

**Daw Cho Cho, 35**  
**Red Cross Brigade Member/  
CBDRM Facilitator**  
**Pauktaw Township**



**Daw Cho Cho has been working as a Red Cross Brigade member since 1992. She was trained as a CBDRM facilitator in 2009.**

“On 20 October, we were informed by the Grade One officer of the Rakhine State Red Cross Brigade about the low pressure building up in the coast and the possibility of a strong storm affecting our area. Accordingly, the MRCS Township Red Cross Branch coordinated with the local authorities to issue storm alerts to the community in Pauk Taw Township.

This was done with the assistance of five township Red Cross branch volunteers trained previously as CBDRM facilitators, as well as CBDRM teams from three villages (Tha Pyay Kan, Thit Poke and Ah Lel Kyun ) which comprised villagers who had attended multiplier training in 2009.

#### **Response to Cyclone Giri**

The storm alert was disseminated by RC volunteers and trained villagers through various means, including telephone and radio. In the morning of 22 October, villagers were evacuated to strong buildings such as monasteries and houses on higher ground. Thanks to these preparedness measures, the death toll in Pauktaw was not high.

During the early warning and evacuation drills, CBDRM kits (which include hand-held loud speakers) and teaching materials distributed to the three selected villages as part of the CBDRM training, were utilised by RC volunteers and trained villagers. Left-over posters on colour-coded disasters and corresponding preparedness and response measures were also distributed. “

**U Mya Sein, 50**  
**Team leader**  
**CBDRM multiplier team**  
**Yan Htaing village tract**  
**Minbya Township**



“We received cyclone alerts from several sources including the MRCS headquarters, the Sittwe Red Cross branch and the local authorities, through telephone, radio and television.

#### **Response to Cyclone Giri**

Our CBDRM multipliers team was mobilized to evacuate villagers from the seashore. We evacuated them in coordination with the township local authorities and Red Cross Brigade members.

The CBDRM kit which includes a hand-held loud speaker was very useful in warning people and providing life-saving support to the most vulnerable like children and the elderly. “

**U Soe Naing, 43**  
**2IC(Second-in-Command) ,**  
**Kyaukphyu Township**  
**Red Cross Brigade**

I received the information about the possible storm through a telephone call from the MRCS headquarters on 20 October. On the same day, the Red Cross Township Branch and Brigade members met and started preparations.

#### **Response to Cyclone Giri**

Brigade members as well as Red Cross volunteers and villagers trained previously in CBDRM, were mobilized to disseminate the early warning alerts to vulnerable communities by using our RC vehicle in the evening of Oct 21.

Thanks to the collective efforts of the Red Cross, local authorities and villagers, there was no casualty in our township.

## **4 Lessons learnt**

As the Cyclone Giri developed very quickly from *Category 2* in the morning to *Category 4* in the evening, communication lines were cut and a radio system was not available. Brigade volunteers along with CBDRM facilitators and CBDRM multiplier teams maximized their learning from previous training during their mobilization to warn and evacuate vulnerable communities. CBDRM kits distributed to multiplier teams as part of their previous training (including a hand-held loud speaker and teaching materials) were effectively used on the ground. The response to Cyclone Giri has shown that training of vulnerable communities as well as relevant equipment and materials played a vital role in reducing casualties.

Effective coordination and communication with local authorities is an important factor in reducing casualties.

More dissemination needs to be done to create an awareness of the importance of stopping all boat travel immediately after a

cyclone warning is issued.

A special arrangement is needed to warn fishermen, sea workers and travelers about a possible cyclone/storm.

Communities need to be made aware of the importance of taking essential items (food, water and regular medicine) with them during an evacuation.

Separate teaching materials need to be developed and shared with vulnerable communities to enhance their skills and knowledge on the construction of low-cost cyclone-resistant houses.

## **5 Way forward**

MRCS will continue implementing CBDRM activities in different parts of the country – this will include the distribution of CBDRM kits which include hand-held loud speakers as basic early warning equipment.

