



Greater Mekong Subregion Climate Change  
and Environmental Sustainability Program

# Enhancing Community-Based Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction in the Greater Mekong Subregion

Policy Study – July 2023

## Key Messages

1. **NEED TO RECOGNIZE THE URGENCY AND NEED FOR ACTION.** Climate change and disasters will increase vulnerabilities of populations and countries and put in peril current and future development in the GMS. Climate and disaster risk reduction interventions should recognize that the poor, women, people with disabilities and most vulnerable groups bear the brunt of the impacts of climate change and disasters. Thus, risk reduction and climate action need utmost commitment and concerted action. There is need to support and commit to meaningful engagement and participation of communities and vulnerable groups in the GMS.
2. **THERE IS PRESENCE OF DRR AND CCA FUNDAMENTALS** when it comes to laws, policies, frameworks and action plans in the GMS. The region has made significant progress at the regional and national levels, though evidence that connects this progress to enhanced community outcomes may not yet be clear or properly documented. Meantime, multiple challenges hamper effective adaptation and DRR at national and local level in the GMS countries. Many of these challenges stem from a legacy of siloes and a lack of consistent approaches to integration at the institutional and policy levels that then filter down and influence practice at the community level.
3. **THE LACK OF STANDARDS AND CLEAR GUIDELINES AND TOOLS**, including their mainstreaming into wider development processes not only at the national but also at the local level, is one of the foremost challenges identified in CBA and CBDRR in the GMS. Different providers using different approaches and standards create confusion and diminishes effectiveness and impact of interventions.
4. **SCALE UP EFFECTIVE RISK REDUCTION AND CLIMATE ACTION.** There is repleted CBA and CBDRR experience, lessons learned, good practices and models implemented by communities, NGOs, CSOs, government and other groups available in the GMS and other countries. Effective applicable interventions should be scaled-up, increased in scope and more importantly institutionalized in the GMS. A project-based approach to CBA and CBDRR is not sustainable. Strengthening and institutionalizing bottoms-up approaches in decision-making should be an overarching principle.
5. **INCREASE AND DECENTRALIZE FINANCE FOR ADAPTATION AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION.** Prioritize and increase funding for the most vulnerable people, and communities, make climate finance more accessible in the GMS. Unleash the private sector in the region. Provide incentives for business entities' investment in risk reduction and climate action. Increase investments on green and blue infrastructure.

**This policy study is a consultation draft for restricted distribution.** It presents a starting point for further discussion with national and regional stakeholders and key development partners to verify findings, address knowledge gaps and identify priority actions.



## Context

- The Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) is a natural economic area but is extremely vulnerable to climate change and disasters.
- GMS countries have varying degrees of vulnerability to climate change and disasters.
- Across the GMS, the effects of climate change are obvious. Rising temperature and changes in the intensity of rainfall, river flow, floods and drought are destroying homes, crops, infrastructure and fisheries.
- Vulnerable communities bear the impact and are faced with food shortages and diminished livelihoods. When disasters happen, they can have overwhelming impacts, damage and losses that ultimately is borne and have disproportionate impact to vulnerable communities, including women and children.
- Rural people, comprising nearly 67% of the GMS population are particularly vulnerable to climate change and disasters. While most rural households have developed some means of managing and adapting to climate and other risks such as diversified farming practices, social capital networks, option for seasonal migration and reliance on public assistance, but on the whole they are ill-equipped to cope with climate shocks.
- GMS countries have limited resources to invest in risk reduction, emergency preparedness and building resilience as well as limited capacity to implement necessary measures.



Figure 1: The Greater Mekong Subregion  
Source: Ramboll

## Making the case for CBA and CBDRR

The following best provide the rationale why community-based adaptation and disaster risk reduction should be supported in the GMS:

1. **Communities, including women and men and other social groups, know their situation better and have direct knowledge of the local context.** Acknowledging this is a must in designing and implementing successful adaptation and risk reduction strategies.
  - Communities have inherent capacities for adaptation and risk reduction. In fact, they have been doing this since time immemorial.
  - Communities themselves initiate the necessary steps to survive even before aid givers and outside support arrive at the disaster scene. They have developed and adapted coping strategies from previous experiences dealing with disasters.

- Without active involvement of local communities on the frontlines of climate impacts, interventions are less likely to be effective and can lead to maladaptation.<sup>1</sup>
2. **Risk reduction and adaptation interventions identified by communities better reflect the uncertainties associated with climate and disaster risk and are better designed to actual conditions and needs of specific locations and vulnerable communities.** Because communities are so varied, risk reduction cannot be a one-size fits all solution as with the case with top-down approaches. With localized risk reduction and adaptation schemes, communities can better adopt solutions that provide wider development gains in the immediate term while being flexible enough to accommodate evolving changes of hazards as well as changing contextual vulnerability.
  3. **Communities see and implement community-based adaptation and risk reduction solutions within the wider local development context and priorities.** Communities facing poverty will always see the complexities and linkages between climate, disasters, vulnerability, poverty, and development failures as a single collective experience. As such, adaptation solutions fostered by communities are more likely to achieve multiple and broader gains, such as poverty reduction, improved governance and inclusive socio-economic development. The socio-economic benefits of community-based adaptation and risk reduction measures designed with communities are greater than actual investment costs.
  4. **Lastly, when community-based adaptation and disaster risk reduction measures that foster participation of the most vulnerable in decision-making processes are implemented in combination with broader governance reforms that promote collaboration across formal and customary authorities, other stakeholders and various local actors, sustainable and equitable solutions are often achieved.** Hence, shifting the role of communities from passive beneficiaries to drivers of change and development is critical in achieving transformation.



