



COMMUNITY BASED DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Synthesis report on field innovations

ANANDI

COHESION FOUNDATION

Partners
GRAMYA VIKAS TRUST

PRAYAS

SAVAJAM

SWATI

UNNATI

Disaster Preparedness & Response Group

Supported by CONCERN WORLDWIDE (INDIA)

*“Lets come together to strengthen our
synthesis of learning & experience and be the
part of chain to make a difference in the
human society”*

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADRC	Asian Disaster Reduction Center
ANANDI	Area Networking and Development Initiative
CBDP	Community Based Disaster Preparedness
CEE	Centre For Environment Education
DMI	Disaster Mitigation Institute
DPRG	Disaster Preparedness Response Group
GSDMA	Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority
GVT	Gramya Vikas Trust
IIPA	Indian Institute of Planning and Management
IRC	Indian Red Cross
MDM	Mid Day Meal
NIRD	National Institute of Rural Development
OSDMA	Orissa State Disaster Management Authority
RED-R	Register of Engineers for Disaster Relief
SAVAJam	Saurashtra Voluntary Actions, Jamnagar
SWATI	Society for Women's Action and Training Initiative
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

INTRODUCTION

Backdrop

Disaster response cannot be seen as an isolated activity, as it is linked with larger socio-economic-political condition of the community or the region.

There is a strong link between poverty and the impact of disasters. For a family struggling to earn a meal, the biggest disaster is daily stress and denial of their fundamental rights. Hence it is evitable to work towards ultimate elimination of extreme poverty and facilitate long term development to reduce the impact of disasters on community. The project "DPRG"- Disaster Preparedness Response Group in Gujarat is based on the concept of responding to emergencies alongside its established development work.

Evolution of DPRG

The project is funded and supported by Concern Worldwide India. Concern's work in India has been largely dominated and dictated by emergencies. It is also involved in other critical areas, such as livelihood security, education and intensive HIV-Aids education and awareness programme. The project DPRG has been evolved by Concern to spread a mission of responding emergencies through established development works.

The NGO partners of Concern Worldwide India, who were closely associated with relief and rehabilitation work in the earthquake affected areas of Gujarat, felt that low importance was being given to following issues:

- Few initiatives were taken on incorporating disaster preparedness into long term development
- Very less sharing of experiences and learning amongst local agencies on disaster preparedness

- Very few initiatives have been taken by NGOs on issues of advocacy related to disaster preparedness

With these concerns, the partner NGOs mooted the idea of forming a group with support of Concern Worldwide India to facilitate the learning process among Gujarat partners. Gujarat has been successful in addressing several issues through network of NGOs. This led to formation of DPRG to effectively address the disaster preparedness needs of the state. The group consisted of seven like minded NGOs namely Anandi, Cohesion Foundation, Gramya Vikas Trust, Prayas, Savajam, Swati and Unnati with its secretariat at Cohesion Foundation Trust, Ahmedabad.

The project area covers 14 villages across 4 districts of Gujarat which are vulnerable to natural disasters and consist of needy, vulnerable and poorest of the poor community.

Specific Objectives of DPRG

The network/collective formed among the DPRG partners would learn from within; from other states; country experiences; from institutions like IIPA, NIRD, DMI, GSDMA, OSDMA etc in India and international experiences like UNDP, ADRC etc. The group will work collectively to achieve following objectives:

- To transfer risk and reduce vulnerability in normal (non-emergency) period through enhancing food security and more access to information
- To enable individual group members to develop community specific disaster preparedness plans (CBDP) including HIV-AIDS in two villages in site of each partner
- To synthesize the learning on CBDP
- To develop linkages with NGOs, networks, government bodies in Gujarat and other partners of Concern in Orissa for the purpose of sharing and policy advocacy.

PROGRAMME AREAS

All seven partners in DPRG worked in different areas with varied communities and socio economic conditions.

Anandi worked in two villages of Maliya block in Rajkot district. Khirai and Chikhli are the villages with remote habitats just near the little Rann of Kachchh. Communities in these villages are some of the most marginalized groups of the society. No other agencies had worked in these villages after the earthquake 2001.

