

Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction in High Altitude Regions



Photo: AIDMI.

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| <p>2 Reducing Disaster Risks in Ladakh</p> <p>3 Strengthening CMDRR in Leh</p> <p>4 Risks in High Altitudes: How to Think About Action?</p> <p>6 Disaster Risk Reduction in High Mountainous Regions</p> <p>8 European Parliamentarians on a Visit to Strengthen Ties with its Indian Partners</p> | <p>9 Women: A Key Force for Recovery</p> <p>10 From Vulnerability to Resilience – Partnering with Communities for Effective DRR</p> <p>11 Economic Recovery of Women</p> <p>12 Indo-Norwegian Cooperation on Disaster Risk Reduction</p> <p>13 Children and Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment at High Altitude</p> | <p>14 "Financial Gradients" for "Resilient Societies": An atypical Wedding</p> <p>16 Cash Transfer Programming</p> <p>17 Towards Green School Safety in High Altitude Regions</p> <p>18 Green Livelihoods: Reviving Ecology and Economy for Local Recovery</p> <p>19 Giving Money, Helping Communities</p> |
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Reducing Disaster Risks in Ladakh

Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) would like to adopt an approach in which community is at the centre and involved in all the stages of their recovery and development. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has outlined good guidelines on Community Based Disaster Management. The other good practice on the ground in Leh is Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR). The flashfloods of 2010 have highlighted the need for effective Disaster Risk Reduction and Management (DRRM) strategies in place in order to be able to deal with all types of disasters. LAHDC Leh recognises the role of family, neighborhood and community as the first to respond in a disaster management structure. It would, therefore, strive to promote a DRRM plan for each neighborhood and community in both rural and urban setup (with village Panchayat and Municipality in the lead and various grass-root institutions as key stakeholders). At the same time adequate backup and support systems will be developed / strengthened at Block and District levels. This will include strengthening of existing District Committee on DRRM (to make it more effective and representative) as well as identification of a 'Nodal Agency' and creation of a District 'Resource Team'.

Programme:

- Strengthening management and program development work (reinforcing analysis, team work, sharing and learning).
- Conducting a comprehensive Hazard, Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (HVCA) exercise leading to formulation of village/town level DRRM plans and DRRM framework at

Block and District level (under risk reduction, preparedness, mitigation).

- Developing (and constantly updating) the strategy (including institutional arrangements) for DRRM in the District under (a) Preparedness, (b) Rescue operations, (c) Immediate Relief Measures and (d) Rehabilitation, to be put in place at Village / Town, Block HQ and District level.
- Putting in place DRRM mechanisms and contingency plans at village/ town, Block HQ and District level with the following features:
 - ♦ Arrangements for constituting 'Rescue Teams' (Task Groups - to be formed at call) with (a) appropriate combination of skills required (b) quick access to essential equipments, tools, materials and transport facility, (c) ability to get mobilised within specified timeframe and (d) capacity, mandate and facilities to liaise / coordinate with vital services - Hospital, Fire Services, Police, Army, NGOs, sectoral agencies etc. (e) coordinating relief work and with various agencies and groups of people (f) ensuring convergence of efforts with minimum gaps / duplication.
 - ♦ An up to date inventory of key resource institutions and persons (and contact details) with arrangements for quick access and use.
 - ♦ Arrangement for establishing 'Control Rooms' (within short notice) with all key facilities (e.g., helpline, access to vehicles, etc.) and for wider publicity about its existence through various means (including media).



Rigzin Spalbar, Chief Executive Councilor, LAHDC, Leh.

- A stock of key items of rescue and relief (based on inventory developed on advance) with arrangements for maintaining and updating it within a prescribed timeframe.
- Capacity Building, training, Information and Education Communication (IEC) and Community Organisation at various levels.
- Provision for Contingency fund for ensuring preparedness and response under DRRM at various levels.
- Capacity Building of 'Task Group' and 'Resource Team' at various levels (including drills and field testing).
- Liaisoning with resource institutions, sectoral agencies, government schemes, media, etc. for accessing technical and financial support.
- Maintaining the 'Resource Teams' at various levels.
- Establishing mechanisms for ongoing monitoring and review of DRRM structure at various levels.