**Communities adapt to conditions in the Tonle Sap Lake in Cambodia**

About 1.7 million people are living in over 1000 villages by the lake and on surrounding floodplains. People in these villages are fully water based (or floating villages), water-land based (living in stilt houses that resemble a floating village), and land-based. Floating houses or stilt houses and their lifestyles represent traditional nature-based solutions. (INAS)

## CBA & CBDRR in the GMS

GMS countries have consistently taken steps to formulate, update and mainstream climate change and disaster risk reduction into existing policies, regulatory frameworks, strategies, and plans<sup>2</sup>. There is a good foundational presence of laws, regulations and plans on DRR and climate change adaptation at national, sectoral and to some extent, sub-national level<sup>3</sup>:

1. **National Development Plans (with CCA and DRM)** - Each country has outlined the importance of DRR and CCA directly or indirectly in their respective national development plan.

<sup>1</sup> Soanes et al. Follow the money: tracking Least Developed Countries' adaptation finance to the local level, IIED (2021), <https://www.iied.org/20326iied>

<sup>2</sup> ADB, Greater Mekong Core Environment Program, 2017

<sup>3</sup> ASEAN Policy Review, *Project for Strengthening Institutional and Policy Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) Integration [ASEAN] - Final Report*, 2018 <https://openjicareport.jica.go.jp/pdf/12303509.pdf>,

2. **Disaster (Risk) Management Law, National DRM Policy and Plans** - Each country has a national DRM policy and a designated DRM organization based on the law. Each country has a vertical DRM system from national, state/provincial, district/municipal to village/community level. Most countries' system consists of subnational committees for disaster management often headed by the leader of the subnational government with participation of relevant agencies and departments. Each country has developed National DRM plans.
3. **National CCA Policy, strategy, plan and responsible agency for CCA** - Each country has either developed a climate change policy, strategy, program or plan and has designated a focal agency, mostly under the ministry of environment, to lead climate action. A national climate change committee consisting of multiple line ministries and agencies are also established.

On CBA and CBDRR, GMS countries have articulated and set goals for CBA and CBDRR in their national plans. Vietnam and China in particular have developed and are implementing National CBDRR programs. Vietnam has been implementing the “*Program for community awareness raising and community based natural disaster risk reduction*” (previously known as National Program 1002, now the National Program 553), which was approved by the Prime Minister Decision No: 553/QC-TTg dated 6 April 2021<sup>4</sup>. China meantime has implemented the “*National Demonstration Communities on DRR Project or NDCDRR*”, a nationwide community-based disaster risk reduction program started in 2007<sup>5</sup>.

Funding for DRM and CCA, including that for CBA and CBDRM has been increasing. Cambodia has been providing a portion of its budget to climate change. As of 2019, total budget that was “*exclusively addressing climate change*” has slightly improved to 7%, at 2,181 billion riels from 2018<sup>6</sup>. International Finance Institutions such as ADB and the World Bank Group have various funding facilities for climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction. ADB has various facilities for CBA including the Community Resilience Financing Partnership Facility (CRFPF) and the Climate Change for Environmental Sustainability Program (CCESP).

Capacity for mainstreaming climate resilience and disaster risk reduction has also been enhanced in recent years, especially at the national and sector levels. Risk assessment, early warning, risk awareness and public awareness activities are being implemented and continually being enhanced. GMS countries have invested and improved their disaster damage and loss assessment procedures and databases.

Access to information, information generation and sharing, adaptation and disaster risk management planning, risk assessments, developing and institutionalizing monitoring and reporting of climate action and risk reduction are works in progress.

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<sup>4</sup> Decision No. 553/QD-TTg 2021 the Project for community awareness raising and natural disaster risk management”, <https://english.luatvietnam.vn/decision-no-553-gdt-tg-dated-april-06-2021-of-the-prime-minister-approving-the-project-for-community-awareness-raising-and-community-based-natural-200776-Doc1.html>.

<sup>5</sup>2020. GFDRR, The World Bank. Learning From Experience: Insights from China's progress in Disaster Risk Management. <https://www.gfdr.org/sites/default/files/publication/Learning-from-Experience-Insights-from-China-s-Progress-in-Disaster-Risk-Management.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> NGO Forum on Cambodia. *Cambodia's Citizens Climate Budget for 2018-2019*. <https://www.ngoforum.org.kh/consultation-workshop-on-draft-report-cambodias-citizens-climate-budget-report-2018-2019/>

## Key observations

While significant strides have been achieved in developing policy and regulatory frameworks, and an increase on the capacities of governments on mainstreaming CCA and DRR, there are weaknesses however to current CCA and DRR policy and legal instruments which permeate into and are relevant to challenges facing CBA and CBDRR. Among the major gaps and challenges related to CBA and CBDRR are:

### POLICY AND INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

The need for integration resonates through academic and grey literature, policy and guidance manuals, calls for funding and practitioner toolkits. For example, the IPCC Special Report on Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation found that: “*closer integration of disaster risk management and climate change adaptation, along with the incorporation of both into local, sub-national, national, and international development policies and practices, could provide benefits at all scales.*”<sup>7</sup> This critical finding in an influential report highlights the importance of integrated approaches, including at the local (community) level.

