

Press Release

DMH's early warning system goes operational with an international standard

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The 2016 Index for Risk Management ranks Myanmar as a “very high risk” Nation (6.8 of 10) and with an increasing trend. The country is exposed to “severe weather events”, originating from the Bay of Bengal and South China Sea. Natural disasters continue to intensify, with the change in the climate, and Myanmar should be ready. Sharing of early warning information in a timely and coordinated manner, with Stakeholders and the Public to prevent economic losses and the loss of lives, is important to cope with extreme events.

The Department of Meteorology and Hydrology's (DMH) early warning system goes operational using an international standard called Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) upon successful completion of a UN-ESCAP funded project titled "CAP on a MAP – Improving Institutional Responsiveness to Coastal Hazards through Multi-Agency Situational Awareness". The project has been implemented by the Asian Institute of Technology in partnership with the Sahana Software Foundation since January 2015. The initiative is in line with the recommendations from World Meteorological Organization's (WMO) to adapt common platform for issuing early warnings using the common alerting protocol (CAP).

With the implementation of CAP, a robust and efficient early warning system is in place in DMH now covering all hazards under the jurisdiction of DMH and disseminate the early warnings using several medias like e-mail, phones, fax, SMS, and social media. By making early warnings readily available in a clear, concise, actionable manner through media and tools people commonly use will help DMH and relevant agencies to reach those at risk to act more promptly and mitigate the impacts of an impending disaster.

The main goal of the project was to augment the capacities of the DMH and the relevant stakeholders in issuing early warnings by using a multi-agency all-hazard/all-media approach in order to improve the response capacities to an impending disaster.

The efficiency of the existing early warning system in DMH has been now increased in many folds and the system has already integrated all the relevant agencies through a common information exchange hub for exchange of information at the time of a disaster. The system was tested in the Departments of Relief and Resettlement, Government Administration, Fire Service, Police, Irrigation and Dam Safety, Health, Agriculture, Fisheries, and the Myanmar Red Cross Society; especially, in Naypyitaw and the Townships: Kunyangong and Nyaungdon in order to determine the system's usability as well as adaptability. A few staffs of the DMH were trained in building and using the system and they can now handle the system independently. The Meteorology, Hydrology and Seismology Divisions of the DMH is now issuing early warnings using the CAP standard through the system, which is reliable, secure and efficient.