MRCS will also explore all the opportunities to establish a regular communication system between the Red Cross township branches, stakeholders, local authorities and targeted communities, to explore the opportunities for collective preparedness efforts aimed at reducing vulnerability.

The CBDRM programme will provide a small contribution to the development of all Red Cross township branches involved in CBDRM programme implementation.

VCA exercises, training, CBDRM kits and teaching materials as well as basic mitigation activities will remain part of the CBDRM programme.

Red Cross volunteers will continue to be engaged in the implementation of the CBDRM programme at township and community level.



# **CASE STUDY**

## **Community-Based Disaster Risk Management**

Helping reduce the impact of Cyclone Giri  
October 2010

### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:-**

**Myanmar Red Cross Society**  
**Raza Thingaha Road, Dekhinathiri**  
**Nay Pyi Taw**  
**Myanmar**

## 1 Background

Cyclone Giri hit the Rakhine Region in western Myanmar in October 2010. Myanmar's long coastline along the Bay of Bengal is highly vulnerable to cyclones. Besides cyclones, other identified hazards are floods, fires and tsunamis. According to the country's last 100-year record, the cyclone seasons include April-May and October-December. .

In the last five decades, eight major cyclones hit Myanmar:

- 1968 (Sittwe cyclone)
- 1975 (Pathein cyclone)
- 1982 (Gwa cyclone)
- 1994 (Maundaw cyclone)
- 2004 (Myebon Cyclone)
- 2006 (Cyclone Mala)
- 2007( Cyclone Akash)
- 2008 (Cyclone Nargis).

With the exception of the Cyclone Nargis (2008) and the Pathein Cyclone (1975) which devastated the Ayeyarwady Delta south of the country, the rest of the cyclones passed through the western Rakhine region.

## 2 Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) Programme

The Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS) has been implementing its Community-Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) programme with the support of the IFRC for the past few years with a view to increasing the safety and resilience of vulnerable communities.

In the Rakhine Region, the programme has been implemented since 2009 at 15 villages in nine townships.

The CBDRM programme begins with the training of 5 to 6 Red Cross volunteers at township level as facilitators. They are trained in hazards and vulnerability mapping, as well as the use of Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) tools, along with basic coping measures aimed at reducing risks at community level. They also learn about early warning, colour codes and basic measures during cyclone, facilitation and leadership skills.

These facilitators are then mobilized to identify the most vulnerable communities (villages) within their townships, in close coordination with the Red Cross Township Branch and the local authorities. Following the identification of these communities, they

form CBDRM multiplier teams within each selected community and train them.

Each CBDRM multiplier team consists of 30 people from a selected vulnerable village. Women account for around 50 per cent of them. Multiplier team members are trained in VCA which includes village-level hazards and capacity mapping. They also learn about how to identify available resources within their respective communities and possible coping measures to reduce the impact of disasters.

Following their training, multiplier teams mobilize their respective communities to become more resilient towards disasters. Each team divides itself into five or six sub-groups assigned with specific tasks to deal with one of the following six disaster preparedness components as per the needs at community level:

- Storage of food and safe drinking water
- Early warning and evacuation
- Search and rescue
- Assessment and emergency relief
- First aid and psychosocial support
- Awareness raising

These groups develop seasonal calendars, identify evacuation routes and buildings/areas, as well as focal persons to issue early warnings in close coordination with the village-level authorities. They also conduct public awareness raising activities including the dissemination of information, education and communication (IEC) materials.

In order to strengthen community-level preparedness, MRCS provides each vulnerable village/community with a CBDRM kit which comprises a hand-held loud-speaker, stretcher, life jackets, ropes, fire beater, hooks, portable zinc bucket, tarpaulins, blankets, flag for early warning and teaching materials. Each multiplier team is responsible for the safekeeping and maintenance of their respective community's kit.