While there has been recognition and progress on integrating DRR and CCA at national level, this is not replicated at the local level. Siloed frameworks do not translate between scales. The ASEAN DRM Policy Review report noted that although development plans as well as climate change strategies and action plans refer to the importance of mainstreaming CCA and DRR in (local) sectoral development plans, there is no clear-cut indication of the integration of DRR and CCA in these plans.<sup>8</sup> The JICA study also noted that there is insufficient mainstreaming and integration of DRR and climate change at local levels<sup>9</sup>.

In Vietnam, a study conducted by UN-Habitat noted the following key issues as challenges on integrating DRR and CCA in the country:<sup>10</sup>

- Capacity at the local government and at the national level are limited. The human resource capacity gap to perform and support mainstreaming actions is challenging the process. With limited financial resources as well as lack of experience to develop such kind of development plans and actions, the objective of mainstreaming is constrained;
- Standards/criteria related to climate change in development policies at both sector level and local level as legal document are lacking.

In Laos, the ASEAN DRM Policy Review also reported that vertical coordination of the nation-wide 3-layer administrative levels of the National-Provincial–District Disaster Prevention and Control Committee is relatively weak<sup>11</sup>. This is also the case in Cambodia where an assessment on current DRR organizational arrangement of Cambodia found that there is weak horizontal coordination between DRR focal points in line ministries and the climate change focal (Ministry of Environment). Likewise, the vertical coordination among the 5-layer provincial-district, commune, and village disaster management committees. JICA also noted that current legal and regulatory framework on climate change in Cambodia is scattered among dozens of legal documents.

Whilst communities do not make distinctions between DRR and CCA, agencies implementing programs in communities often align with existing frameworks and structures, therefore perpetuating

<sup>7</sup> SREX; IPCC 2012

<sup>8</sup> ASEAN Policy Review, *Project for Strengthening Institutional and Policy Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) Integration [ASEAN] - Final Report*, 2018 <https://openjicareport.jica.go.jp/pdf/12303509.pdf>,

<sup>9</sup> JICA. February 2018. Final Report: Project for Strengthening Institutional and Policy Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) Integration ASEAN. Japan International Cooperation Agency. Institute for Global Environmental Strategy CTI Engineering International Co., Ltd.

<sup>10</sup> Mainstreaming Climate Change into Urban-related Policies, Country Case Study: Vietnam, UN Habitat, [https://fukuoka.unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/vietnam\\_final.pdf](https://fukuoka.unhabitat.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/vietnam_final.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> JICA. 2018. Final Report. Project for Strengthening Institutional and Policy Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) Integration ASEAN Institute for Global Environmental Strategy CTI Engineering International Co. Ltd.



the siloed approaches especially when there is limited or no integrated frameworks in place<sup>12</sup>. Also, initiatives to promote integration in higher-level frameworks may not always be carried through into strategy and implementation at subnational levels<sup>13</sup>.

The lack of consistent standards, guidelines, approaches, policies and frameworks across siloed policy frameworks also hinder support for community-level efforts related to both CBA and CBDRR. This finding is observed in all of the GMS countries (JICA, 2018)

Lastly, political will and coordination among concerned departments, various stakeholders and providers as well as technical expertise also serve as barriers to integrating and mainstreaming CBA/CBDRR in national and local sectoral plans and programs of key agencies and departments.

## COORDINATION AND MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION

Coordination and collaboration across sectors, stakeholders and institutions is regarded as essential for successful integration<sup>14</sup>, but coordination among CCA and DRR actors has always been a prevailing challenge. This is more important because evidence shows that at the community level, there is very little distinction between DRR and CCA<sup>15</sup>.

The ASEAN Policy Review noted that, “*one of the identified common constraints in ASEAN is weak inter-ministerial and inter-agency coordination*”. Likewise, the report noted that there is a need to improve the weak vertical coordination of various administrative levels of government especially along the following areas:

- collecting, sharing and feedback the information on climate and disaster management
- preparing and updating risk reduction and disaster preparedness plans
- implementing risk identification and assessment
- carrying out rapid damage assessment after disasters
- applying standard operating procedures
- mobilizing financial resources, and monitoring and evaluation of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation implementation activities

Many of the ASEAN countries have initiated more formal networks known as ‘Working Groups’ to share information, identify and work together on common themes and coordinate among relevant sectors and government.

Under the leadership of the Ministry of Investment and Planning, the Government of Laos has established a Round Table process, which brings together government and national development agencies, United Nations agencies, civil society organizations and the private sector to ensure funds, time and knowledge have the maximum impact in development across the country. It consists of 10 Sector Working Groups to coordinate actions among various stakeholders by theme, covering: health, education, governance, infrastructure, macroeconomics, trade and the private sector, mine action, illicit drug control, agriculture and rural development, and natural resource management and the environment. A number of Sub-Sector Working Groups provide additional platforms for coordination around specific priorities within these sectors. Disasters, Climate Change & Environment is one of the Natural Resources & Environment Sub-Sector Working Groups, chaired by Department of Climate Change, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, and Co-Chaired by UNDP.

In the PRC, disaster risk reduction in the country is state led and it is usual for coordination and assistance to be carried out through and coursed through its central government. Until 2018 whereby

<sup>12</sup> Gero, A., Méheux, K., and Dominey-Howes, D.: Integrating community-based disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation: examples from the Pacific, Nat. Hazards Earth Syst. Sci., 2011

<sup>13</sup> SREX 2020, [https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/03/SREX-Chap6\\_FINAL-1.pdf](https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/03/SREX-Chap6_FINAL-1.pdf), accessed 20 January 2023

<sup>14</sup> Begum et al. 2014; Schipper et al. 2016, Climate Change, Climate Extremes and Disaster Risk Reduction

<sup>15</sup> Humanitarian Advisory Group, Beyond Barriers: Integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in the Pacific, 2021

the China International Development Cooperation Administration (CIDCA) was established, foreign aid, humanitarian and development assistance, strategy, budgeting and implementation was controlled by the Ministry of Commerce Department. China's strategy for external aid was through bilateral cooperation than multilateral and civil society partners.