People of Leh district see role of government and non-government agencies crucial as now is the time they need to extend their expertise and experience in the long term to give support for community involved recovery. This is expected to bring social, economic and ecological growth in Leh. ■

– Rigzin Spalbar,
Chief Executive Councilor, LAHDC

Strengthening CMDRR in Leh

Leh, north most part of India, is known for its scenic beauty and tourism attraction. Still, Leh remain one of the finest attractions for tourists from all over the world. On the other side, this part of India is of strategic importance for the country as it shares borders with China and Pakistan. So, this part of the country remains a region of strategic importance.

In August 2010, Leh faced an unprecedented cloudburst leaving many people lost their lives, huge loss to agriculture and ecology. Neither the people of this region nor the country expected this disaster to happen in such a peaceful high altitude region. Where the economy of this region depends upon agriculture and tourism, it affected both in a big way.

Although civil society organisations and government agencies did provide initial assistance and then rehabilitation, however that was not sufficient considering the fragile nature of Leh. And considering the

recent disasters in the country and other parts of the globe, it is an established fact that there will be more "unpredictable" hazards in the future. So, it is important for the government as well as the community to be more prepared and capacitated to face any further future disasters.

Cordaid, along with its partners in India is facilitating the process of "Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction" (CMDRR). This is the process, which assesses the risks at community level, understands the hazards, identifies vulnerable locations and communities as well as map the existing capacities at community level locations, such as Leh/Ladakh, become extremely un-accessible during the disaster. It is, utmost important to prepare the community in advance so that they can survive till any external help reaches.

To achieve the above, it is important to engage all stakeholders in the assessment and planning process. In

the case of Leh, it is most crucial to engage local governance mainly CEC (district level) and *Gamba's* at village level. Considering the difficult geographical locations and spread out villages, this is not an easy task to achieve. Along with these local representative institutions, it will be important to engage Non governmental Organisations (NGOs), villagers, women, children, youth, schools, hospitals, academic institutions and other groups/influential people who are of strategic importance.

One aspect, which has not been shared yet, is the window of working months in Leh. The actual working months in the field are not more than six months, which makes the task difficult. Second, high altitude also limits your capacities to perform. Considering the above difficulties and challenges of Leh, one can understand the dire need of CMDRR where it is important to prepare the communities and reduce the risk of potential disaster.

Agencies like All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI) and their team being present in the field directly and through partners in these difficult conditions trying to achieve CMDRR is commendable. We are sure the efforts of AIDMI, which they are already doing along with the Local Government; Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Leh; National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) will help them to achieve the same. We wish them all the success in their work. ■

Marlou Geurts and
Munish Kaushik, Cordaid



Involvement of the most vulnerable groups in recovery lays foundation of CMDRR.

Risks in High Altitudes: How to Think About Action?

Sudden and heavy rains caused by a cloudburst on August 5-6, 2010 in Ladakh, which killed 257 people and damaged 1,448 households¹, surprised many agencies. Ladakh is an unusual place for a cloudburst because it is a cold desert region where average rain fall is low². Although, experts suggest that cloudbursts cannot be directly linked with climate change, the number of extreme events such as cloudbursts would increase with a rising global temperature³. How well do we understand risks in high altitude areas? How to think about action?



Women – a vital force of quick community managed recovery.

While no one has clear answers, more thinking and deliberations on the subject is necessary, especially when we know that humanitarian responses are extremely difficult in these areas and mitigative actions are almost nonexistent. Water outbursts from high altitude glacial lakes may not be and should not be seen as a remote possibility anymore. Also, limited, but whatever body of knowledge we have on the topic is mostly scientific in nature and mostly not suitable for decision making and designing humanitarian responses. Even for climate sciences, protection and preservation of high altitude areas is important as they act as one of the greatest storehouses of historic data and information to study, measure and predict changes in climate.

Rarely, we hear somebody talk about risks in high altitude areas in national and international conferences. Nor does anyone adequately inform or train humanitarian professionals to work with communities and markets in high altitudes. Being extremely important to national security, rapid access and action in many high altitude areas is not always possible. Thus, any response in high altitude areas without adequate knowledge of local context and robust preparedness is likely to be ineffective.

Risk is universal. But risk is also context specific. Specific to community, area, structure, institution, and even local markets,

we find this in our work in Ladakh in India and we learn this from our partners in China, Pakistan and Nepal. So how to start thinking about risks in high altitudes? This question is not only important for the local actors in high altitudes but also for the Post 2015 policy framework for ISDR to the UN system and the various national platforms. Also as citizens, along with communities in high altitude areas we as consumers benefiting from products and services from them need to demand greater safety of our high altitude areas if we want to keep our image of high altitude areas intact as a safe haven for tourism and purity.

