



for clearer guidance, increased participation of departments and agencies as well as greater public involvement. The survey revealed that 34 per cent of respondents did not receive training and capacity building in DRR and CCA in the last five years. This lack of training is of concern, as about one third of those responsible for NDPC at provincial level have not been trained in DRR and CCA. Training on emergency responses was seen as the highest priority (41 per cent of respondents), followed by communication and public awareness (25 per cent), legal frameworks (15 per cent) and fundraising (9 per cent). Less than 2 per cent of respondents prioritized child-focused DRR compared to other vulnerable groups.

Recommendations: Grant more decision-making power to Commune Committee for NDPC and outline roles and responsibilities to encourage more active participation of members. Decision-making structures of the NDPC fund should be clarified regarding a discretionary spending limit of VND 100 million, for which the Commune Committee for NDPC chairperson is authorized. All NDPC provincial and district committee members should be trained on DRR and climate change, and new members should receive an induction package that includes specific information on the challenges faced by vulnerable groups and the steps needed to ensure they are fully considered. VDMA should update its vision on DRR with core values that promote individual and community action (self-help by individuals and mutual-help within communities). Make DRR a mandatory component of the curriculum and life skills development in schools. This will help strengthen community resilience and awareness.

Organizational Set-up

Achievements: Funds for NDPC are available under Decree 94 and from development partners. Procedures to receive support from other countries have been developed. There are also procedures to provide disaster assistance to other countries, which have been applied to health emergencies and search and rescue operations. VDMA cooperation with the VNRC is positive, and it can obtain external support and carry out training at different levels. The commune-level system to disseminate information to households via television, megaphones, loudspeakers and SMS works reasonably efficiently. The Contingency Fund is allocated quickly by PPCs when disasters occur.

Shortcomings: Implementing the NDPC plan is challenging due to insufficiently clear guidance and proper horizontal and vertical coordination, human resources and funding. When implementing Decree 94, it would also be important to assess the affordability especially in areas with high concentration of ethnic minority and poor households. Complex standardized damage and needs assessment templates as well as a digital system, make it more challenging for provinces to promptly analyse and report needs. Urgent official letters sent from central government to province(s), then to districts and communes can slow response times to emergencies. This can be worsening the situation and slowed further with the need for permission to be granted from higher administrative levels before important decisions can be acted upon. Early warning information is sometimes not precise and false alarms can occur. There is inadequate communication

and awareness raising for ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups, and the key messages are not specifically tailored. No NDPC fund is set-up at national level. An NDPC partnership has still not been officially established by the government.

Recommendations: Many comments in the survey indicated that the speed and efficiency of the VDMA system should be enhanced. To this end, there is a need to have a better data management system which can identify and monitor risks, provide reliable information and data for planning. Amendment of Circular 43/2015/TTLT-BNNPTNT-BKHDT, on damage and needs assessment (DANA), is necessary. VDMA should ensure disaggregated DANA, digitalize the DANA risk management system to allow PCNDPC to upload data directly into a national database and provide equipment and necessary training. There is an urgent need to improve communication to different groups of population ensuring that the key messages and other communication materials are disseminated through diverse channels maximizing outreach and in ethnic languages. Rapid relay of information should be improved from reservoir management to downstream CCNDPC if floodwaters are released. Use the 'tried and trusted' VNRC trainers and provide a manual for training and equipping rapid response teams at provincial level. In high-risk districts, train response teams to use the same materials. More generally, greater autonomy for decision-making at district and commune levels should be achieved. Enhanced safety standards for schools, hospitals and other public buildings as well as provision of safe places for evacuations are necessary, with priority given to vulnerable groups. Provincial early warning stations should be supported and more regular comprehensive public awareness-raising campaigns must be conducted, including the National Day of Natural Disasters. Financing options for national NDPC fund should be reviewed, exploring investment from State Budget and prioritizing DRR activities in poorer provinces with high concentration of ethnic minority and households that have limited income, and a NDPC partnership to improve collaboration in DRR and CCA should be established.