In Thailand however, current networks in the country, particularly those working on various disaster response and other issues rely heavily on informal and person-to-person relationships. There are no formal government centralized platforms for disaster management and climate change in the country.<sup>16</sup>

Meantime, there is an increasing number of stakeholders operating across DRR and/or CCA which exacerbates the above challenges, particularly where exists an absence of a common language, guidelines and standard between CCA and DRR as "effective communication is a prerequisite to coordination and harmonization" (Hay 2009). If no integrated framework and implementation arrangements exist, formal coordination across the two fields is more difficult. And because DRR and CCA are often planned and implemented by different government agencies, institutions and sectors and where these agencies receive funding from different sources, it is inevitable that integration and mainstreaming will pose a challenge<sup>17</sup>.

## UNDERSTANDING RISK, INFORMATION AVAILABILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY

Availability of and access to correct information in the right way has been a challenge for integration and mainstreaming in the GMS. Whilst there have been investments in the generation and communication of relevant information over time, such as long-range climate projections, risk assessments, hazards maps and downscaled Global Climate Models (GCMs), they are not being used to the best effect in integrated approaches, particularly at the community level<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, data related to vulnerability and resilience indicators is often collected and reported in such a way that datasets are siloed.

Another challenge for effective risk reduction and climate action is that critical information is often communicated in a way that is difficult for community members to interpret or act upon, hindering their understanding of disaster and climate risk and their participation in forums that shape policy and practice<sup>19</sup>. Likewise, limited climate data such as downscaled Global Climate Models (GCMs), hazard and risk maps for various hazards such as flood, landslide and drought impede mainstreaming efforts to development planning from the national down to the local level.

There is also the challenge of multiple approaches. Diverse implementers, such as communities, local government, and NGOs/CSOs, follow different plans and processes, which leads to problems in coherence, coordination and monitoring.<sup>20</sup> The number of different approaches that address disaster and climate-related vulnerabilities has caused considerable methodological confusion for both practitioners and communities.

Historical differences in DRR and CCA have also led to inconsistent approaches to participation and inclusion in programs, hindering integration. Vulnerabilities may be identified through different lenses or participation may be conceived differently. Inclusion efforts in both areas are still lacking. Further research could helpfully explore what adaptation and risk reduction activities are occurring at the

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<sup>16</sup> JICA 2018

<sup>17</sup> Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, Policy Brief- National laws and policies on climate change adaptation: a global review, 2019

<sup>18</sup> Humanitarian Advisory Group, Beyond Barriers: Integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in the Pacific, 2021

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Ibid



local level that are not visible through national laws and policies, notably endogenous practices of communities, as well as the flows of knowledge, responsibilities, and finance between the levels.<sup>21</sup>

Meantime, science-based methodologies such as in needs/risk assessment (i.e., environmental impact assessment, social impact assessment) and planning, needs to be further incorporated in current CBA and CBDRR approaches particularly in widely used participatory risk assessment (PRA)/Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) and planning tools.

Lastly, greater exchanges of information between agency datasets and models could yield progress towards integration. However, given the diversity of settings and needs in different locations and sectors, trying to identify a single approach may not be desirable, but there are opportunities identified and good practices to be shared and learned.

## INVESTING ON RISK REDUCTION AND ADAPTATION: GMS GOVERNMENT BUDGET AND FUNDING MECHANISMS

Finance for adaptation and resilience is inadequate. Despite commitments to balance international funding for mitigation with funding for adaptation, adaptation accounts for only 7% of total (public and private) climate finance, or 14% of public climate finance.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the international aid architecture is characterized by siloed frameworks, institutions, and technical communities of practice, resulting in fragmented financing streams that do not align with the complex nature of climate and disaster risk.

GMS countries provide funding for DRR and CCA either as part of budgets of their National Disaster Management Offices, agency in-charge of climate change adaptation (usually the Ministry of Environment), and thru DRR and CCA related activities of Ministries/Departments.

On the other hand, funding from multilateral climate funds is difficult to access, requiring onerous accreditation and application processes. As a result, finance is primarily disbursed through international organizations, shutting the door for small, local community organizations to access funding.

In regard to funds for DRR, an Oxford study looking into capacity of national and local actors also noted that, *“there is a considerable bias towards government spending on response in contrast to spending on DRR”*.<sup>23</sup> Likewise, adaptation finance tends to favor bulk spending and infrastructure that is coursed through central governments and rarely targets local organizations.<sup>24</sup>

Inadequate resources such as no specific nor pre-allocated CBA/CBDRR funds, limited budget, insufficient skill set, knowledge, equipment and materials to implement CBA and CBDRR activities, is common across the GMS.<sup>25</sup> Meantime, funding mechanisms that perpetuate the historical siloes directly limit the capacities of implementing agencies to progress integration.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and Environment, *Policy brief National laws and policies on climate change adaptation: a global review*, 2019, [https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/National-laws-and-policies-on-climate-change-adaptation\\_A-global-review.pdf](https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/National-laws-and-policies-on-climate-change-adaptation_A-global-review.pdf) - accessed 21 Jan. 2023