1 Disaster Update, www.nidm.gov.in Issue No.2193 Date: 26.6.11, <http://ndma.gov.in/ndma/latestdisasterupdates/26-06-11.pdf>

2 <http://currentaffairsappsc.blogspot.in/2010/08/leh-cloudburst.html>

3 <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/home/environment/global-warming/No-concrete-proof-to-pin-Leh-cloudburst-on-global-warming-Experts/articleshow/6331318.cms>

One clear indication is that we need to think more about market based solutions for reducing risks in high altitude areas and communities. This may not be for all areas and all communities or all solutions but certainly there is a case to think more and more in terms of markets now. Direct dialogue with businesses and business interests in high altitude areas will be timely in 2012.

The market based solution may start from what the most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report titled "Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation" (SREX) say about climate risks in high altitudes as well as the solutions it offers. A round table on this in Nepal or Bhutan by the UNDP or UNEP in partnership with an institution in these countries or similar scientific agency will be most timely.

The above two next logical steps seems to be focused on agriculture and, therefore, food security. Not only agriculture is becoming unsustainable, due to disasters and market focus, but also the food security of the farmers themselves and the community they live in. The areas where agriculture is surviving and with direct measures faces issues of "inclusive business". A time bound scoping study by FAO in selected high altitude areas on risk faced by agriculture will be timely. The WFP may want to explore possibilities of introducing an innovative index-based micro-insurance programme for select crops or high value agriculture products and develop sustainable delivery channel for food supply in food deficit high altitude areas.

What does risk protected market based solutions take into account? Let we start with some ideas. They include value chain development, creating multi-actor platforms, strengthening business service providers, as well as value chain financing. Such solutions can strengthen highland-lowland linkages to improve community access to improved services in agriculture, horticulture, dairying, forestry, medicine, art and culture, tourism and in numbers of other areas. Many more ideas can be added in consultation with local communities. Such initiatives can be piloted in key high altitude cities and towns.

Last, not as an end but as a beginning, let us focus on investments. In spite of having rich natural resources, high altitude areas remain cutoff from the mainstream development both in terms of technology and markets, including power to influence policies. Most markets in high altitude areas

are still closed markets and rarely trade outside. Also, occupational diversity and alternative sources of income in most high altitude areas are found to be very limited. In order to support high altitude areas to adapt to climate change reduce risk to natural disasters and make progress in other socio-economic indicators, investments are needed in sectoral and financial returns in investment mapping, in business readiness, in deal structuring, and in quality assurance.

Key information and insights shared above is one way to think about and address challenges posed by high altitude risks and in coming years for Post 2015 Hyogo Framework for Action policies. Similarly other important areas such as water, sanitation, education, or energy can be taken up to find ways to think about them in coming years. ■

– Mihir R. Bhatt,

All India Disaster Mitigation Institute



Linkage of rural livelihood with market adds pace to economic recovery.

Disaster Risk Reduction in High Mountainous Regions



High altitude regions borne quick and long-term impacts of a disaster.

Nobody wants disasters to happen. We also cannot prevent hazards from taking place, but we can definitely prevent hazards from becoming disasters by building the capacity of the community and the first responders, thus, reducing the prevailing risks. If it happens in/near a mountainous terrain, in high altitude, like Leh, Shimla, Nainital, Gangtok, etc, the impact could be many-fold. Despite best intentions of the policy/decision makers, things may go wrong.

The most recent glaring example is the response of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) teams after the Sikkim Earthquake last September. The earthquake of magnitude 6.9 on the Richter scale occurred at about 6 PM on 18 September 2011, near Mangan, in North District of Sikkim. NDRF Battalions were despatched by air to the nearest airport Bagdogra at about 2300 hrs the same night. But due to the bad weather conditions and more than 30 landslides between Siliguri and

Gangtok, the teams could not proceed from Bagdogra in the afternoon of 19th September, until the National Highway (NH) 31 was cleared by the Border Road Organisation. The biggest lesson learnt from the Sikkim earthquake was that community, local authorities at village, sub division and district levels should be self-sufficient to sustain and manage the disasters, on their own till the response from the state, centre and neighbouring states could arrive.

