

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

Disasters are known to kill, maim and cause widespread deprivation in the communities they strike. Apart from claiming lives and livelihoods, disasters also push back the progress and hitherto achieved. Especially in the context of humanitarian action, any progress achieved is as best precarious if it is not disaster proof. Therefore, managing risk and building resilience against disasters should be cross-cutting themes in all areas of humanitarian action. However, this is not the case as these themes are looked upon as disparate areas and are not well integrated with other themes of humanitarian action.

This in essence represents a wasted opportunity to provide effective, lasting and sustainable humanitarian solutions. This issue of *Southasiadisasters.net* highlights the cross cutting themes of managing risk and building resilience in humanitarian action in India. It describes major initiatives in humanitarian action that have also addressed the themes of risk and resilience. These includes disaster risk sensitive reconstruction after the Indian Ocean Tsunami, the opportunities and challenges of integration between the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction (HFA2) with other humanitarian frameworks along with the role of Asian Disaster Reduction and Response Network (ADRRN) in promoting resilience across all sectors of humanitarian action.

Replete with the best practices, views and insights from the major actors of humanitarian action in India and South Asia, this issue of *Southasiadisasters.net* is a must read for all interested in integrating risk and resilience with ongoing development initiatives. ■

- Kshitij Gupta, AIDMI

MANAGING CLIMATE RISKS

Community Based Disaster Management of WOTR

The Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) programme of Watershed Organisation Trust (WOTR) adopted a multi-pronged approach in empowering local communities to deal with climate change. Interventions at various levels in a village helped to march towards desired adaptation. One of the key components was Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). Objective for DRR was to build capacities of the communities to prevent, mitigate and cope with disasters effectively. WOTR adopted the approach of Community Based Disaster Management (CBDM) to accomplish this. Since every individual is vulnerable and is threatened by natural and man-made disasters, each one is required to be aware and have the minimum capacity to counter such crisis. Community participation and community ownership in disaster risk reduction is a key factor in reducing vulnerabilities of people and minimizing losses.

The work done under the component aided communities to identify and address the adverse situations in advance and reduce its likely impact. It involved organizing awareness campaigns to sensitize the village; planning, reviewing and analysing of past disasters; creating a calendar of disasters seasons; mapping village resources (using the CoDRIVE-VI tool), assessing risks and vulnerabilities, identifying safer alternatives and training local individuals and bodies in basic and immediate disaster response.

Reducing the risk of disasters is closely linked to CCA as well as to sustainable development. Disasters can stem from any rapid or slow change in the environment that increases vulnerability and compromises resilience. WOTR Wasundhara guidelines address many issues of sustainable development. WOTR has consistently and continuously adjusted its projects and programs to incorporate new learnings. The effects of Climate Change and Globalisation – together and separately – are likely to induce large changes in all five capitals – Human, Social, Physical, Financial and Natural capital. Some of these changes will help, while others would compromise the viability of rural communities. Still others could bring large unpredictable changes that could only result in disaster. Mainstreaming DRR in WOTR projects is one strategy that would build resilience to any unanticipated changes. Fragility defines the relationship between damage and hazard intensity. As the fragility increases, damage for a given intensity hazard event increases. Resilience on the other hand, is the inverse of fragility.

DRR activities were successfully carried out in 33 project villages of WOTR, 25 of Maharashtra and 8 of Madhya Pradesh. Following are the major activities carried out per village under DRR component:

1. Awareness and Training

Discussion on DRR was initiated through *gramsabha*. DRR trainings

- Empowering local communities to deal with climate change lies at the heart of CBDRR approach of WOTR.
- The interface of DRR and CCA will change human, social, physical, financial capital.
- Apart from awareness, training and education what other strategies can be adopted by WOTR to foster CBDRR.



Hazard hotspot: Electric DP.

were organized especially for village youths. Concepts and correlation between Hazard, Vulnerability, Exposure and Capacity were thoroughly explained through these training. A village level Disaster Management committee (VDMC) was formed as subcommittee of gramsabha. All further activities were planned through this committee.

2. Mapping and marking of Hazard hotspots in village

As a first step to begin with DRR, efforts were made to identify hazard hotspots within the village boundary, in a participatory way. Hotspots were mapped using GPS and a DRR map for the village was developed, to be displayed on a board at common public place. Hotspots mainly included broken walls, open wells, exposed electric DPs and wires, blind road turns, tilted water tanks, potential fire places, potential landslide locations etc.

3. Daily activity clock

In a meeting with villages, especially elderly people, an activity clock was developed for the village. It included daily activity of villagers - kids, women, and elderly people. It would help in reacting quickly when disaster strikes.

4. DRR Mock-drill in schools

Schools are extremely vulnerable areas in any village. Disaster specific mock drills were conducted in schools to prepare kids to respond to disasters. Small sessions were also conducted in explaining the significance of DRR activities.

5. Developing DRR workbooks per village

DRR workbook were prepared for each village in a participatory way. Such workbooks cover all necessary information of a village with reference to its disaster history, coping strategy used by the villagers in past, DRR clock, important telephone numbers, Hotspot map etc.



Mock Drill on Earthquake.

6. Sharing DRR workbooks with local government bodies

As a final step in disaster preparedness, village-wise DRR workbooks were submitted to local government bodies which deal with disasters response.

Importance of Ecosystem based adaptation was also stressed as an important link in dealing with climatic disasters.

Ownership by Community

Implementing DRR activities in a participatory way was a real challenge. Most of these villages had a view point that even thinking of disaster is inauspicious. Rigorous trainings and awareness campaigns helped dealing with such a challenge. Self-motivated community action post DRR-trainings was kind of litmus test to success of DRR implementation. Some of the villages used Panchayat funds in repairing works at hazard hotspots while some even acted on biodiversity perspective while dealing with disaster preparedness.

WOTR is also developing a DRR Manual for facilitators. It will help NGOs learn from WOTR experiences. ■

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