<sup>22</sup> Global Landscape of Climate Finance 2021, Climate Policy Initiative, Buchner et al. (2021), Based on public (bilateral and multilateral) and private funding, using 2-year averages over 2019/2020. <https://www.climatepolicyinitiative.org/publication/global-landscape-of-climate-finance-2021/>

<sup>23</sup> IFRC, National DRM laws and institutions, <https://www.rcrc-resilience-southeastasia.org/disaster-law/disaster-law-mapping-asean-agreement-on-disaster-management-and-emergency-response/thematic-analysis/national-drm-laws-and-institutions/>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> Mfitumukiza, D., A. S. Roy, B. Simane, A. Hammill, M. F. Rahman, S. Huq. 2020. Scaling local and community-based adaptation. Global Commission on Adaptation Background Paper. Rotterdam and Washington, DC., [www.gca.org/global-commission-on-adaptation/report/papers](http://www.gca.org/global-commission-on-adaptation/report/papers) accessed 20 January 2023

<sup>26</sup> Humanitarian Advisory Group, Beyond Barriers: Integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in the Pacific, 2021

## Options for scaling up CBA and CBDRR in the GMS

Local civil society, local authorities and communities are best placed to identify adaptation and risk reduction solutions, but they often lack the decision-making power and finance to influence or lead the action. There is international agreement that locally led, inclusive and participatory approaches are essential as part of an equitable, whole-of society approach to adaptation and risk reduction, yet the norm is still top-down planning and implementation.<sup>27</sup>

Many local risk reduction and adaptation initiatives rely on technical, financial, and capacity-building support provided by the national government or international organizations, mainly on a per project basis. At the same time, the macro-level policy and economic environment can act as either a barrier to or an enabler of efforts to address climate risk and help scale up local adaptation measures.<sup>28</sup> To scale up, local action and community-based adaptation needs to be supported and enabled by the right policies, institutions, finances, and capacity.<sup>29</sup>

Based on the observations, challenges, and opportunities from the review of literature, enumerated below are some options for enhancing CBA and CBDRR in the GMS.

### SHARE WHAT WORKS, SCALE UP AND INSTITUTIONALIZE EFFECTIVE ADAPTATION AND RISK REDUCTION ACTION

**There is replete documentation of lessons learnt, good practices, innovative approaches and models successfully implemented and developed by communities, NGOs, UN and Government agencies that can be replicated, up scaled and more importantly, institutionalized in government programs.** The diversity of advances and experiences made in CBA and CBDRR in the region means that there is an immense potential for GMS regional learning and cooperation in adaptation and risk reduction. Countries that have made significant progress in disaster and climate change risk assessments, adaptation planning, climate smart agriculture etc. are well placed to share this expertise with the rest of the GMS.<sup>30</sup>

Among the notable programs that GMS countries can examine and maybe adopt are the national programs of China and Vietnam, notably the “*National Demonstration Communities on DRR Project or NDCDRR*” and the “*Program for community awareness raising and community based natural disaster risk reduction*” respectively.

Likewise, Vietnam also established the Climate Change Bureau (CCB) and the Climate Change Coordination Office (CCCO) in the cities of Can Tho, Da Nang and Quy Nhon. CCCOs are expected to improve climate change adaptation through local government planning, decision-making, and policy implementation. The CCCO in Danang City prepared the ‘Resilient Strategy for Danang City’ under the 100 Resilient Cities initiatives. The CCCO in Quy Nhon has targeted to be 100% flood free by 2025. The CCB of Ho Chi Minh City meantime formulated the ‘Climate Change Response Action Plan (CCRAP) 2016-2020 that targets multiple sectors. These plans promote CCA and climate change mitigation in various sectors including agriculture, transport, water and energy. They aim to train households on climate change and disaster preparedness and have introduced multi-purpose flood prevention houses and improved the coordination mechanism at the local level. The

<sup>27</sup> IFRC, National DRM laws and institutions, <https://www.rcrc-resilience-southeastasia.org/disaster-law/disaster-law-mapping-asean-agreement-on-disaster-management-and-emergency-response/thematic-analysis/national-drm-laws-and-institutions/> accessed 21 January 2023

<sup>28</sup> Yaron, Khynn, and Dave, “Resilience Dividends of Community-Level Interventions: Evidence from Myanmar.”

<sup>29</sup> Aggarwal et al., “The Climate-Smart Village Approach.”

<sup>30</sup> ASEAN State of Climate Change Report [https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ASCCR-e-publication-Correction\\_8-June.pdf](https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ASCCR-e-publication-Correction_8-June.pdf)

local CCA plan, which is customized based on the integrated local situation of disaster risks and climate change scenarios, contributed to the potential integration of DRR and CCA in Vietnam.<sup>31</sup>

Similarly, CBA and CBDRR experiences and models developed by various agencies, including CSOs, INGOs, UN, communities and other agencies can be investigated to see how these can be scaled-up, replicated and institutionalized. The above interventions have developed standardized and accessible community-focused guidance and tools that can guide adoption by each country.

## SUPPORT INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION

Evidence suggests that ethnic minorities, women and other vulnerable groups are far more vulnerable to disaster and climate impacts than the rest of the population. These groups and individuals are substantially poorer, more marginalized, and more vulnerable to disasters and climate change than the rest of the country's ethnic majority and population. Minority groups in particular often inhabit marginal and fragile ecosystems that are most threatened by a wide range of disaster and climate change impacts, including extreme weather events such as cyclones, flashfloods, prolonged droughts, saltwater intrusion and sea-level rise. Understanding such vulnerabilities is critical to supporting holistic policy making.