The peculiar conditions prevailing in the mountainous regions which cause additional damages and difficulties in rescue and providing relief during and after such disasters are given below:

a) The road communications are limited. Due to disasters, like earthquake and cloudbursts, landslides are caused damaging the arteries. It takes considerable time to restore them due to liquefaction and soil conditions. The disruption thus caused delay to rescue and relief work.

- b) The communications, especially line and mobile networks, normally fail even the alternate ones, like the wireless communications, take time to establish unless they have been planned earlier. Compatibility between the various radio sets is another factor which affects restoration of communications.
- c) The first responders are not acclimatised when they arrive at the disaster site/s and some of them may become casualties themselves to diseases, like pulmonary oedema, causing death.
- d) The community being the first responder in any disaster, especially in hilly areas, have to be self contained as the first responders may not be able to reach the disaster site/s within the requisite time.
- e) The education standards in the hill region are low due to the poor quality of faculty members, thus, affecting the general awareness among the

community on disaster risk reduction measures.

- f) The weather plays a major role in rescue work and delivery of relief work. Adverse weather conditions can impede the rescue and relief work.
- g) Adequate reserves of food and fuel have to be created and kept at district, tehsil/taluka and even at village level, to sustain the effect of disaster as well as weather conditions.
- h) The villages in hills have few houses and these are also spread over. The task of assessing the damages and providing rescue and relief work becomes difficult.

Having understood the peculiarities of disasters in high mountainous areas, some of the disaster risk reduction measures which are recommended to be undertaken at various levels under Indian conditions, are given below:

- a) Sensitising and building the capacity of the community to perceived disasters. Training the community is easier said than done, due to the varied nature of their jobs and working

conditions. Motivated volunteers among them should be selected and given basic training on rescue and first aid. Besides giving training, the village panchayat or volunteer clubs should be provided limited inescapable DM equipment to make effective disaster management teams. Besides, each village must make their DM plan, which should be evaluated periodically through mock drills.

- b) Early warning system, to warn the community of the impending disaster, should be evolved, practiced and community made aware of its presence.
- c) Local indigenous practices, like construction of houses, providing rescue and relief, home remedy medicines, etc should be sustained and dovetailed into the modern DM techniques/practices.
- d) The management of disasters at official level (district/sub district/tehsil/village) should be carried out as per the Incident Response System guidelines issued by the NDMA, for better

command, control and coordination.

- e) More number of helipads should be built in hilly areas, especially in remote places. These could be located in school play grounds, parade grounds, plain grazing areas, etc. These helipads should be registered after trial landings.
- f) Disaster response teams should be created at district and state levels and these should be placed at more vulnerable areas, so that they are able to reach the disaster site/s in a short time period.
- g) Encouraging the community to invest in insurance which can transfer the risk from the state to the insurance companies, would also help the community to receive full payment for the losses suffered by it due to disaster.
- h) One time review of all the houses and infrastructures in hilly areas to check their viability to sustain the perceived disasters.
- i) More number of arteries, both vertically and horizontally, needs to be created in hilly areas, for movement of response and relief teams.



Local need based response programme is foundation of CMDRR.

Communities in the high altitude areas are more vulnerable to disasters than in the plains, due to their topographic location and inability of the first responders to reach disaster locations in time. The community has to be made self sufficient in these areas to face the perceived disasters and for that their capacities have to be built.

"A Prepared community is a safe community". ■

– Brig. (Dr.) B.K. Khanna,
*Senior Specialist in National Disaster
Management Authority, Ministry of Home
Affairs, Govt. of India.*
and
Nina Khanna, Ph.D.
Research Scholar in Disaster Management

European Parliamentarians on a Visit to Strengthen Ties with its Indian Partners

At the end of April, 2012 twelve Members of the European Parliament visited New Delhi and Chennai as members of the European Parliament's delegation for relations with India, which I Chair. We met Members of Parliament from the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, and were briefed about Tamil refugee camps and visited a Nokia plant near Chennai to list but a few of many visits and meetings.

One of the common challenges we discussed with our counterparts was that of energy and climate change. India's per capita energy consumption is of course a fraction of the EU's and 400 million Indians still do not have access to electricity. Both the EU and India are facing energy security and supply concerns, however, and we left convinced of the benefits of real EU-India cooperation in the development of clean energy.