Cohesion was actively involved with community in Rapar block of Kachchh district since post earthquake 2001. Villages Vanoi and Vanoi Vandh, where the project was implemented, are prone to earthquake, cyclone and drought. Moreover, they face major issues like increased desertification, lack of potable drinking as well as sufficient irrigation water, increased migration due to lack of livelihood security and lack of medical facilities and education.

Gamyia Vikas Trust (GVT) worked in villages in Dwarka block which are affected by salinity ingress. GVT had its presence in the project villages Juni Dhavad & Lovrari of Dwarka block since 1995. These villages face major problems like salinity ingress due to proximity of sea, lack of livelihood, severe attack of pigs and swines on agriculture products, and other social issues like dowry, education promotion and shattering social evils.

Prayas selected two villages in Anjar block - Makhiyana and Bhuvad. Both the villages are at remote location near the Rann of Kachchh and have limited resources of livelihood. Major population consist of marginalized communities of Rabari, Dalit, Harijan and Muslim. Debt trap and exploitation are rampant in both the villages due to low level of

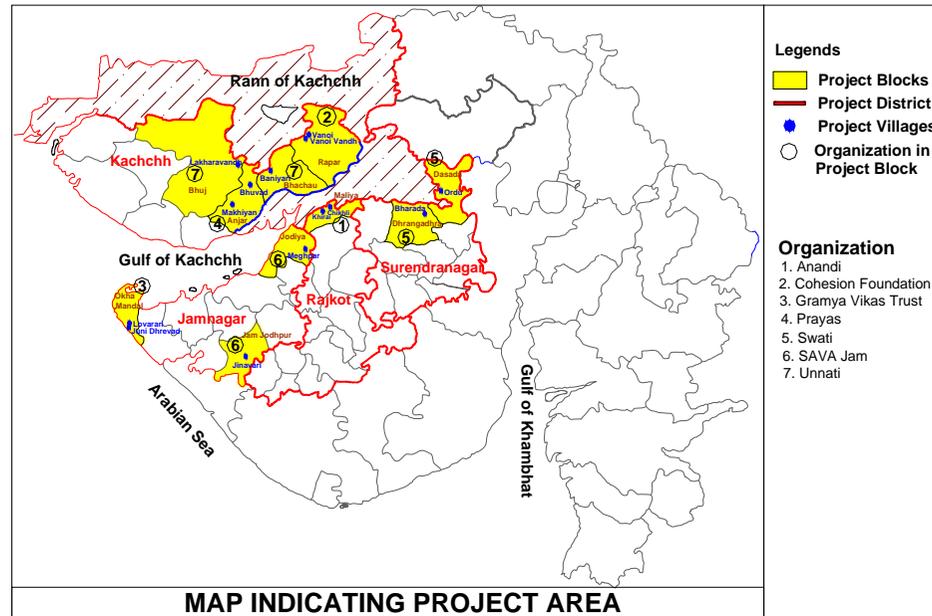
education, poverty and social evils. No NGOs have worked in these villages before.

SAVA Jam worked in various blocks of Jamnagar District. Villages Meghpar and Zinavari of Jamjodhpur blocks in Jamnagar district were two villages, which were isolated and interior and had weak socio-economic profile, low health and education facilities acute water problems. Moreover, there were no other social institutions linked with the villages. These villages were selected to promote education and augment livelihood activities.

Swati has been associated with Surendranagar district intensively since earthquake 2001. The project villages Bharada and Ordu in Dhrangadhra block

of district are prone to earthquake, cyclone and drought. Moreover, they face major issues of crop damage by wild ass, increased desertification and creeping salinity, occasional flooding, low medical facilities, and increased migration by salt pan workers resulting in low socio-economic development of this specific community.

Unnati selected Lakharavandh and Baniyari villages of Bhachau and Bhuj blocks to implement DPRG programme. Both the villages are located in proximity to Banni grassland in remote part of Kachchh. Limited livelihood resources, marginalized community and high vulnerability to disasters were the main reasons to select these villages for the project.