Meantime, the added value of CBA and CBDRR lies in the existing capacities and coping mechanisms of community members. CBA and CBDRR interventions must capitalize on community knowledge and understanding of local risks and vulnerabilities, community accumulated experiences dealing with hazards and disasters, community values, social & family organization, and community coping mechanisms.

Assessments have identified that processes for resilience building that directly involve vulnerable groups and are gender sensitive should be prioritized to support climate and disaster resilience. Vulnerability is a key factor of disaster and climate change, so when vulnerable populations are prioritized in DRR and CCA programming, the overall human impact and associated economic costs can decrease dramatically. Integration and mainstreaming provide an opportunity for participatory approaches that meaningfully involve representatives across the community, including vulnerable groups and recognizing power dynamics.

Adaptation and resilience programs should support and enable meaningful engagement and participation of the vulnerable in decision-making, implementation of interventions; and decentralize access to climate finance. Included in participation and inclusion is the use of customary and traditional law, as well as endogenous knowledge and practices, to support risk reduction and adaptation at community level.

Governments, specifically lawmakers, should consider more comprehensive legal provisions to facilitate the participation of communities in DRR and CCA, promote the participation of women, and ensure that the specific needs of women and vulnerable groups are addressed. GMS countries can consider enacting policy, law and guidelines that mandate the formal representation of communities in local DRR and CBA bodies and processes.

## CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Strong institutions contribute significantly to the effectiveness of climate action and the disaster risk reduction. Hence, capacity development and training interventions for relevant agencies, local government and community leaders themselves are needed to effectively perform their assigned functions. The local government particularly must be trained so they become capable of educating and facilitating local community adaptation, prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

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<sup>31</sup> JICA, 2018



Capacity building should be principally aligned to the following needs: a) *understanding of the provisions of related policies and legislation, and how other laws affect CBA/CBDRR*; b) *ability to draft comprehensive (CB)CCA and (CB)DRR plans*; c) *technical capability of local personnel to understand and apply CCA and DRR concepts*; d) *awareness of new local executives and officials on the importance of sustainable CCA/DRR programs*; and e) *skills for hazard and risk assessment down to the village level*.

In the formulation and implementation of capacity development programs and activities, particular distinction should be made between rural and urban CBA and CBDRR. Risk reduction and climate action in urban settings can be more complex than in rural communities. Livelihoods and natural resource management can be the major components of CBA and CBDRR programs in rural areas. But in urban areas, social cohesion, infrastructure, varied hazards and impact can be much more complex.

Relatedly, there must be a continuing and funded climate and disaster risk reduction education and public awareness building. Heightened awareness of prevention, adaptation, mitigation and preparedness protects people from climate and disaster risks and empowers them to respond to emergencies and contribute to mitigating impact of disasters and climate change. With the country's limited resources however, the government may enter into partnerships with other institutions and stakeholders to maximize use of resources and avoid duplication of efforts.

Also, the ensuring regular monitoring and reporting of interventions is important. Finding ways to ensure this process is streamlined and accessible to a wide range of stakeholders will be key to improving the accountability and effectiveness of integrated programming. There is also a significant opportunity to harmonize data collection and reporting efforts to ensure consistency and availability of data across the fields, levels and scale. Monitoring, evaluating and importantly, sharing integrated approaches that work will be vital to improving practices and avoiding negative impacts.

### **ALIGN FUNDING, INCREASE THE AMOUNT AND ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY OF CLIMATE AND DRR FINANCE**

Financial inclusion, such as access to emergency borrowing, and social protection are essential ways to help people recover from disasters and climate shocks.

Climate finance must be accessible to local actors, both for climate action and risk reduction, and to ensure sustainable capacity to prepare for and respond (including loss and damage assessment) to disasters and climate related emergencies. Without this, communities will not be able to prepare for, adapt and respond to the growing risks created by the hazards and climate crisis. There should be equal emphasis on funding non-structural risk reduction and resilience measures over structural grey infrastructure.

GMS countries can legislate laws that will dedicate a certain percentage of annual development budget from national to local government to CCA and DRR, including CBA and CBDRR. The following are examples that GMS countries may want to consider:

#### **(1) Local DRRM Funds, the Philippines**

The Philippines has a built-in funding system that mandates local government units to compulsorily set aside part five (5) percent of their estimated revenue as the Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Fund (LDRRMF) to support DRM activities at local level. Of these funds, 30% is allocated as the Quick Response Fund (QRF) that can be used for emergency response. Guidelines have been issued for the utilization and reporting of the fund.

#### **(2) Indonesia Climate Change Trust Fund (ICCTF)**

The Indonesia Climate Change Trust Fund (ICCTF) is the national trust fund for climate change in Indonesia which was established to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of Indonesia's

coordination in combating climate change in accordance with the National/ Local Action Plan on Mitigation (RAN/RAD-GRK) and the National Action Plan on Adaptation (RAN-API). The fund provides small-grant funds for NGOs/ CSOs, up to a maximum of IDR 1b for adaptation and resilience projects and IDR 3.5b for land-based mitigation projects (forestation and conservation).

### (3) People's Survival Fund, the Philippines

The People's Survival Fund (PSF) in the Philippines was created to provide a long-term finance scheme for effectively addressing climate change. The fund is expected to strengthen the risk and vulnerability assessments in the country and enhance the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP), Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP) and the Local Climate Change Action Plans (LCAP). The fund can be accessed by Local Government Units.