One of the areas where we can work together would be in the development of solar energy, particularly concentrated solar thermal power. India has greater opportunities for solar and wind power development than almost any other nation on earth.

Another area would be that of dealing with black carbon or soot – particularly important in high-altitude areas due to their warming effect on Himalayan glaciers (soot causes glaciers to absorb more



Sir Graham Watson, MEP, sharing his views in Tamil Nadu.

sunlight and heat). Melting glaciers could have a terrible impact on Indian agriculture, and with more than half of Indian jobs in the agricultural

Melting glaciers could have a terrible impact on Indian agriculture, and with more than half of Indian jobs in the agricultural sector, this is a risk India cannot run.

sector, this is a risk India cannot run.

Black carbon comes from old-style cook stoves, burning coal, diesel engines and deforestation. If India did more to conserve its forests, cleaned up its coal-fired power stations, mass replaced old biomass cook stoves with new models and reduced its reliance on diesel engines and back-up generators, it could deal with a cause of hundreds of thousands of premature deaths annually due to air pollution and (we are now discovering) global climate change.

Much of India's black carbon problem could be remedied by switching from coal-fired power generation to renewable and investing in proper electricity infrastructure to both transmit that power and reduce reliance on dirty diesel generators when the grid fails. In doing so it would avoid thousands of preventable deaths, protect its agricultural sector and get rid of this idea that CO₂ cuts are an obstacle to development. With limitless clean power that, with the right levels of investment, will soon come down in price, India can develop in a truly sustainable climate-friendly way. ■

– Sir Graham Watson,
Liberal Democrat Member of European
Parliament for South West England
and
Gibraltar President of the European
Liberal Democrat and Reform Party
(ELDR) Chairman, Climate Parliament

Women: A Key Force for Recovery

If someone from Ladakh asked Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) what is a key force of any recovery, SEWA experiences shows that it is woman.

The districts where SEWA works in Gujarat are constantly at the vortex of some kind of disaster or the other. Some small, some large. Some at individual level many at community level. All disasters do not attract media attention. The people of this region depend on agriculture and animal husbandry for a living. However, the climatic conditions of the region render both the activities unsustainable for livelihood. This results in large scale migrations from the region to nearby blocks or states where conditions are better: more water, fodder, fuel and work.

The earthquake that struck Gujarat in January 2001 threatened to destroy all that SEWA had worked for over decades. SEWA is a membership based organisation with one million poor women workers as members. SEWA realised that its members, that is its sisters, looked not for aid or for charity but for work not only to provide them income but also as a kind relief and recuperation from the constant stress of wondering about their bleak future or about the fear of yet another quake. They wanted work not relief. Work would enable them to start rebuilding their lives and livelihoods with dignity. Recovery can be at their own pace. At their level. Hence, SEWA began thinking of ways and means through which its sisters could get meaningful employment along with a roof over their heads.

For a large number of poor, self – employed women their home is their work place. Based on the immediate major need of its members for shelter,



Socio-economic recovery of women is essential element of CMDRR.

took up the shelter reconstruction programme called "*Naya Ghar*", which translates to mean "new home". The "new" home was new in many ways. The "home" was a home in many ways.

SEWA's experience of helping its 8000 sisters rebuild homes proves that throughout the disaster recovery cycle women are the most active, creative, and determined in their efforts to come out of loss. This capacity is undermined. It is essential to make livelihood recovery of the women central to disaster recovery processes. For women, the twin sector of shelter and livelihood are very important. Not many humanitarian actions remember this. Not many disaster risk reduction remember this. May be this can be remembered in Leh where recovery is being planned after August 2010 cloudburst.

SEWA's approach was not that of just reconstruction of the damaged houses but that of an integrated revival of livelihoods and to turn it into a livelihood opportunity. The Gujarat earthquake 2001 had left members

homeless, destitute and without any source of income or livelihood. Hence, rebuilding houses would not suffice to prevent their migration in search of livelihood opportunities. The only way then to ensure their stay and repair the fragile rural economy was to simultaneously, along with rebuilding of houses, provide or revive or augment income generation opportunity right at the village level. SEWA realised that enabling its sisters to rebuild their own houses as masons, carpenters and cement block producers would enable them not only to earn an income but also to pick up a skill that would prove to be of use later too. Also women were given crafts work on the basis of their traditional skills so that they do not have to go out of the house and look after the children as well as and work from home. This provided the SEWA sisters with sustainable income. Thus, SEWA's approach was to rebuild community assets, strengthen and stabilise existing and traditional livelihoods as also develop new sources of livelihood. May be this is useful to remember for recovery in Leh. ■ – Reema Nanavaty, SEWA

