifies risk and vulnerabilities in various sectors and a long term and sustainable actions in disaster prevention, mitigation, and preparedness.

6. Activities that will be Carried out in Relation to Specific Objectives

Objective 1: Disaster Management Policy and Its Effective Dissemination

Activities:

- 1.1 Improve capacity of inter-ministerial level committee in policy-formulation and implementation and in providing appropriate issuance, executive orders, and promulgation that would provide clear mandate to various ministries involved in disaster management.
- 1.2 Set functional full-time General Secretariat and various internal departments or units to oversee implementation of various coordination activities among Ministries and development partnership mechanisms among external organizations (e.g. International Organization, NGOs) for disaster management programs and projects.
- 1.3 Improve the understanding of the Provincial Committee on Disaster Management (PCDM) and District Committee on Disaster Management (DCDM) in the areas of disaster management policy and guidelines.

Objectives 2: Develop Disaster Preparedness and Response Plans and Training of its Implementors

Activities:

- 2.1 Development and Implementation of a Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response Plan.
- 2.2 Training and Mobilization of a Disaster Response Force (national and sub national within the RGC Armed Forces.

Objectives 3: Establishment of NCDM Disaster Management Information System

Activities:

- 3.1 Review and develop data collection, collation and reporting system.
- 3.2 Improve flood early warning system

Objective 4: Development of a National Strategy for Disaster Awareness and Community Based Disaster Preparedness:

Activities:

- 4.1 Develop and improve a public awareness and CDBP program strategy in various Ministries, agencies and villages and with NGOs, IOs.
- 4.2 Create and implement a multi-media public awareness programme.

Objectives 5: Study on Flood Vulnerability and Development of a Long-term and Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy:

Activities:

- 5.1 Identify risk and vulnerabilities and its impact to major national sectors and programmes (e.g. Agriculture, transportation, urban sector)
- 5.2 Prepare sectoral strategies in response to risk analysis.