### (4) Insurance in the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand

In the above countries, farmers have the option to insure their crops against the risk of crop loss caused by disaster such as floods and droughts. In Indonesia, crop insurance was first started as pilot program with the assistance of JICA by Directorate of Infrastructure and Agriculture Finance in 2015.

Another intervention GMS countries can embark on is to introduce a budget management mechanism such as the CCET (Climate Change Expenditure Tagging)<sup>32</sup> that would require agencies involved and with programs on climate change adaptation and mitigation to prioritize and assign codes to climate change programs, projects and activities.

Introducing CCET will allow the tracking and potential integration of DRR and CCA. The Climate Change Expenditure Tagging (CCET) is a budget tool for monitoring and tracking of climate-related expenditures in the national budget system, thereby acting as a label on the expenditure items, which are essential to identify and track them, generating data on domestic climate-relevant investment and operating expenditures. The CCET can establish baseline information on agency/department budgets which have alignments to the programs and projects concerning climate change and DRR. The Ministry of Planning and Finance can serve as the focal for this undertaking. The introduction of an expenditure tagging and tracking system contributes to the efficient allocation and mobilization of financial resources for integrating DRR and CCA.

## **ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY AND RELEVANCE OF CLIMATE AND RISK INFORMATION.**

Provision of relevant climate and disaster risk information to vulnerable people is central to risk-informed decision-making in integrated approaches.<sup>33</sup> Information about risks and prevention measures should be updated regularly and provided efficiently in user-friendly and target specific format to affected populations, including vulnerable groups and people with disabilities<sup>34</sup>.

Risk assessments and building a common understanding of community risks and vulnerabilities is the initial step in developing CBDRR and CBA programs. Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam etc. have produced flood hazard maps of probable floods etc. by their governmental agencies. Although, these flood hazard maps don't include climate change impacts in general, these maps however are very important in identifying areas prone to floods and for Flood Risk Management (FRM) including DRR, particularly preparedness planning. Integration of CCA and DRR not only provides an opportunity to better align information channels, but to build upon –

<sup>32</sup> Climate expenditure tagging (CCET) is the process of prioritizing and assigning codes to climate change programs, projects and activities. This is done during the preparation of the annual investment program.

<sup>33</sup> Turnbull, M., Sterrett, C., and Hilleboe A. (2013). *Toward Resilience. A Guide to Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation*, Practical Action Publishing

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

rather than displace or duplicate – traditional knowledge and supplement it with knowledge provided by researchers and technological innovations.

In Myanmar, monsoon forum provides a unique opportunity to continuously interact with the agro-met information users and to integrate climate change issues as and when the new knowledge emerges. The Monsoon Forums are being organized by the Government and RIMES (Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia) at national and with UN-Habitat at sub-national level. Monsoon forums are conducted at least twice a year, before and after monsoon season during which the DMH does the verification process of weather forecasts. Monsoon forums have raised sufficient interest among the government agencies as well as the bi- and multi-lateral agencies. The Myanmar Government is very eager to continue this activity given the availability of funds.

Meantime, various tools for participatory risk assessment have been produced by various NGOs/CSOs in their CBA and DRR programs/projects. There is a need however to standardize the tools used for risk assessment and the whole CBA and CBDRR approach. GMS countries should make efforts to standardize the tools and guidelines for CBA and CBDRR to avoid confusion and for easier monitoring and evaluation. Experiences from Vietnam and China can be shared more widely to other GMS countries.

Lastly, equal focus must be put on building local government and community technical capacity to issue the warning and organizing the community capacity to respond effectively to the warning. Legislative support should be established for risk mapping and early warning systems as essential underpinnings for risk reduction and adaptation. Also, sustained resource allocation for the maintenance of equipment must be part of the support to communities.

### **EXPLORE NEW PARTNERSHIPS THAT SUPPORT LOCALLY LED ACTION – UNLEASH THE PRIVATE SECTOR**

At the local and community level, new partnerships can be leveraged to facilitate an integrated approach and diminish vulnerabilities at the community level, for example, through insurance, risk transfer and credit schemes.

The private sector should play a key role in risk reduction and climate action. The government can take numerous actions to support, incentivize, or partner with the private sector on risk reduction, mitigation and adaptation initiatives. Private sector partnerships might enhance efficiency, innovation, access and quality improvement in integration. (SREX 2012).

Multi-stakeholder participation and collaboration could also ensure gender-sensitive and inclusive integrated responses (UNISDR and UNDP 2012). These partnerships should maintain a focus on supporting good practice integrated approaches in a way that also supports local leadership, in line with localization commitments.

In Vietnam, bilateral and multilateral donors coordinate disaster risk reduction assistance through the forum of the Disaster Risk Reduction Partnership (DRR Partnership). The DRR Partnership is established under the NSCNDP, and has members from key UN agencies, international NGOs, and bilateral and multi-lateral partners. It provides a forum to effectively enhance cooperation and coordination between the Vietnamese government, donors and development partner community, NGOs, and private sector entities in a concerted effort for disaster risk reduction. The ADB is co-chair of the DRR Partnership with the MARD/VNDMA in 2021. To implement disaster response and CBDRR programs, international and local NGOs coordinate their work through the Disaster Management Working Group (DMWG).<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Vietnam Disaster Management Reference Handbook, CFE-DM, 2021



## FOSTER SYNERGY BETWEEN MULTIPLE LEVELS (INCLUDING LOCAL AND COMMUNITY LEVEL)

Clearer delineation of responsibilities between stakeholders, especially at the policy and institutional level, has been identified as a driver of improvement in CCA and DRR integration.<sup>36</sup> Well-defined national legislation sets the stage for successful mainstreaming and integration, but defining institutional arrangements remains a challenge (UNDRR, 2019)

Mitigation and adaptation policies are partially about changing individual and collective behaviors, which will require leadership, coordination, and effective incentives. There is a need to align the institutional framework so that fragmentation is reduced across sectors and between the central and subnational governments.

