

Key Learnings and Recommendations for creating Local Disaster and Climate Resilience Plans (LDCRP)

Experiences of Mercy Corps Nepal on Local Disaster Risk Management

Mercy Corps Nepal



Community members discussing available resources and capacities for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in Bhajani Municipality, Kailali. Photo by Mercy Corps Nepal on July 3, 2019.

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1. Introduction

Mercy Corps Nepal began its programs in 2007 with programs focusing on natural resource management, disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation, economic development, and youth engagement. Under the "Managing Risk through Economic Development" (M-RED) program, Mercy Corps is conducting disaster risk management and climate change adaptation programs in eleven local municipalities of Kailali, Kanchanpur, Baitadi and Dadeldhura Districts in the Sudur Paschim Province.

Nepal has recently transitioned to a federalist structure with seven provinces and 753 municipalities covering urban and rural areas. Local governments now hold significant responsibility for decision-making and service delivery. In this context, municipalities also have the authority and responsibility to plan for disasters and climate change, which had been done at the district and national levels.

Mercy Corps Nepal supported three municipalities of Bhajani in Kailali; Laljhadi in Kanchanpur; and Dilashaini in Baitadi District; to develop their Local Disaster and Climate Resilience Plans (LDCRP) adopting the LDCRP Guideline (Draft 2017), which is an emerging element of the Local Disaster Risk Management Plans (LDRMP) and Local Adaptation Plans of Action (LAPA). Through this process, we have identified key challenges and recommendations for the LDCRP national guidelines, which are currently under amendment by the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration.

2. Challenges

The LDCRP is an opportunity to streamline both disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) into one coherent policy. However, implementation plans should delineate between short term planning for fast onset disasters, and longer term planning for climate change impact and slower onset events. Identifying and incorporating appropriate adaptation measures for climate change has been restricted due to limited knowledge of climate change by community and local stakeholders. A lack of understanding of how climate change attributes to the frequency and intensity of disaster events such as floods, inhibits the ability to plan for such events. We have identified three main challenges in developing the Local Disaster and Climate Resilience Plan (LDCRP) at the municipality level.

- **Knowledge and capacity:** Local policy makers and community members are not well informed on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation, and identification of hazards is not prioritised while designing regular development plans. There are a limited number of trained staff in the ward office to deal with disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. Furthermore, local knowledge, which is essential to policy planning and solution identification, often exists but is overlooked.
- **Incentives to consider disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation:** Participation of representatives from the local government and elected body to formulate the LDCRP is insufficient due to limited human resources and the ongoing restructuring and implementation of the new governance system. Significant skills and capacity gaps, and a weak incentive structure for local governments to consider disaster risk reduction and climate change in regular development activities, prevents consideration of such areas in development planning. Activities perceived to

contribute directly to immediate electoral promises and goals are prioritized, such as infrastructure projects.

- **Relief and response before preparedness:** Although the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act 2074 mandates local governments to prioritize disaster management, most of the current spending is for relief and response. Leadership and coordination is not adequate to address disaster risk and climate change issues, which are cross sectoral and need the involvement of different sections and divisions within government.

3. Good Practices

Throughout our engagement of supporting the eleven municipalities, we have recognized a number of good practices for effectively developing the Local Disaster and Climate Resilient Plans (LDCRP).

- An orientation program to equip local government officials on practical knowledge of disaster risk and climate change is essential. Such information provides a foundation for understanding why the LDCRP is important, and how the government should approach its formulation. Discussions on how municipalities can conduct technical and financial planning for activities necessary for formulating the LDCRP, such as risk mapping activities, is useful. Practical knowledge on the basic concepts, needs, and schedule for developing the LDCRP is necessary.
- Training local government officials and volunteers on the use of tools for disaster and climate risk assessment is critical. In the municipalities we supported, partner organizations including Mercy Corps, Nepal Red Cross Society, and other local organizations, provided the training. The trained personnel were mobilized to collect information and data to inform the LDCRP.
- Mercy Corps Nepal incentivizes investment in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation activities by providing technical support for risk and resource mapping, and planning. Mercy Corps provided a starter fund to local municipalities of around sixty percent of the total budget along with technical support. The remaining forty percent of the budget (four lakhs) was paid by the municipality. Over the longer term, the majority of such budgets should be mobilized from government and private sources of funding.

4. Recommendations

As the Government of Nepal proceeds to create national level guidelines to support local municipalities develop their LDCRP, Mercy Corps has seven main recommendations which we believe will contribute to an effective guideline.

- Terminology on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation should be simplified so it is accessible to the community members and municipal staff with messages crafted based on their levels of knowledge. A balance between scientific projections and validation, and simplified language is required. Complex climate vulnerability and risk information should be presented in very simple formats using maps and visual presentations that can be easily translated into decisions and

actions. Technical terminology including "resilience" needs to be translated into local language where Nepali is not the first language. Climate change adaptation measures also need to be described reflecting the local context and scenarios, such as how a phenomenon is linked with local livelihoods and priority development activities.

- Mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation policies into development plans or budget disbursement has not been done at the local government level. An integrated plan of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation should be developed as a single document. At the local level, having a separate plan for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation is challenging for resource management.
- Relevant local government and elected officials should be trained on how activities addressing local disaster and climate risks can contribute to achieving broader development goals, as well as contribute to better governance. Improved quantification of short to long-term benefits of adaptation and risk preparation should be consolidated and presented to new federal government staff and constituents.
- Municipalities need basic guidance on how to identify risk to formulate the LDCRP; the guidelines should provide specificity on activities which can support municipalities in the risk identification phase. Specific tools that can be applied for risk assessments should be outlined in the LDCRP, including both methods and a timeline of how and when to conduct such assessments. Some useful tools are: hazard, vulnerability, and capacity assessments (HVCA); historical disaster data and local knowledge collection; calendar and timeline creation of disasters; vulnerable household identification; and community vulnerability mapping.
- Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation actions can be included into different sector budgets in municipalities and prioritized by the sub-planning committees during the annual budget and program preparation period. However, such actions need to be informed thorough comprehensive vulnerability assessments, resource mapping, and action prioritization, to ensure appropriateness and sustainability of action. Baseline/indicators for vulnerability rankings, and economic loss and damage data at the community and ward levels is necessary in conducting a comprehensive assessment.
- The Local Disaster and Climate Resilience Committee should be trained to deliver the functions, duties, and power of the committee as provisioned in the Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Act 2074. This capacity would enable the community and elected officials to effectively implement the plan without operational obstacles.
- The LDCRP guidelines should include how the nine minimum characteristics for community resilience recommended by the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (now the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration) can be considered to develop the LDCRP, so the plan is a comprehensive document which considers recommendations by related ministries and their policies.

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