From Vulnerability to Resilience – Partnering with Communities for Effective DRR

Who can better understand and manage their risks, protect their lives and livelihoods than communities themselves? It is critical to recognise the primary role of the community in disaster risk reduction. They have the knowledge, capacity and can take ownership and responsibility to reduce their vulnerability to disasters. External agencies that seek to build the resilience of communities need to keep them at the centre of their work and build on their existing capacities. Thus, when well-intentioned external agencies are gone, communities will still be there, better informed and equipped to face disasters. Recognising this important fact, the International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC) and Red Crescent Societies in South Asia are working towards ensuring that the 'community' is at the centre of its approach in all disaster risk reduction programs.

South Asia is one of the most frequent and intensive natural hazard prone regions of the world. When combined with high population density, rapid and unplanned urbanisation, endemic poverty, overstretched basic health systems, and climate change induced vulnerability; the disaster related risks of communities in the region are further exaggerated. In this context, the IFRC commissioned a study of seven years of programming, carried out by the consultancy ARUP in 2011, which sought to identify the characteristics of a disaster resilient community. The key characteristics were identified in the study as:

A community that...

1. ...is knowledgeable and healthy. It has the ability to assess, manage and monitor its risks.

2. It can learn new skills and build on past experiences
3. ...is organised. It has the capacity to identify problems, establish priorities and act.
4. ...is connected. It has relationships with external actors who provide a wider supportive environment, and supply goods and services when needed.
5. ...has infrastructure and services. It has strong housing, transport, power, water and sanitation systems. It has the ability to maintain, repair and renovate them.
6. ...has economic opportunities. It has a diverse range of employment opportunities, income and financial services. It is flexible, resourceful and has the capacity to accept uncertainty and respond (proactively) to change.
7. ...can manage its natural assets. It recognises their value and has the ability to protect, enhance and maintain them.

The programs of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in South Asia are increasingly seeking to assist communities attain these characteristics. The Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment (VCA) process is used to facilitate communities in identifying and analysing the vulnerabilities that increase their disaster risk. Using this process, communities across South Asian countries are establishing their priorities for reducing risks and taking action, as well as advocating with their local government institutions for taking steps for disaster risk reduction.

In the Lalmonirhat District of Bangladesh, one of the priorities identified by the communities in the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society programme was the health problems caused by a lack of adequate and safe sanitation facilities in the community. The community was able to connect (characteristic 3) with key local government stakeholders to raise the concern and advocate for resources



Sri Lanka Red Cross Society staff explaining the usage of the rain gauge to a community member in Rathnapura, Sri Lanka.

Photo credit: SLRCS

to be made available. The Union chairman subsequently ensured that the Union Parishad development plan included providing all households with sanitation facilities which contributed to an improved health situation. The Bangladesh Red Crescent Society further supported this initiative by spreading awareness and information on safe hygiene practices.

In Sri Lanka's Nuwara Eliya, Rathnapura, Badulla and Matale districts, community members identified 'rainfall levels' as one of the key parameters that indicate the risk of disasters such as landslides. Hence, the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society, the National Building Research Organisation and the Disaster Management Centre (DMC) of the Sri Lankan government are helping communities living in landslide prone areas to monitor rainfall levels. Communities are

provided with rain gauges kept at accessible locations within the village which are monitored regularly by the community. Communities are also taught how to read and interpret (characteristic 1) the various water levels of these gauges and the necessary early warning and evacuation actions to be taken. This organisational capacity (characteristic 2) of the community is proving to be vital in reducing the risk of rainfall turning into a disaster.