APPROACH FOR COMMUNITY BASED DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

On the very outset of DPRG, the primary aim was to reduce day to day sufferings of people by targeting physical, social and economic vulnerabilities¹ in normal time and build their capacity to withstand disasters.

DPRG partners, who are working in varied geography and diverse socio economic societies, integrated DPRG objectives in their ongoing programmes. This was more of a strategic move, as DPRG did not have extensive budget for physical interventions. DPRG programme largely banked on soft activities of community mobilization, trainings, capacity building exercises, workshops, awareness campaigns and issue-based activism.

Approach for community based disaster preparedness through DPRG programme was multi pronged. At upper level, DPRG worked with networks of civil society organizations to sensitize government authorities, district administration and block level officers towards problems of common people; while at community level, partner NGOs of DPRG focused on reducing physical and social vulnerabilities of marginalized communities through various interventions, which included:

- Awareness generation and mobilization to access various government welfare schemes at village level. This included campaigns for inclusion of marginalized section under various subsidy-based schemes such as Public Distribution System (PDS), ration cards, Below Poverty Line (BPL) cards, Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) etc. People were also mobilized to monitor the scheme at

village level to ensure quality of goods and check corruption in distribution.

- Capacity building of communities in disaster response, disaster preparedness, risk reduction & transfer, and vulnerability reduction. Activities included:
 - Disaster Response:* Formation of village level committees and assigning responsibilities to each member in case of any emergency.
 - Disaster Preparedness:* Community contingency plans prepared by people themselves by recognizing their vulnerabilities and preparing action plan to equip themselves for future disasters.
 - Risk reduction and risk transfer:* The direct action leading to risk reduction, such as retrofitting and support in reconstruction of houses. Promotion of various village Insurance schemes as a risk transfer mechanism.
 - Vulnerability Reduction:* Capacity building of communities to avail their rights on food security and other issues relevant to the area to empower them to fight for their rights in normal time as well as in disasters. Regularization of housing rights and BPL (Below Poverty Line) cards are the examples of vulnerability reduction at community level.
- Use of Right to Information and other fundamental rights to avail basic services and rights of socially and economically backward sections of the society
- Technical support for reconstruction and retrofitting of housing of weaker sections in aftermath of devastating earthquake
- Integrating development works with disaster preparedness through linkages with various NGOs, Government authorities and institutions.

¹ Vulnerability to disasters can be classified in four categories: 1) Physical: Loss of life and assets by destruction of houses, schools, institutions etc, infrastructure and services. 2) Economic: Loss of livelihood and employment, 3) Social: Loss of social security leading to exploitation, abuse and exclusion, 4) Environmental: Loss and damage to built and natural environment, natural resources, ecological imbalances and climate change.

PROCESS

Consultations

It was important to have a common understanding among the project partners on process adopted for village level interventions. Various consultations among the partners were held to design the projects and monitor the progress from time to time. Consultations with donor agency were also pursued regularly for guidance and support in the programme. DPRG also worked closely with village panchayats, block and district level administration and state level authorities to foster the objectives of the programme. State level workshops on disaster management were organized to share experiences with all stake holders and chalk out the plan for further actions.

Staff level capacity building



It was necessary to build the capacity and insight of its own staff at certain level, so that they can implement the programme effectively. Exposure visits of the staff to Orissa and interaction

with NGOs and authorities working for disaster preparedness in Orissa helped the workers to broaden their views on different measures of community mobilization and their coping mechanisms. Training on use of different PRA tools and testing them in field also helped staff to get an insight of practical use and appropriateness of these tools under varied circumstances and different target groups.

Village level micro planning workshop at Dwarka

As a start-up event, four-days workshop on micro-planning was organized in August'06 which also included field visit to Lovrari and Juni Dhrevad villages of Dwarka block, Jamnagar district.

The broad objective of this workshop was to develop understanding of representatives of partner organizations on micro-planning for developing common understanding on the issue. It also aimed at improving co-ordination between partners.

