

FINAL EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT “BUILDING DISASTER RESILIENT COMMUNITIES IN SOUTHERN BANGLADESH”

Final Report



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Contents

Executive summary	4
Introduction	10
Purpose	10
Key objectives	10
Main users of the evaluation	10
Scope.....	10
Evaluation criteria and key questions.....	10
Country context and description of the project under review	11
Country context	11
Description of the project under review.....	14
Methodology and tools.....	16
Limitations	17
Key findings	18
Relevance	18
Effectiveness	19
Efficiency	20
Impact	20
Sustainability & connectedness	21
Conclusions	22
Recommendations	24
Lessons learnt	26
Annexure 1. Terms of Reference	27
Annexure 2. List of consulted persons/organisations.....	39
Annexure 3. List of documentation reviewed	41
Annexure 4. Evaluation matrix.....	42
Annexure 5. Interview guide: Project team and key stakeholders.....	46
Annexure 6. Interview schedule for community leaders/women.....	50
Annexure 7. Focus Group Discussion Guide	52
Annexure 8. Detailed overview of project activities and outputs	54

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List of acronyms and antonym

ADPs	Annual Development Plans
BCCSAP	Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan
BCCTFR	Bangladesh Climate Change Trust Fund Resilience Fund
BDRCS	Bangladesh Red Crescent Society
CBDP	Community Based Disaster Preparedness
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CCVI	Climate Change Vulnerability Index
CDMCs	Components Disaster Management Committees
CRAs	Community Risk Assessments
DDM	Department of Disaster Management
DMCs	Disaster Management Committees
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Aid
EU	European Union
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
GRC	German Red Cross
HCTT	Humanitarian Coordination Task Team
IEC	Information Education and Communication
IMDMCCs	Inter-Ministerial Disaster Management Coordination Committees
LDCs	Least Developed Countries
MoDM&R	Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief
MoFDM	Ministry of Food and Disaster Management
MoPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NDMAC	National Disaster Management Advisory Committee
NDMC	National Disaster Management Council
PA	Project Agreement
RL	Resilience Livelihood
RRAPs	Risk Reduction Action Plans
SBDP	School Based Disaster Preparedness
SDGs	Sustainable Developments Goals
SDRRT	School Disaster Risk Reduction Team
UDMCs	Upazila/Union Disaster Management Committees
UNU-EHS	United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security

Executive summary

1. Short project description

Bangladesh is one of the Flagship Countries under the EU Resilience Action Plan.¹ The Southern part of Bangladesh is grappling with recurring natural disasters, such as cyclones, floods and tidal surges that are expected to intensify with climate change in the future. The majority of the population in this area lives in utmost poverty. Communities lack knowledge and capacities to effectively prepare for disasters and thus repeatedly lose their lives, assets and livelihoods. Although the national government endorsed a legal Disaster Management (DM) framework, implementing capacities on sub-national and local level remain weak and don't reach the country's poorest people.

To address the challenge, GRC in partnership with BDRCS was awarded a grant from ECHO to contribute to the operationalization of the Disaster Management legal framework of Bangladesh in order to enhance resilience of local communities and institutions through improved preparedness, mitigation and response capacities. The main objective of the project was to promote and scale up standardized and harmonized approaches and models developed under DIPECHO VII, in particular Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP), School Based Disaster Preparedness (SBDP) and Resilient Livelihood practices for building disaster resilience of the target communities.

The project mainly targets government institutions, BDRCS staff and volunteers. For the community and school based activities, 9 unions were chosen to benefit from the livelihood and community based DRR/DP interventions. In total, the project covered an estimated 12,150 individuals from 3 Districts, 4 Upazilas and 18 unions. The table below gives a summary breakdown of the number of beneficiaries per result and geographical area covered by the project.

Result areas	Coverage of beneficiaries	Key activities carried out
Result 1 - CBDP	12,100 persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 290 BDRCS unit staff and volunteers & 140 local government personnel receiving training on project management, DRR/DP and CCA measures.• 225 community representatives receiving trainings and 20 community members (5 per upazila) trained as Pool of Master Trainers.• 11,425 persons living in target unions/upazilas benefit from the community based DRR/DP activities, such as mock drill exercises, public DRR/DP and CCA campaigns and action days.
Result 2 – SBDP	2,700 persons	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 36 focal teachers and 540 students (SDRRT) in the 18 target schools receive trainings on WASH, DRR/DP, CCA and first aid trainings.• 2,124 additional teachers and students receive trainings from the SDRRT members.
Result 3 – Resilience Livelihood	850 households	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 850 households (average family size of 5) benefit from cash grants, allowing them to generate income and savings through adapted agricultural and fishing methods and other activities.

