

CHRIS PIPER COX'S BAZAR ROHINGYA MISSION¹ APRIL-JULY 2018

Chris Piper worked as a Redr Australia deployee with UNDP in Cox's Bazar from April to July 2018, this being in support of the humanitarian program assisting Rohingya refugees there. His official title was 'Early Warning Dissemination and Training Specialist', and he had four main areas of responsibility, namely: Weather forecasting, preparation and messaging related to cyclones and monsoonal rains; Disaster Risk Management (DRM) training; representing UNDP at various inter-agency meetings; and landslide related initiatives. In addition to this he hosted a number of visitors (both regional UNDP staff and potential donors) around some of the refugee camps.

Weather Forecasting, Preparation & Messaging

Chris' work in Cox's Bazar corresponded with the end of the April-May cyclone season², and preparations for the monsoon season which generally runs from June through to mid September. There were strong concerns that as much early warning preparation and messaging be given for these extreme weather events, as both cyclones and heavy monsoon rains have the potential to seriously disrupt the Rohingya refugee settlements. He was therefore heavily involved in messaging for these vulnerable communities, particularly the risks from cyclones, flooding, landslides and drowning. In this work, he had particularly close contact with members of the Communication with Communities (CwC) Working Group.

Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Training³

UNDP was asked by BRAC to facilitate some Disaster Risk Management (DRM) training in Cox's Bazar for BRAC, the country's (and indeed the world's!) largest NGO. He therefore conferred with BRAC staff, and, together with the BRAC Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Specialist, and IOM⁴ Emergency Preparedness Coordinator and other facilitator, carried out a one day DRM training program on the 7th May. A total of 42 people attended this practical workshop, most of these BRAC staff. BRAC then used to this training to replicate DRM workshops out in the refugee camps. Separately, Chris and the IOM Emergency Preparedness Coordinator laid the groundwork for some future risk management training to be carried out at camp level for agency staff and volunteers.



¹ This two page summary can be found at www.torgaid.com/cp-rohingya-mission

² There is also a second cyclone season which lasts from October to November

³ A longer account of this DRM training work can be found at www.torgaid.com/cxb-drm-training

⁴ International Organisation for Migration

UNDP Representation at Inter-agency Meetings

Chris represented UNDP at various inter-agency coordination meetings, these including the Emergency Preparedness and Response Task Force (EMPRTF), Communication with Communities (CwC)⁵, Emergency Communications (EC), Civilian-Military (CivMil) and Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) meetings. He was able to contribute global best practice information relating the DRM at a number of these working groups, and was also instrumental in special meetings. One of the latter was following the CivMil meeting of the 31st May, when extra discussions were held between the military and the Cyclone Preparedness Program (CPP)⁶ team, clarifying the correct use of flag signals relating to a potential cyclone.

Landslide related Initiatives⁷

As well as observing some landslide training for Rohingya volunteers in the refugee camps facilitated by both UNHCR⁸ and the ADPC⁹, Chris' main role here was in project managing the installation of automated rain gauges in three refugee camp locations. This initiative, funded by UNHCR and project managed by UNDP, was carried out in close cooperation with both the Geological Survey of Bangladesh (GSB) and the Norwegian Geotechnical Institute (GTI). As well as providing an accurate record of rainfall every 15 minutes through the mobile phone network, the gauges also are programmed to give warnings to the key people receiving these calls, alerting them about potential landslides occurring when certain rainfall thresholds are reached¹⁰.



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⁵ A longer account of this CwC work can be found at www.torgaid.com/cxb-cwc

⁶ The main stakeholders in the CPP being the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BRCS) and the American Red Cross (ARC)

⁷ A longer account of this rain gauge work can be found at www.torgaid.com/rain-gauges

⁸ United Nations High Commission for Refugees

⁹ Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre

¹⁰ For example, 75 mms of rain within three hours; 200 mms of rain within 24 hours; or 350 mms of rain within three days