On the first day, class room sessions were taken up on following issues: Poverty and wealth ranking, Financial arrangements at village level, Disaster Management concepts, Search and Rescue operations, Disaster Preparedness and Mitigation, Micro Planning, People's rights in disaster time, integrating disaster preparedness in development process. Field visits were arranged on second day to test the tools which were developed on first day. The tools included social mapping, research mapping, group discussion and wealth ranking. Exposure visit was arranged on third day to Zaver Nagar SHG and understanding their progress. Later, wealth ranking parameters were understood in detail through an exercise. On fourth day micro planning and feed back sessions were organized to identify activities and resources in the villages.

After detailed deliberations during workshop, groups came out with various suggestions, some of them were arranging exposure visits, calling in experts to the villages and region and arrange discussion with community members, setting up of fodder bank, grain bank, cluster based water tanks for insulating against vagaries faced during droughts.

DPRG coordinator and other staff participated in various training programmes and workshops, which helped them get better insights of the issues concerning disaster preparedness. Trainings on Sphere Standards by Red-R and Oxfam, training on Qualitative Information System (QIS) by Resource Centre Development (RCD) and IRC Netherlands, have been very useful to staff for effective communication and establishing link with disasters and daily distresses. Training on Organizational Level Disaster Preparedness (OLDP) software by Oxfam, Ahmedabad was useful to plan response programmes and mobilize resources. Moreover, staff attended International Conference on School Safety by GSDMA, Food Security Meet by ANANDI, Training on managing Humanitarian Response by Red-R and several other workshops.

Village level capacity building and field operations



PRA tools like Social Mapping, Resource Mapping, Wealth Ranking, Institutional Analysis, Problem Analysis, *Chapati* Diagrams, History Time line etc. were used to gather information and perception of people. The

inference and analysis of the data gave a fair idea of issues in the village, access and spread of natural resources, assets and its control, support systems of different communities and coping mechanism in times of disasters. The overall picture also revealed the gaps in support mechanism and coping mechanisms of community in normal time as well as disaster times. DPRG partners then planned and carried out their activities to fill up the gap and build capacities of the people to strengthen their coping mechanisms.

Awareness generation on HIV AIDS was another important activity undertaken in this programme. However, unavailability of well-trained workers who can handle the issue extremely sensitively, none of the organizations continued beyond dissemination of basic information on HIV- AIDS.



Right to Information (RTI) Act was widely used for availing people's right, keep check on corruption in PDS and improve quality of food and regularize MDM scheme at

village level. The process involved formation of village committee in each village, build their capacities on issues of food security and train them to use RTI for their interest. These committees in turn build capacities of others in the village. Programme also worked on formation of Self Help groups (SHGs) at village level and building their capacities to act as pressure group on administration to improve outreach and quality of various government welfare schemes implemented in the village. There are many cases where use of RTI and SHGs as pressure groups, have created huge difference in performance of administration at village level as well as block level. Some of the issues were also represented by SHGs and others at District and State level.

Formation of village level committees known as task force and assigning responsibilities to each member in case of any emergency was an effective measure in areas prone to recurring disasters. Collective actions through these task forces were vital for achieving the desired impact of the programme. Some of the successful collective actions to avail basic rights and check corruption and exploitation at village level

are showcased in the next section.

Activities like retrofitting, technical support in reconstruction of houses and promoting insurance schemes for marginal sections of society were carried out by partners as measures for disaster risk reduction and risk transfer.

An exposure visit to Orissa was organized to orient the staff members of



DPRG on initiatives of NGOs and Government for disaster preparedness in Orissa. The group had meeting with Country Director and Emergency Programme Manager of Concern Worldwide India. Group also had

meeting with Indian Red Cross staff working in cyclone affected districts. Interactions were held with people in three districts to get a first hand knowledge of approaches of community based disaster preparedness in Orissa. Meetings were also held with officials of Orissa State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

Institutional Linkages

Besides experience sharing among the partners, there have been very limited linkages with other organizations. Janpath network provided IEC materials on RTI and other issues. Consultation with INGOs like Oxfam, CARE, IRC etc was done on issue basis. CEE and Citizen's Initiative were other organizations consulted time to time. DPRG organizations

responded to floods in South Gujarat in 2005 and 2006 through collective efforts of "Citizen's Initiative- Flood". Similarly DPRG joined hands with "Citizen's Initiative- Tsunami" to work for relief and rehabilitation in South India in aftermath of the devastating Tsunami.