## 3 Programme scenario and impact

Cyclone Giri originated from the low pressure built over the Bay of Bengal on 19 October 2010. From the moment of this cyclone early warning, the MRCS' Disaster Management Division maintained close contact with the Myanmar Meteorology and Hydrology Department (MHD) to get regular updates on the cyclone as it unfolded. MRCS is an information user of the MHD and an active member of the annual Monsoon Forum of the MHD. Regular cyclone updates from the DMH were despatched by the MRCS' DM Division to the townships of Sittwe, Kyaukphyu, Pauktaw, Myebon, Thandwe, Toungup in Rakhine Region via fax and phone. Township

volunteers previously trained as CBDRM facilitators, along with various CBDRM multiplier teams, were mobilized to disseminate early warnings to vulnerable communities, and to facilitate their evacuation. The MRCS used all its locally available resources such as teaching materials and other facilities from different programmes to disseminate the early warning messages at community level.



Relief items were despatched to affected communities quickly thanks to the availability of prepositioned disaster preparedness stocks. (Photo: MRCS)

Category 4 Cyclone Giri made a landfall on the Kyaukphyu Township and coastal areas of the Rakhine Region at 8 p.m. on 22 October. Other most affected townships along the coast were Minbya, Myebon and Pauktaw. Several townships in the neighbouring Magway Region, including Salin, Seikphyu, Pakokku and Pauk, were also affected. .

Cyclone Giri triggered storms, heavy rains and huge tidal surges in islands and coastal areas. The surges were seven to eight metres above normal water levels, while the wind speed upon landfall was measured as 177 kph (110 mph). A total of 45 people lost their lives and about 250,000 people were affected by Giri. Fortunately, despite the force of the cyclone, the number of these casualties was relatively low in comparison with previous cyclones. For instance, the Sittwe cyclone (in 1968) claimed 1,037 lives, the Pathein cyclone (1975) 304 lives, and the Cyclone Nargis (2008) 138,373 lives.

*The low casualty rate of the Cyclone Giri is due in part to the benefits of the CBDRM programme as explained by Red Cross volunteers and a trained villager. Their testimonies are valuable case studies which reflect how the programme helped reduce the impact of the Cyclone Giri on vulnerable communities in four townships.*

## Case Studies

**U Kyaw Than Tin, 35**  
**2IC (Second-in-Command)**  
**Myebon Township Red Cross Brigade**



“Myebon Township experienced a number of cyclones such as the Sittwe Cyclone in 1968 and the Myebon Cyclone in 2004, which caused many casualties in our area.

In 2009, the MRCS conducted a CBDRM facilitators course in Myebon. Following this, multiplier teams were formed in Kan Htaunt Gyi, Ah Ngu and Wet Gaung villages. Relevant training such as VCA exercises was provided to selected community members and the multiplier teams kept in regular contact with their respective facilitators to brief them on activities conducted at village level.

### **Response to Cyclone Giri**

The Myebon Red Cross Township Branch received the Cyclone Giri alert by phone on 20 October from the Grade One Officer of the Rakhine State Red Cross Brigade. He also instructed the branch to take preparedness measures in close coordination with the local authorities since the cyclone was heading towards the Rakhine coast.

The Myebon Red Cross Township Branch and the township authorities immediately issued cyclone alerts to villages through all possible means such as telephone and by mobilizing government officers and Red Cross Brigade members. They visited households one by one on foot or by using various transportation means to share the alerts.

We also facilitated the evacuation of villagers to safe places such as monasteries, relatively strong houses and higher ground. While the township was not struck by a tidal wave, the water level rose up to 10 ft in town area.

A total of 24 people died in Myebon. These included some fishermen who were killed in the middle of the sea because they did not hear the cyclone alert. . Some villagers were killed as they failed to understand and follow the warnings provided by different sources. When the last alert was broadcast over radio, the cyclone had already hit the area and they did not expect the winds to reach 110 mph.

Although we had fatalities, we managed to reduce the number of casualties. It is also a reminder to us to put more effort into preparedness measures in the future. “