In the Maharashtra state of India, communities have seen the importance of natural resource management (characteristic 6) for managing human induced disaster risk. Excavated soil from mining was causing polluted dust to drift on the wind onto communities posing a health hazard. With the assistance of the Indian Red Cross Society, the community decided to protect their environment and health by planting

trees, including fruit bearing trees, around their villages. These trees not only served to shield them from the dust, but also provided an alternate livelihood, leading to enhanced nutritional status. The Indian Red Cross Society provided the saplings, the local government agricultural department provided the guidance and the community did the rest, caring for the trees as they grew.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in South Asia believe that the community's greatest resource for building resilience is within themselves and that ways should be found to identify and support, not undermine. Changing minds, attitudes and ways of working is crucial towards the strengthening of resilient communities with all the relevant stakeholders working in partnership and in synergy. ■

– Colin Fernandes,
Disaster Risk Reduction Advisor,
South Asia, IFRC

LOCAL PILOT INITIATIVE

Economic Recovery of Women

Centre for Sustainable Development and Food Security in Ladakh (Censfood Ladakh) was established in 2003 with a mission to work towards promotion of policies, institutions and capacities that strengthen the voice and participation of the poor and marginalised in improving their socio-economic status. The organisation is currently working intensively in Leh district of Jammu and Kashmir state with rural and urban communities affected in the year 2010 flash floods.

Immediately after the flash floods of 2010, a sectoral assessment was carried out jointly with our year 2003 partner AIDMI and this participatory one-week long exercise was done with ten of the worst affected and largely isolated rural communities in the Leh district. This included an

assessment of women led SHGs in Pheyang and Sakti villages. During the year 2011 intervention, livelihood restoration support had been provided through pilot relief intervention to two women member based SHGs in Sakti village comprising of 21 women. The women SHG members face limitation of working space to produce wool products as they have no proper structure and they have to switch from one to another SHG members' house. These women groups approached us and requested us to solve their problem of space exclusive for their livelihood – wool weaving and wool cloth making. CENSFOOD – in due course – held meetings with village Sarpanch and women led SHG leaders to learn the exact situation and needs; who will contribute and how. The village Panchayat agreed in a meeting to provide a common

structure, which the Panchayat has held for alongtime, that needs major repairing work to use it as a Livelihood Resource Centre for women SHGs' collective livelihood activities. The village panchayat and women members of the SHGs voluntarily offered to contribute, so that they can spend more time in this new facility. CENSFOOD helped women members and village Panchayat of Sakti in finding a local engineer who can start repairing the structure so that it becomes a livelihood resource centre for women throughout the year. The livelihood resource centre will provide the women led SHG member an excellent opportunity to work collectively, feel free, sharing and exchange of ideas and experience and by that enhance their business knowledge. ■

– Tsewang Norbu
Executive Director, CENSFOOD, Ladakh

Indo-Norwegian Cooperation on Disaster Risk Reduction

IIT Roorkey and Norwegian institutions NORSAR* and NGI* have several years of cooperation in Earthquake Risk Reduction. In the year 2010, they successfully completed a research project which contributed to a better understanding of *vulnerability* (earthquake and landslides) and risk (threatened human lives and infrastructure). By enhancing knowledge and experience, it built up and strengthened local capacities for preventive actions towards an earthquake-safer environment.

The initial phase of the project developed capacity in both India and Norway. The later phase of the project was a more focused research on 'Seismic Risk Reduction in the Himalayas', with Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, Dehradun, also joining the team. Thorough seismic hazard and risk analyses as well as studies on ground motion amplification and slope stability were conducted for selected target areas at the foothills of the Himalayas in the state of Uttarakhand. Through this improved understanding, it has been possible to communicate to city officials in Dehradun where the highest risk in the city was concentrated. The project also deliberated upon how vulnerability and risk can be reduced in an economically defendable way.

The project was funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Norwegian Embassy in New Delhi under a wider bilateral institutional cooperation

programme. Following the successful implementation of the project, the Embassy, in January 2012, has launched another institutional cooperation project targeting earthquake hazard and risk reduction on the Indian Subcontinent. While the project intends to deepen and further develop understanding on Himalayan India, the activities are being extended to other parts of India, namely Peninsular India and Northeast India including the states of Sikkim, West Bengal and Assam as well as in Bhutan.

The collaboration on earthquake research between Norwegian and Indian institutes goes back to 2002, when NORSAR and Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee (IITR) started working together. The collaboration

is expanding with more and more institutions joining from both the countries and the scope of research getting expanded.