Monitoring and coordination

A full time coordinator was appointed at the Secretariat for effective coordination between project partners. Monthly meetings of project coordinators were useful for experience sharing, monitoring progress and planning future activities. However, it was not an easy job considering varied geography and activities of the partners and time overruns in the project. Organization heads also met half yearly to discuss strategies of the programme.



OUTCOMES

DPRG was successful in involving people in contingency planning for the villages. Awareness generation on various issues and capacity building of people to avail their rights and regularize administration was remarkable achievement of the project. 14 villages have prepared their Village Development Plans (VDPs) with active involvement of all classes of the village. They have been able to identify vulnerable groups and individuals and taken up responsibilities to help them in time of emergency. Women were particularly enthusiastic to take up development activities in the villages, which is evident by number of instances of women group taking lead to break the barriers of traditional roles and take a stand to fight injustice. In all fourteen villages, Village Committees have been formed which has designated various responsibilities to each member to work as volunteer in time of disasters. Besides this, there has been significant empowerment of community on issues of food security and use of Right to Information act

Primary schools now have ramps for disabled

Bhuvad is a remote village situated near Rann of Kachchh in Anjar block. A physically challenged girl child was escorted by her mother daily to attend the class of the school. In 2007, her class was shifted to first floor and that caused great difficulty for her mother to carry her to upper floor. Despite of repeated requests, the principal did not change her classroom. An application under RTI was then filed by members of village committee promoted by DPRG (Prayas), to get data on standard norms on availability of ramps for disabled children in primary schools. The impact of this single application was unbelievable. Collector immediately called a meeting with applicant and other parents and asked for a week's time to solve the problem. The child's classroom was then shifted to ground floor; and not only the school in that village, but all the schools of district were surveyed and Collector assured the construction of ramps and railings in all primary schools immediately. The issue was also taken up by education department for quick execution of work.

First election after independence

Chikli village is the remote village near Little Rann of Kachchh in Maliya block. This village did not witness any *Panchayat* election in its history of 60 years after independence. Sarpanch and Panchayat body was unchanged for last 25 years. In Panchayat elections of 2007, the seat was declared reserved for women. But under the '*samras yojana*' of State government, panchayat body tried to persuade people to declare the village as samras village by supporting the wife of sarpanch as its candidate- i.e. the sarpanch is elected with consensus without any elections. Women members of SHGs supported by Anandi did not agree to this arrangement. They asked sarpanch in Gram sabha to let capable women candidate stand in election. But it did not work out. So, Jetaben, a SHG member took lead and stood for the post of sarpanch. They also formed a panel for panchayat body. For the first time, panchayat election was held in village. There was 97% voting. Jetaben herself lost the election with a margin of 12 votes because of the inexperience of political dogfight. But her panel was elected and formed majority. Now these panel works with Sarpanch with a definite decisiveness.

for protecting their interests. Women SHG members and village committee members particularly lead the community to restrict corruption and improve quality of government administered schemes like MDM and PDS.

In number of instances across the project villages, the activities of project has provided impetus to check rampant corruption prevailing in PDS shops, regularizing and improving quality of food in MDM schemes in Anganwadis and primary schools.

Anandi led the health checkup campaign for nutritional needs of children in their project villages. This gave an insight of vulnerable communities and reasons behind the mal nutrition, which helped in

articulating another project on nutrition. The organization also led the educational initiative for girl child enrollment in primary schools which have yielded excellent results. Four years ago, there were 30-35 girls enrolled for primary school in one of the villages; now the number has increased to 145. All the girls of the village are enrolled in the school now. Similarly GVT was also successful in increasing enrollment in primary schools in the villages where they worked.

