

CYCLONE PREPAREDNESS PROGRAMME (CPP) BANGLADESH RED CRESCENT SOCIETY

Concept Paper

Introduction :

Natural disaster is a common phenomenon for Bangladesh but it is more often in the 710 km long coastal region of the country. After the devastating cyclone of 1970 that perished half a million lives, the League of Red Cross, now the International Federation was requested by the UN general assembly to undertake a leading role in pre-disaster planning for the country. The Cyclone Preparedness Programme(CPP) of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS) came into being in 1972. In June 1973, the Government of Bangladesh approved this new CPP programme and undertook the financial responsibility for some of the recurring expenses and setup a joint programme management mechanism by creation of a programme “Policy Committee” and a programme “Implementation Board”.

A 7(seven) members policy committee headed by the Minister, the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management is constituted to give policy directives and allocate resources for the programme.

A 15 (fifteen) members “ Implementation Board” headed by the Secretary, the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management is constituted for effective implementation and administration of the programme.

Operational Method:

CPP is a mechanism which relies on technical skills and volunteers commitment for ensuring that all potential victims of an approaching cyclone are given sufficient warning to 11 million coastal people so as to enable them to move to safe- sites including cyclone shelters and buildings. The system starts with the collection of meteorological data from the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD), which issues bulletins including the designated warning signals of an approaching cyclone. The bulletins are transmitted to the 6 zonal offices and the 30 upazila level offices(sub-district) over HF radio. The upazila office in turn, pass it to unions and lower level through VHF radios. The union team leaders then conduct the unit team leaders immediately. **The unit team leaders with his volunteers spread out in the villages and disseminate cyclone warning signals almost door to door using megaphones, hand sirens and public address system.**



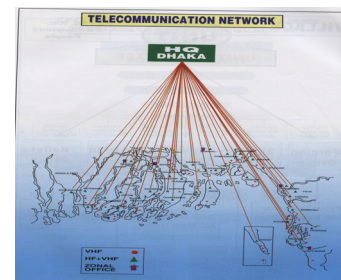
When the situation turns serious the GOB passes the Order for evacuation. The volunteers implement the order, and advise and help people to seek safety in cyclone shelters or other available safe places. After the cyclone is over the volunteers rescue the injured and marooned people, provide first aid to the injured, send serious cases to the local hospital and assist in post cyclone emergency relief operation launched by BDRCS.

The GOB of Bangladesh introduced its standing orders on Disaster which specify the functions of each concerned Government Ministry, Division, Department and Agency including the specific function of Cyclone Preparedness Programme(CPP). These standing orders lay down the various action to be taken at different stages by CPP. The CPP plays a crucial role in the dissemination of Cyclone Warning, evacuation, rescue, first aid and emergency relief work including mobilization of people toward cyclone shelters through its volunteers in the coastal districts.

The programmees have at its stock of 42675 trained and devoted volunteers including 14225 female who often take risk of their live. **In 1991 and 1997 cyclone 23 CPP volunteers died while they were in duties to keep their communities informed of the cyclonic status and in particular the evacuation order. Again 3 volunteers died while they were disseminating the early warning signal of cyclone SIDR-2007.**

Telecommunication System:

CPP operates an extensive network of radio communication facilities, in the coastal areas, linked to its communication centers at its head office at Dhaka. The purpose of this network is exclusively for the disaster management task. The network consists of a combination of HF/VHF radios which covers most of the high risk cyclone prone areas. CPP is now operating a total of 130 HF/VHF radio stations, out of which 60 stations are located in the cyclone shelters, built by the BDRCS in the high risk cyclone prone areas.



Volunteers organization and their role:

CPP is organised in 32 upazilas (sub-district) in 274 unions (village level) divided into 2845 units. Each unit serves 1 or 2 villages with an approximately population of 2 to 3 thousand. 10 male and 5 female volunteers are recruited from the respective unit with popular support of the villagers.



In each unit the 10 male volunteers are divided into 5 groups, 3 in each, to discharge the following responsibilities.

- a) Warning
- b) Shelter
- c) Rescue
- d) First aid
- e) Food and clothing

Training of Volunteers :

For maintaining a high level of efficiency the volunteers are given training on the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, cyclone and its behavior, warning signals and their dissemination, evacuation, sheltering, rescue, first aid and relief operation. The first aid volunteers are given first aid training by CPP officers. The implementation of training for 42,675 volunteers of the programme is always a big challenge mainly due to inadequate trainers, time and fund constraints. In lieu of traditional training method a new strategy of volunteers training has been introduced considering the fact that “ volunteers need to be trained by the trained volunteers”. Keeping this in view training of trainers (TOT) were arranged among the volunteers to create potential trainers in a community. A total of 157 volunteers successfully completed the TOT course and became community trainers. Further the community trainers can contribute a lot to conduct the basic and refresher training of the volunteers if the necessary fund is ensured by the donors and other concern agencies.



Public Awareness:

Public awareness is an integral and very important part of cyclone preparedness activities for its successful implementation. Keeping this in view, the CPP implements the following public awareness activities in various ways in the cyclone prone coastal areas:-

- a) Public awareness through volunteers.
- b) Cyclone drills and demonstration
- c) Film/ Video Shows/folk songs
- d) Publicity campaign
- e) Radio and Television
- f) Posters, leaflets and Booklets
- g) Staging of drama



Social welfare/other activities :

Other than the mandatory responsibilities, the volunteers are very much involved in performing social welfare activities by integrated themselves with local government administration, NGO's, upazila disaster management committee, educational institutions, religious institutions, social club and other agencies in the event of road accident, fire, boat capsize, river erosion, epidemic etc. On those situations the volunteers stand besides the helpless people with sincerity and offers wholehearted cooperation. The community people have recognized the services rendered by the volunteers with satisfaction.

Regional award :

The effective role and dedication of the volunteers in a cyclonic disaster has been acclaimed nationally and also regionally. This programme has been awarded with " Smith Tumsaroch award-1998" from Thailand for its outstanding effort that has saved many thousands of lives in Bangladesh.

Conclusion:

CPP is an effective, grass-root oriented, disciplined and tightly knits organization which is dedicated to the task of protecting the population along with community capacity build up activities. Its 42675 volunteers are respected and becoming increasingly integrated and influential within their community and with the local government agencies. They exhibit a high level of commitment to their programme and readiness to meet the community requirements for better disaster preparedness. Since the inception of cyclone preparedness programme in 1972, a total of 178 depressions have formed in the Bay of Bengal out of which 20 intensified into a severe cyclonic storm. The programme faced all the situation with determination and courage and gradually achieved greater success in moving people to shelters and saving live and property of the coastal people.

710 km long coast line of Bangladesh with numerous off-shore islands are inhabited by 11 million people who are direct beneficiaries of the programme and they depend on CPP. Its devoted and committed volunteers are well organised to face any eventualities for saving lives and properties of their own communities. These extra ordinary volunteers team need to be supported for the very well being of the 11 million coastal people of Bangladesh

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