2. Key questions of the evaluation

¹ ECHO 2016, Humanitarian Implementation Plan South Asia (Version 4 dated 13.12.2016), <http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/funding/decisions/2016/HIPs/South%20Asia%20HIP%20v4.pdf>

The project outputs and outcomes are evaluated against the criteria of relevance or appropriateness (long-term), effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability & connectedness. The evaluation is guided by the following key questions. A much comprehensive list of evaluation questions is presented in annexure 4 in the form of the evaluation matrix.

Criteria	Key questions
Relevance: How appropriate was the project design?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are objectives or outcomes of the project appropriate in terms of ECHO, GRC, BDRCS priorities, Governments' strategies and priorities, and requirements of the target groups? • Was the design of project interventions the most appropriate way to achieve intended outcomes and outputs? • Are the objectives and design still relevant for potential future phases of the project?
Effectiveness: How well the project activities were planned and implemented?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent the expected objectives or outcomes the project has been achieved, and have resulted in changes? • Are there any quality standards defined, procedures or protocols in place and are they followed in the implementation? • Did the project achieve its intended outcomes? Did the project contribute to the advancement of DRR knowledge and practices?
Efficiency: How efficiently did BDRCS manage the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any noticeable, verifiable instances of waste or inefficiency in the delivery of project activities in terms of resources and time? • Were there any important unintended outcomes, either positive or negative?
Impact: What impact has the intervention made?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any noticeable impacts that project has contributed to? • What impacts have been recorded or reported?
Sustainability & connectedness: How sustainable is the project model?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What exit strategies/sustainability plans were incorporated in the project design and to what extent they contributed to sustainability? • For outcomes and activities that the targeted agencies would like to continue, do they have capacity and resources to do so? • What is the likelihood that the benefits of the project will continue in the future?

3. Key findings (Structured along the criteria: Relevance / Effectiveness / Efficiency / Sustainability / Impact)

Relevance: The project is relevant to the national policy framework of the Government of Bangladesh, sub-national institutions at the district level where the plans for operationalising national frameworks are made, and sectors of education and employment. This project supports GRC's long term strategy for Bangladesh as well as the objectives of the IFRC's Long Term Planning Framework 2012-2015 Bangladesh Country Office. The project is implemented in four sub-districts of Southern Bangladesh. Namely – Hatiya Island, Subarnachar (Noakhali District), Tazumuddin (Bhola District) and Ramgati (Laksmipur District). These locations are extremely vulnerable to natural disasters and climate change. The project was designed based on the needs assessment (a baseline survey was conducted) and key components of the project design; Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP), School Based Disaster Preparedness (SBDP) and Resilient Livelihoods were found relevant to the area and needs of the communities targeted. The project beneficiaries were involved in the project design and the selection process was supervised by the project team, using a set of criteria as a guide. The activities and outputs of the RL and SBDP in Char Barta and Subarnachar matched with the needs of the communities. The beneficiaries in Raghunathpur and

Charlaxmi were among the most vulnerable, including widows and women headed households. The community members in Char Mojid were satisfied with the project activities—training and cash transfer—and no complaint was received about cash transfer in any locations.

Effectiveness: The project has been effective in achieving its objectives. The intervention strategies of starting from the local level were in line with local capacities and needs in targeted areas. The project has been effective in strengthening DRR/DP structures and procedures in 4 Upazillas for effective implementation of the CBDP model. Instead of establishing a separate national DRR platform; all DRR/DP related coordination and discussions are undertaken within the ECHO partners' platform. In the initial phases of project Community Disaster Management Committees (CDMCs) within the RC/RC movement in Bangladesh were activated, trained and supported to conduct community risk assessments and develop risk reduction plans, including provision of early warning tools/equipments. The project effectively rolled out DRR/DP structures and procedures for safe schools based on the SBDP approach in the target area. Using the manuals and toolkits from DIPECHO VII projects in Bangladesh, schools have been trained and supported to develop conduct risk assessments and develop safety plans. Schools have been equipped with early warning tools and equipments and supported to improve WASH facilities. A baseline survey for the livelihoods component of the project has been useful in targeting households as well as prevention of misuse of cash grant. For efficiency of cash transfer mechanism an agreement was signed with bKash (mobile cash transfer remittance company). Prior to transferring the cash grants, each beneficiary was trained and guided to develop a business plan taking into account the any natural hazards that may affect their livelihood practices. The beneficiaries were able to restore and expand their livelihoods, mainly in animal husbandry, fisheries, and small businesses. NDMC were capable to conduct CRAs. The major areas on for objectives being achieved was that the activities were started not from project level but from where they were. That is, if community needed planning inputs they were added to CRA activities. The UDMCs in Char Barta are using RRAPs and ADPs in their work with youth and education.