Policy Brief

Capacity Gap Assessment of the Central and Provincial Committees for Natural Disaster Prevention and Control system, and the Viet Nam Disaster Management Authority, with a child lens

September 2018

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

In 2017, the Prime Minister approved the 2017-2021 programme of cooperation between the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) and UNICEF. As a first step within the programme towards identifying Viet Nam's natural disaster risks, the Viet Nam Disaster Management Authority (VDMA) under MARD requested UNICEF support to conduct a systematic assessment of the capacity of Viet Nam's disaster management system. The objectives were to:

- Assess capacity gaps within the system of Central and Provincial Committees for Natural Disaster Prevention and Control, and the VDMA.
- Assess gaps in the country's disaster risk management (DRM) system as to why children and vulnerable people are severely affected by disasters.
- Provide recommendations for an action plan to close these gaps.

APPROACH

The assessment looked at how the natural disaster prevention and control (NDPC) system addresses groups particularly vulnerable to natural hazards and climate change impacts (such as children, the poor, ethnic minorities, migrant workers, persons with disabilities, older people, HIV-positive people and those living with AIDS). The three main components of the assessment were a desk review, semi-structured interviews and an online survey of 484 representatives of provincial NDPC committees, departments and mass organizations in all 63 provinces of the country.





MAIN FINDINGS

Global and Regional Concepts and Frameworks

Achievements: There is a growing understanding of global and regional issues related to natural disasters, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (2005) and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Also, 39 per cent of online survey respondents believed key issues of international frameworks and goals were considered in provincial programmes and projects.

Shortcomings: An understanding of global frameworks diminished when moving from the central to commune level. Some 39 per cent of respondents in the online survey reported they had little or no knowledge about the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, as did 23 per cent with respect to the Children's Charter. About 26 per cent of respondents knew little or nothing of the ASEAN Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response.

Recommendations: VDMA should develop a useful guideline on the key elements of global and regional agreements and commitments to their alignment with Government of Viet Nam priorities.

The guideline should illustrate how and where the concepts and frameworks can be incorporated into ministerial strategies, programmes and plans as well as sector roles in implementing these commitments.



National Strategies, Legislation and Programmes

Achievements: Most survey respondents were cognizant of national laws, including the Law on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control, the National Strategy on Natural Disaster Prevention, Response and Mitigation, the National Strategy on Climate Change and Decision 1002 on community awareness and community-based disaster risk management (CBDRM). Almost all respondents considered the legislative system and organizational set-up for NDPC to be at least "moderately effective", while 60 per cent of respondents thought the 'four on-the-spots' to be effective.

Shortcomings: While a proliferation of normative legal documents exist, they do not cover all aspects

and are not sufficiently detailed to regulate all NDPC actions. Sector-developed policies were reported as fragmented and lacked inter-sectoral coordination. Limited awareness among stakeholders on the degree to which natural disaster impacts the most vulnerable groups, particularly children, is common. At the same time, 80% of respondents did not feel the system covering the needs of vulnerable groups. In addition, implementing policies and legislation is viewed as challenging due to staff shortages, inadequate resource allocation, ineffective communication and overlaps. The impact of climate change, increasing the threat of natural disasters, puts more pressure on NDPC to resolve these challenges.

The assessment further concluded that the current NDPC system is focused on response and insufficient attention is paid to disaster risk reduction (DRR) and preparedness. Implementation of CBDRM was deemed limited and the Safe Schools Framework is at an early stage. One factor in the lack of general awareness on the issues mentioned previously is provinces do not have separate provincial level offices for NDPC. The variety and complexity of NDPC-related issues remains challenging for people to digest and as such, they should be integrated and concisely communicated to stakeholders and the public.