In another instance, women empowerment in village level development works and political arena, SHG group members contested for Panchayat election for the first time in the village where there were no elections

625 hectare of fertile land was saved from submergence

It was the site where Kachchh branch of Narmada canal ended and from there, water was to be taken by pipeline. Government had planned acquisition of 625ha of cultivable land in Khirai village of Maliya district for construction of reservoir for overflow water of Narmada Canal. Besides the submergence of fertile land, 65 houses were also in submergence area. There were no consultations held with villagers on this issue. Even Panchayat was unaware of the acquisition. When the land acquisition process started, it spelled doom for more than 100 families of the village, as they would have lost their only livelihood resource. DPRG committee members took up the issue and a resolution against proposed reservoir work was passed in gram Sabha. They also filed an RTI application-seeking details of process carried out by authorities at village level. Secretary, Water Resources, held a meeting with villagers and assured them to protect their interests. In the discussion, an alternative wasteland area of the village was proposed for reservoir. It was win-win situation for both-administration and community. Thus an aware community saved itself from a livelihood disaster.

held since independence (because of consensus on elected representative which was continues as family tradition).

Regularization of housing rights for the marginalized community was

another achievement of the project. Using RTI, housing rights of 32 families of marginalized community were regularized in a village where Anandi operated. RTI was also used to fight against forced displacement in the village due to Narmada Canal Sump planned in a fertile land of

PDS shop monitored by SHG

Corruption was rampant in PDS shop and other government run development scheme in Makhian village of Anjar Block. Women SHG formed in DPRG programme by Prayas decided to fight against corruption and avail their fundamental right of food security. This was possible through capacity building and awareness generation activities on food security and RTI carried out under DPRG programme. SHG gained support of other villagers and build up pressure on shop owner to distribute ration as per the norms. SHG also worked as pressure group to regularize supply of goods and improve quality of grains for mid day meal in anaganwadi and primary school. This has worked well and checked corruption and improved quality of food in MDM. SHG continues to monitor PDS and MDM regularly.

farmers. Villagers were able to make change in the location of sump to protect their 660 hectares of fertile land. In two villages in Rapar, where Cohesion had its presence, about 37 separate ration cards and 32 BPL cards were issued by authorities after efforts of DPRG committee across both villages.

Villagers were also successful in putting forward demand for a new bore well and convincing State Water Supply Board for allotment of the same. In same villages, women are willingly getting involved in Panchayat elections. In one of the most significant achievement of the programmes, Prayas paved the way to construction of ramp in all primary schools of Anjar by filing an RTI application. Similarly, Prayas successfully supported families of marginalized community and addition of 28 families in *Antyodaya*/BPL scheme through RTI process.

In a major social drive, GVT was successful in curbing the addiction to alcohol in a village to about 70.

LESSONS LEARNT

There were some constraints faced at organization level and at project level that can be described as a part of learning for project partners. DPRG was first ever effort by these NGOs to work towards a common goal. Some of the lessons learnt during the programme are:

- Planning process lacked common strategies and measurable targets of the programme. Too much time was consumed in organization level coordination and understanding the programme by project partners. A common understanding at the initial stage of the programme could have been beneficial for all partners to formulate their activities and articulate it with their ongoing programmes.



- More time was spent on capacity building of the staff itself. Field level interventions, though integrated with ongoing programmes of each organization, lacked the intensive efforts due limited budget.

- Without any physical activity in the village, it was difficult to mobilize people to work for a cause. This was particularly true, when people's expectation for monetary benefits were raised by several NGOs after earthquake.
- It was found that working directly with community was easier and effective rather than working through panchayat, as it involved vested interests. DPRG programme was carried out directly with community. Panchayat was taken into confidence, but the activities did not depend on response of panchayat.
- It was also found that people's expectations were raised after preparing village development plans and community contingency plans. So, it was a common feeling among the villagers and partner staff that the project should not end at preparing these documents. Some concrete activities and support should be continued on agreed objectives.

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