

Pioneering grassroots disaster preparedness

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Motoyama (fourth from right) and Hulu Klang community leader Badrulisham Mohd Akhirin (second from right) with volunteers at the Community Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) Resource Centre in Bukit Antarabangsa. — Photos: LOW BOON TAT/The Star and courtesy of JPP-SeDar

Programme aims to improve community resilience in four areas

WHAT kind of terrain does your township have and what history of disasters has occurred in the area?

Most importantly, what can one do to minimise the impact of such disasters on the community?

With these questions in mind, the proponents of a SeDar programme set out to equip local governments and community leaders with the skills and knowledge needed to develop disaster risk reduction (DRR) initiatives from the grassroots level.



A DRR workshop for students being conducted at SMK Abdul Jalil in Batu 14, Hulu Langat.

SeDar is the abbreviation for “Strengthening the Disaster Risk Reduction Capacity to Improve the Safety and Security of Communities by Understanding Disaster Risks”.

The programme adopts a unique community-focused approach by instilling a science-based understanding of disaster risks among community leaders, members and local authorities.

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It also encourages collaboration to develop DRR activities and programmes tailored to specific needs and understanding.

This community-oriented strategy represents a significant step towards building disaster- resilient communities.



Mohd Kamri says there has been an increase in DRR activities within the community.

It was a collaborative project between the International Research Institute of Disaster Science of Tohoku University, Selangor Disaster Management Unit, the Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Centre of Malaysia-Japan International Institute of Technology at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia Kuala Lumpur, and the Civil Defence Force.

Initiated in 2018, the multi- phase SeDar programme was a community-oriented approach towards disaster risk reduction that concluded in April this year.

The communities in this four-year pilot project were from Bukit Antarabangsa/Ukay Perdana in Hulu Klang, Batu 14 and Kampung Sungai Serai in Hulu Langat, and Kampung Tok Muda in Kapar, Klang.

These areas are known for being prone to landslides and floods.

Eriko Motoyama, who was project coordinator for the Japan International Cooperation Agency Partnership Programme (JPP) –SeDar, said it gave communities the option to determine what they needed most to enhance their disaster preparedness and resilience.



Badrulisham showing some of the useful information available at the DRR Resource Centre in Bukit Antarabangsa.

“It also encourages collaboration among them to develop disaster risk reduction activities and programmes tailored to their specific needs and insights,” she said.

One of the programmes carried out as part of the SeDar project was hazard mapping exercises with the communities, to increase disaster preparedness at the local level.

For the Town Watching and Community Mapping exercise, community members identified potential disaster hotspots, safe places, evacuation centres and even heritage sites.

The idea behind the exercise was to pinpoint potential dangers in an effort to prevent or reduce the impact of such disasters, said Motoyama.



Motoyama (left) showing a sample of posters created following engagement with communities in disaster-prone areas.

The exercise was carried out between February and March last year, at all four localities.

“During the course of the exercise in Kapar for example, we found out that not all residents knew the location of the designated evacuation centres.

“The flood warning sirens in the area were also not very loud, which would make it difficult for everyone to hear and respond in time.

“So the community was able to propose solutions such as putting up evacuation centre signs at designated locations.

“They also suggested that announcements could be made through mosques,” Motoyama said.

She said that following the exercise, 21 signs were designed and distributed for installation at designated evacuation centres in the Kapar sub-district.



Emergency response training, including firefighting basics, by Malaysian Civil Defence Force in Hulu Klang.

(The signage was reviewed and verified by the agencies that own/manage the evacuation centre premises such as the Klang District and Land Office, Klang Royal City Council, Selangor Education Department and Selangor Islamic Religious Department. It was also endorsed by the National Disaster Management Agency).