Efficiency: The project has been efficient in its use of resources, time, and team efforts. Monitoring was conducted at the community level, NDMC level and GRC level on a monthly basis. No financial deviations have been reported. The project was extended on two occasions which prompted the overall financial plan to change in order to cover the extended project period. GRC team in Noakhali explained the measures taken to reduce travel and material costs of mock drills. Monitoring was reorganised to save time (and so money) in Chargazi community. The DRR/DP and livelihood activities were coordinated with DIPECHO VIII partners in Charlaxmi and Char Mojid communities.

Impact: The project has a positive impact on CBDP, SBDP, and RL at the district as well as community level. The project has enhanced capacities of communities as well as local government institutions to implement effective preparedness and response. Capacities of local government institutions have been strengthened through advocacy and technical support at upazila, union and ward levels. Similarly, capacities of communities have been strengthened through the establishment of volunteer teams, risk assessments, contingency plans and awareness campaigns, including livelihoods support. The project has also used schools and children as multipliers of knowledge. Keramotpur Bazar High School children have taken DRR, evaluation, and WASH message home. The project has improved livelihoods practices of target communities and helped them adapted to the increasing occurrence of natural disasters and extreme events. Community in Char Mojid showed how ownership of asset had increased. The project activities in the areas of institutional strengthening, capacity building, resilient livelihoods and safer schools directly support adaptation component of the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of Bangladesh. Similarly, the project has contributed to the Sustainable Developments Goals (SDGs) on no poverty (1), quality education (4), gender equality (5), clean water and sanitation 6), decent work and economic growth (8), reduce inequalities (10) and climate action (13). Most significant contribution made by the project is on the SDG on (peace,

justice and) strong institutions (16) where institutional strengthening has taken place within BDRCS and disaster management structures at local levels with community participation. During recent cyclone *Ruano* it was reported that schools were able to respond as per the trainings and livelihoods turned out to be resilient in seven out of ten cases in Raghunathpur. In Chargazi RRAP activities of embarkment are being implemented. Women in Chargazi have diversified their income sources from a cow to goat and from animal husbandry to agriculture and bamboo weaving. The humanitarian action was of better quality when cyclone, *Ruano* came in, some of the project communities.

Sustainability & connectedness: The project has engaged with ongoing activities and budgets of various departments and levels of government to move towards sustainability. The technical quality of inputs to students and teachers was of good quality. The sessions were accurate and systematically carried out. In Char Mojid community increased its resilience to withstand disaster shocks to livelihoods. The institutional capacity of BDRCS in Noakhali district in terms of planning CDBP, initiating SBDP, and launching and monitoring RL activities is strong. It is expected that most of the project activities will continue with the supervision of the DMCs and BDRCS units when donor funds are withdrawn. The project has ensured that ownership is gradually transferred to the DMCS, BDRCS units and beneficiaries for the effective and efficient exit. For the sustainability of DRR and resilient livelihoods activities, a local livelihood and DRR/DP forum has been established on Hatiya Island by the project team. At the moment, there are only two movement partners present in the project location. These are the Host National Society (BDRCS – the main partner for both DIPECHO and BMZ Projects) and the Swedish Red Cross, which is jointly implementing a community based DRR project with BDRCS. IFRC in Partnership with BDRCS is also implementing cyclone Roanu recovering project in Noakhali district (one of the project districts). GRC has signed an “Agreement concerning working through the International Federation Office based in Dhaka”. Thus, it is working under the umbrella of the IFRC Status Agreement with the Government of Bangladesh. In addition, GRC and BDRCS have further outlined their working relationship in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). For each project, a separate Project Agreement (PA) is signed. These arrangements have directly contributed towards ensuring sustainability of the project outcomes and outputs. GRC/BDRCS have been actively coordinating with the DIPECHO partners to support the replication and harmonization of CDBP, SBDP and livelihood resilience practices, share lessons learnt and inclusion of vulnerable groups into DRR.

It can be concluded that the project has achieved what it set out to achieve. The project is coherent in terms of the three activities—CDBP, SBDP, and RL—as well as coherent to GRC and Government of Bangladesh plans and initiatives. Most importantly, the project builds on ongoing local activities. BDRCS offered local teams, community structures, and access to local authorities.

4. Lessons learned

- Regular coordination/communication with the ECHO Country office enhances stronger working relationship between the two partners.
- Regular meetings with local authorities (UpzDMCs, UDMCs and CDMCs) underpins tolerance and acceptance from the local structures and the general populace.
- Effective coordination with other DIPECHO partners (especially for SBDP component) has helped in securing approvals for recently developed frameworks and manuals by the relevant departments and ministries.
- Adding WASH in DRR agenda at school level increases its uptake and impact in schools in vulnerable areas with poor communities.
- Digital cash transfer is possible for sustainable and resilient livelihood support to the poor families in vulnerable areas of South Bangladesh if the activities are planned through bottom up process.