The region has been making steady progress in several areas relevant to climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Importantly, the region's policies and institutional environment in relation to CCA and DRR are at the forefront of this improvement, setting up a good enabling environment for robust implementation of CCA and DRR. But while progress at the national policy and institutional level is commendable, this progress needs to percolate down to the grassroots level. Community-based CCA and DRR plans need to be implemented with and by communities. Devolving power to local institutions needs to take place at a rapid pace to provide them with the needed autonomy in undertaking locally appropriate adaptation and risk reduction actions, matched by accelerated capacity strengthening at the local government level.

The need for greater coordination is well recognized for effective adaptation and risk reduction in the GMS. Hence, greater organizational, management and task synchronization at all levels of each country CCA and DRR systems should be a top priority.

For CBA and CBDRR, the following concrete measures can be done:<sup>37 38</sup>

- inclusion of CBA and CBDRR provisions in the DM Law;
- mandate the representation of communities in local DRR processes;
- include CBA and CBDRR as a central pillar of the National DRM and CCA Strategy
- recognize CBA and CBDRR as strategies for food security, climate change adaptation, ecosystem-based risk reduction and adaptation and nature-based solutions, epidemic management etc.
- Develop a CBA and CBDRR Framework with standards and tools adaptable for diverse community contexts and actors through a participatory consultative process.

## FORMULATION OF COMPLEMENTARY LEGISLATION/S, POLICY/IES, GUIDELINES ON CBA AND CBDRR

Together with current efforts to improve on national legislation and guidelines for DRR and CCA, it is also timely to include CBA and CBDRR in the key legislation, policies and guidelines being reviewed and developed which can complement and help the national CCA/DRM Policy to be implemented in a sustainable and wider scale. Vietnam has made efforts to standardize DRR and CBA approaches by developing a guideline on CBDRA and CBDRM. The guideline can be considered by other GMS countries but with further enhancements such as the following additions:

- a. **Disaster Relief Standards and Guidelines.** In line with better allocation of resources and funding for DRR, is the formulation of Disaster Relief Guidelines which will not only guide relief standard operating procedures (SOP) but also standards on costing and budgeting for relief and response. This Guidelines will not only set the procedures and standards for sub-national

<sup>36</sup> Humanitarian Advisory Group, Beyond Barriers: Integrating disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in the Pacific, 2021

<sup>37</sup> Compendium of Good Practices on Community Based Disaster Risk Management, CADRI, 2020

<sup>38</sup> DRM Public Expenditure and Institutional Reviews (PEIR) for Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam, UNDP & ADB

officials in responding to disasters but also communicate to the international community the standards for relief and response distribution and reporting.

- b. **Standards for community safe facilities and infrastructure** can be other guidelines which can be pursued in the light of strengthening community disaster resilience. Commune and village development planning plays a critical role in seeing the link between DRR and CCA in development and poverty reduction processes and programs in the GMS. Developing standards in village infrastructure investments will serve as a complementary process to address climate and risk reduction at commune and village level. The Standards will guide construction, improvement of key CCA/DRR facilities such as village small scale infrastructure, irrigation and water supply, rural livelihood facilities, evacuation centers, schools, and community health infrastructure. This will also serve to complement multi-purpose community safe facilities and safe shelters during disasters because it is expected to guide the physical robustness and management of these facilities as a significant aspect of disaster preparedness among vulnerable communities. The Philippines has a guideline/ standard of incorporating climate change impacts into planning flood control projects. Malaysia is currently making guideline/ standard for incorporating CCA into planning of flood control projects in practical way. These are among the good practices that can be examined by GMS countries.
- c. **Framework or Strategy for Disaster Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (Recovery)** anchored on Build Back Better. GMS countries can consider passing a similar framework or strategy for Disaster Recovery (Rehabilitation and Reconstruction) of communities like the Rehabilitation and Recovery Guidelines developed by the Philippines. This document will ensure that the needs of the affected population are identified, programmed, funded and addressed through proper monitoring and evaluation. Post-disaster needs assessment guidelines, activities, and involved agencies or offices shall also be featured in the document as part of the Post-Disaster Rehabilitation and Reconstruction process.

## Conclusion

There is presence of DRR and CCA fundamentals when it comes to laws, policies, frameworks and action plans in the GMS and the region has made significant progress at the regional and national levels, though multiple challenges hamper effective adaptation and DRR at national and local level.

It has been argued that when it comes to CBA and DRR implementation in GMS communities, the distinction between DRR and CCA is irrelevant. The challenge is how to reflect the difficulties that communities face in the policy environment that govern risk management in their local areas.

There are opportunities available however to bridge the divide between theoretical discussions and local knowledge and practice to ensure good practice approaches are consistently applied in communities to increase resilience.

The discussions in this paper indicate that there is no one single model of good practice for CBA and CBDRR that can be applied across all of GMS countries. The varied climatic, geographical, environmental, social, economic, and political context in each country, and specifically vulnerable communities and households, determines the design, implementation schemes, required inputs and certainly the possible outcomes of CBA and CBDRR processes and activities.

The challenges and opportunities outlined in this policy brief, in addition to questions around what constitutes best practice and the succeeding efforts to best move CBA and CBDRR forward, will be explored further during the next phases of the policy dialogue.

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