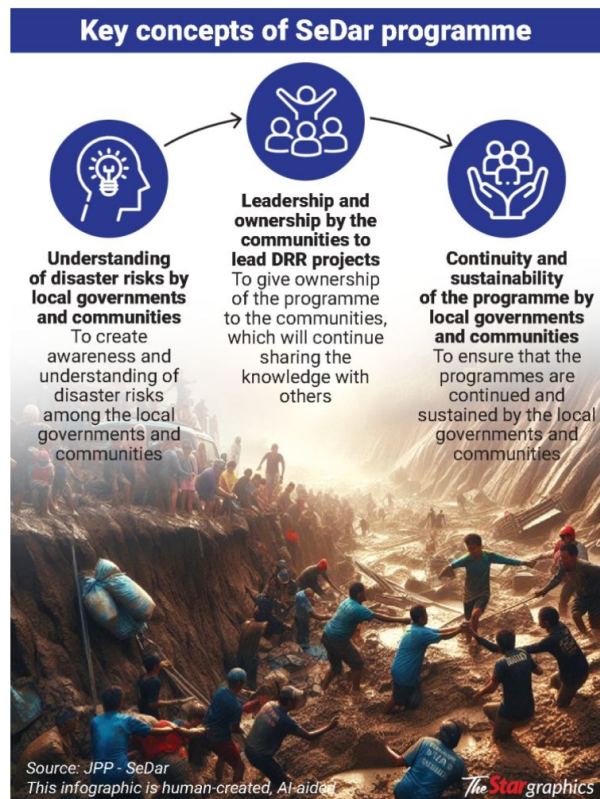
Similarly, in the Hulu Langat sub-district, which is flood-prone, residents were unaware of the locations of the evacuation centres within their areas.

Here, 28 signs were put up at the designated spots.

Additionally, posters containing the location of evacuation centres, community actions to take and important contact information were put up in public places such as community halls, schools and mosques in Kapar and Hulu Langat.

Motoyama said other types of activities that were carried out included plogging (picking up rubbish while jogging), community evacuation route drills and workshops.

"While the programme has ended, we have seen positive impacts that we believe will be sustained.



"The most significant is that community members have an increased awareness and understanding of local risks and DRR practices, which has resulted in behavioural changes."

She said that beyond the programme partners, more government agencies became involved in the SeDar programme, resulting in a network of DRR experts.

"The DRR experts were also encouraged to further engage with communities, utilising their technical knowledge to increase the community's awareness.

"It succeeded in enabling the development of strong ties and relationships between the local government and the communities, and this will significantly contribute to planning, implementation and continuity of DRR activities into the future," said Motoyama.

In addition, Bukit Antarabangsa assemblyman Mohd Kamri Kamaruddin said there had been an increase of DRR activities within the community over the past several years.

"Residents were definitely more aware of their surroundings and quick to alert the authorities.

"Under the SeDar programme, the activity has intensified, with some community members even teaching those in other areas," he said.





Residents participating in a disaster drill to better familiarise themselves with evacuation routes in Kapar.

Mohd Kamri, who is also Selangor state assembly Deputy Speaker, emphasised the importance of continuing to share knowledge, especially at the grassroots level.

"This is crucial for building community resilience.

"I fully support the use of the Ampang Jaya Municipal Council (MPAJ) community hall for DRR initiatives.

"This is a good example of different agencies and communities working together to reduce disaster risks," he said, adding that there were about 60,000 residents staying in Bukit Antarabangsa and Ukay Perdana.

During the tabling of the Selangor 2024 Budget last year, Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Amirudin Shari had said RM400,000 would be allocated this year to sustain community projects, providing participants with an understanding of local disaster risks.

He said that through SeDar project, communities would be exposed to understanding local disaster risk based on scientific facts and empirical analysis, and knowledge about disaster risk preparedness.

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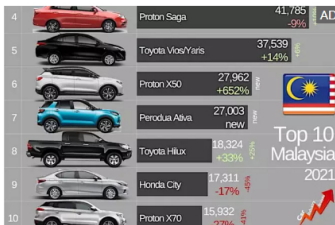
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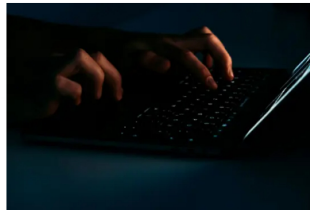
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