Recommendations: Numerous guidelines, laws and strategies related to NDPC issues should be reviewed and concise guidance produced to clarify roles, responsibilities and decision-making. Succinct guidance notes on DRM for sub-national levels are also needed to bring about a paradigm shift away from disaster response towards a greater focus on DRR, preparedness and adaption utilizing a human and child-centered approach. Developing decrees and or circulars to guide NDPC planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation using human and child-centered approaches is necessary. At the same time, the NDPC should expound mechanisms to strengthen a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation framework for DRR actions to track progress, including vulnerability indicators and children indicators. A systematic roll-out and operationalization of the new National Strategy on DRR and other legislation is needed, including

development of action plans linked to adequate investment in DRR and preparedness. The Prime Minister or a Deputy Prime Minister chairs the Central Committee for NDPC. At provincial level, it is recommended that the chair of the Provincial People's Committee (PPC) should be Chair of the Provincial Committee for NDPC (PCNDPC) to emphasize the importance of the issue. Members of the PCNDPC should be directors of respective provincial departments. CBDRM should be evaluated and it would be very useful if VDMA would produce a circular providing guidance on the use of the State NDPC Fund to support implementation of Decision 1002 on CBDRM, including how it can support measures to improve the situation of vulnerable people, especially children and women at risk of natural hazards. Given the important focus on prevention on preparing children to minimize the impact of disaster, the Safe School Framework should continue to be systematically rolled out. Finally, the concept of self- and mutual help should be strengthened as critical values that complement humanitarian relief from public authorities and strengthen the capacity of communities, mass organizations, schools, families and individuals (including children) in DRR.

Cross-Cutting Issues

Achievements: The Viet Nam Red Cross Society (VNRC), Viet Nam Women's Union, Youth Union and many local and international non-governmental organizations take action to support vulnerable groups. Most activities are assumed to be social welfare projects and programmes or under the education sector. Some private sector engagement is noted.

Shortcomings: Women are under-represented in all levels of Central Committee for NDPC (CCNDPC). Discussions with CCNDPC members revealed that most provinces have no programmes focused solely on vulnerable groups, including children, as opposed to select components focused on vulnerable groups implemented within more substantial programmes. There is a lack of capacity building for local staff on how to empower and engage women and to better support vulnerable groups, especially poor, female-headed



households, and those with disabled family members and children. While most PPCs reported they had a child focus, no budget existed for child-focused DRR CCA actions. Further, the online survey revealed that 5-12 per cent of respondents thought the NDPC system was not effective in meeting the needs of vulnerable groups. Combined with respondents reporting the system was only moderately effective, about 80 per cent claimed the NDPC system did not meet the needs of these vulnerable groups.

Recommendations: Increase the number of women in CCNDPC to at least 30 per cent of members in the next five years and 50 per cent by 2030. UNICEF, the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs and other child-focused organizations should advocate for increased support for child-focused DRR projects and programmes. Develop the National Behaviour Change Communication Strategy for Disaster Preparedness to outline the scope, accountabilities and action-oriented key messages to support awareness raising. The concept of vulnerable groups should be reviewed by VDMA and they must play an active role in DRR initiatives.



Management

Achievements: Respondents reported that information, particularly forecasts, on disasters arrived quickly from districts, which supported effective disaster responses. For example, in response to drowning, several provinces established swimming classes at schools and more than 4,000 students and 20 teachers were trained. Some 3,000 high schools (i.e. one or two schools per district) were classified as "safe schools" and could receive evacuees. Some 66 per cent of online survey respondents had received some training on DRR and CCA in the past five years.

Shortcomings: At commune level, a strong dependency exists on decision-making from higher levels. There are minimal connections between CCNDPC focal points of different sectors and CCNDPC members have limited time for NDPC due to their primary roles. Staffing at all administrative levels is insufficient. Apart from the VDMA, no permanent staff work on NDPC at ministries, provinces, districts and communes. At lower administrative levels, offices in charge of NDPC and search and rescue lack relevant knowledge and skills, while frequent staff changes make it difficult to carry out instructions from higher levels. There is no policy on subsidies and incentives for people undertaking NDPC work. This is important for those involved at times of disaster, who work long hours and require clear incentives.

Regarding the provincial NDPC planning process, there is a need