

# Reinforcing the capacity of local government institutions in Bangladesh

## Disaster Risk Management Programme



### The needs

Over last two decades, the Government of Bangladesh has taken several initiatives for building up institutional arrangements from national to union council levels for effective and systematic disaster management. Standing Order on Disaster (SOD) is one of the key outcomes of these initiatives, which adopted a set of top-to-bottom disaster management committees from national to local levels. As per the SOD, local Disaster Management Committees (DMCs) especially, District DMCs, Upazila DMCs (UzDMCs) and Union DMCs (UDMCs) under the leadership of local government institutions at district, upazila and union levels are the frontline instructional structures for both disaster risk reduction and emergency humanitarian responses. These committees are best positioned to act as the local disaster management entity and play the leading role in disaster preparedness, mitigation, emergency response and post disaster rehabilitation, and facilitates coordination among the development agencies and service providers through regular coordination meetings. They also hold the responsibility to conduct hazard, vulnerability, and risk analysis for their jurisdiction areas, and prepare and implement risk reduction action plans and contingency plans to different types of hazards.

However, several studies and assessments, and practical experiences revealed that these local DMCs are often not active or properly functional mainly, due to lack of understanding of their roles and responsibilities, technical skills, and financial resources. Thus, the disaster management interventions and building community resilience at local levels are still heavily dependent on the support of central government and non-government humanitarian agencies.



### The initiative

Realising the above gaps and needs, BRAC Disaster Risk Management Programme (previous Humanitarian Programme) through coordination and collaboration with Department of Disaster Management under the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief initiated to reinforce the capacity of local DMCs since 2019. Dissemination of the updated SOD through orientation to local DMCs on their roles and responsibilities is also another purpose of this initiative.



### The process

The capacity reinforcement initiative started with a rigorous assessment of gaps and identifying the needs of the committees at different tiers. Day-long comprehensive separate training modules were also developed for UzDMCs and UDMCs in alignment with the structure of government's training modules. The modules focus on a thorough understandings on the hazards in their local context; the preparedness and mitigation measures needed at community level; the responsibilities of Upazila and Union DMC members as per the SOD; coordination mechanism with relevant government and non-government actors; damage and need

assessment process; using SOS forms and D-forms to capture scenarios during a disaster; etc. Understanding on weather forecasting and warning signals of cyclone and flood was another important issue in the training modules. In 2020, the issues of COVID-19 were also added to the modules so that the DMC members understand to take necessary preventive measures during preparedness and response to other disasters.



## The reach

**18%** women

**35** Persons with disability

Till now, BHP has facilitated the capacity building activities for 120 UDMCs and 5 UzDMCs in the most vulnerable flood and cyclone prone districts namely Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Sirajganj, Sunamganj, Chattogram, Borguna and Patuakhali.

**05** UzDMC

**214** members



**120** UDMC

**1,747** members



## Lessons learned

It was found that most of the union doesn't have the UDMC or the committee is not functional. Through formation and/or activation of the UDMCs and organizing the training created an opportunity for BRAC staffs to work closely and build rapport with the UDMC members.

While this one-day training helped with a basic understanding of the functional roles and responsibilities of the committees however, further initiatives through organizing refresher training at a regular basis is critical.



## Way forward

expressed that the training was an eye-opening initiative for them to how they can play an active role to protect their community and that disasters can be managed locally.

While BRAC is committed to support for strengthening community resilience to disasters in Bangladesh, it will continue this initiative for reinforcing the capacity of local government institutions to reach all disaster vulnerable districts in the country.

The after-action review with the committee members and Department of Disaster Management demonstrates that the initiative has contributed to increasing awareness, sense of ownership and accountability among the local DMC members. Liaison and coordination with different stakeholders have also been seen to improve. The participants have