- With broad planning by BDRCS and coordination with UDMC mock drills can receive engagement from all of society.
- Cash investment in poor women for disaster risk reduction for resilience can substantially reduce direct economic loss in relation to family's income.
- Linking targeted communities with forecast based financing can increase ownership of interventions made under the project.
- Similarly, community resilience fund for community-level mitigation and preparedness actions will enhance sustainability of actions implemented.

5. Major recommendations (Mainly general recommendations)

- **Knowledge management:** Find ways to capture the results and process to generate co-created knowledge products and tools for capability building. The project has developed a number of knowledge resources during the course of implementation. These include baseline survey report, community risk assessment method, training products, process of implementing micro-mitigation measures, cash transfer approach and awareness and advocacy materials. BDRCS could think of developing a series of knowledge products for use and application by other stakeholders working in the area.
- **Safer schools and communities:** The project has developed a pool of trainers. This resource needs to be sustained and provided opportunities for carrying out continuous capacity building activities at the grassroots levels. Significant opportunities exist for building capacities of schools and students, including communities (DMCs).
- **Institutional strengthening:** ECHO/GRC may consider outsourcing of external facilitators to consolidate DIPECHO project outputs such as models, training materials, good practices to institutionalize preparedness activities within government departments and partners, including BDRCS units thorough periodic trainings and workshops.
- **Cash transfers:** Mobile banking in Bangladesh is rapidly expanding. 'Money transfers in Bangladesh via mobile phone jumped by 53 per cent last year, becoming a major tool for people to help families back home'.² Several agencies in Bangladesh have successfully demonstrated that electronic cash transfer can be effectively done. For example, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) with support from DFID and ECHO provided unconditional mobile phone cash transfers to assist people whose homes and livelihoods were severely affected by the devastating floods in the Northwest of Bangladesh in August in 2014³. Electronic cash transfer is an area where BDRCS can make a huge difference given their existing community base and network.
- **Resilient livelihoods:** ECHO experience of building resilient livelihoods by introducing new and simple agricultural methods in Chittagong Hill Tracts with United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to support critically food insecure families could be replicated by BDRCS.
- **Operational overlap:** Overlap of operational areas and beneficiaries with another project supported by GRC: BMZ - Contribution to food security through income-generating activities and Disaster Risk Reduction/Climate Change Adaptation (Funded by the Federal Ministry for economic Cooperation and development) for the duration of 2016-2017 could improve overall impact of both the projects. Overlap is also desirable with activities and projects of Swedish Red Cross.
- **Financing:** Forecast-based financing model is relevant to the project areas where floods and cyclones necessitates evacuations and preparedness almost every second year. 'Forecast-based Financing is a system to fill gaps in the humanitarian system by using the science of

² Sumon Corraya 2016. Mobile phones as mobile banking accounts for the needs of Bangladeshis. <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Mobile-phones-as-mobile-banking-accounts-for-the-needs-of-Bangladeshis-38723.html>

³ WFP 2014. WFP Provides Cash Transfers To Families Affected By Floods With Funding From DFID And ECHO.

<https://www.wfp.org/news/news-release/wfp-provides-cash-transfers-families-affected-floods-funding-dfid-and-echo>

weather and climate to anticipate possible impacts in risk-prone areas and mobilize resources automatically before an event'.⁴ The German Federal Foreign Office action plan on climate, coordinated by the GRC, includes FbF pilots by National Societies or the WFP in Bangladesh. The model is already being considered for implementation by the BDRCS with technical support from the German Red Cross and Climate Centre, which is intended to cover a total of 4,500 households (20,500 people) in eight vulnerable villages⁵. Such support should be extended to targeted communities of this project.

- **Partnership:** ECHO and DEVCO have developed a Joint Humanitarian-Development Framework for food security and nutrition interventions post disasters (floods), as part of the Resilience agenda in Bangladesh. In case of major sudden onset disasters, both services will address the impact on food security in parallel with their own funding instruments, in a complementary way.⁶ BDRCS may consider partnering with ECHO and DEVCO, especially in areas where it responds to natural disasters and extreme events frequently and repeatedly.

⁴ Catalina Jaime, Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre 2015. FORECAST-BASED FINANCING. <https://understandrisk.org/forecast-based-financing/>

⁵ Red Cross and Red Crescent Climate Centre 2016. German-supported forecast-based action in Bangladesh will be all-cash, <http://www.climatecentre.org/news/716/german-supported-forecast-based-action-in-bangladesh-will-be-all-cash>

⁶ ECHO 2016, Humanitarian Implementation Plan South Asia (Version 4 dated 13.12.2016), <http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/funding/decisions/2016/HIPs/South%20Asia%20HIP%20v4.pdf>