The Norwegian Embassy carries out an institutional cooperation programme fostering research collaboration between centres of excellence in Norway and India, also promoting exchange of students and researchers. The institutional cooperation programme covers many areas such as: political, socio-economic, higher education, industry and commerce, defence and security aspects, energy, environment and climate change, and cultural cooperation. ■

– **Håvard Hugas**, Counsellor and **Vivek Kumar**, Senior Advisor, Royal Norwegian Embassy, New Delhi



Locally adaptable and participatory actions are key to CMDRR.

* NORSAR and Norwegian Geo-technical Institute (NGI) are Norway based institutions. NORSAR is an independent geo-scientific research foundation specialising in software solutions and research activities within applied seismic and seismology. NGI is a leading international centre for research and consulting within the geosciences.

Children and Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment at High Altitude

The Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Analysis (PVCA) is a process with communities and other stakeholders for assessment of both their vulnerability and capacity in addition of builds capacity and motivates involved communities and stakeholders for disaster response and risk reduction with local contexts. It is a lateral learning exercise between local communities, DRR practitioners and involved agencies. PVCA is assisting DRR practitioners and communities to analyse people's vulnerability,

understand capacities, draw up action plans, mobilise resources and enact appropriate policies, laws and strategies to reduce local risks.

PVCA should never be an extractive exercise. Children must know how and for what purpose their opinions are being used. It is possible to train children on DRR without using the PVCA process by having training facilitators pre-identify the common vulnerabilities and capacities that children in those communities face at a regular basis, and listing the measures that children and their families can take to reduce risks. However, this does not support a participatory approach to DRR and, most importantly, it does not support the feeling of ownership, participation in implementation and sustainability issues after outside agencies withdraw.

Engagement of children in DRR activities is one of the most important tasks. The following is an example of children's participation in discussion at hilly areas. Children identified the



Children in hilly areas are more vulnerable to disasters.

following places as disaster prone areas in their schools and community in the hilly areas of Ladakh:

- No speed breakers on the road near the school
- Broken railing of the bridge near the school
- No sign board to indicate that there is a school ahead
- Few feet of deep sewer ditch near the play ground
- A stream by the side of the playground which children have to often cross
- School and several parts of the village are exposed to natural hazards like landslides, rock falls, and floods

The child centered PVCA is unique - it is for, by, and with children. It is also unique for the very high altitude assessment. Children's local knowledge systems can contribute greatly in the various stages of disaster risk reduction from risk assessment to implementation and children as DRR promoters with communities living in isolated hilly areas.

The role of a facilitating agency in action planning is very important and challenging at the same time. The outside agency must balance between being the provider of financial, material, technical and organizational support and serving as a facilitator that supports child-centered community empowerment and mobilisation, rather than directing the children or the community. Sustainable DRR programmes are best established when agencies work to build the capacity of local groups and organisations to a

level where they can generate their own resources according to hill area context, lead their own risk reduction activities and access their entitlements from local governments. The participation of local institutions like PRI, school is very important for effective PVCA and for concrete results that planned based on the PVCA. The systematic and proper PVCA is leading towards village and district level disaster management plan and creating concrete action plan for risk reduction and community development. ■

– Vishal Pathak, AIDMI

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"Financial Gradients" for "Resilient Societies": An atypical Wedding

Because it is time to remove the divide between finance and collective interest to cope with hazards and create 'resilience of societies'.

It is unusual to find the words, socially or environmentally friendly and financially viable together; therefore any concept which ties 'financial viability' to build 'resilience of societies' must be an atypical marriage. However, here we precisely take upon such a task.

The growing uncertainties of environmental issues: climate change, extreme weather events accentuated by the growing natural resource exploitation and degradations and the lack of adequate governance – expose markets, financial and social structure to the possibility of failure or complete collapse. These hazards (slow or rapid, natural or man-made, et al) create "hot spots" or high crisis areas. Given this, we cannot ignore that the global commons could be a source of future conflict and permanent humanitarian crisis¹.

In this context, the concept of "resilience of a socio ecological system (SES)" was developed particularly by Holling, and this can give us some valuable points to nourish a new approach for hazard risk management.

"Resilience" is defined as the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate and recover from the effects of hazards in a timely and efficient manner. The resilience can



Bengal, January 2010.

6 months after *Aila* cyclone, the land stay wash and the saline water burn all terrestrial ecosystem on her passage while contaminating water source.

be bolstered through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions². This definition suggests that the "resilience" of SES is always the internal capacity in face an exogenous disturbance and involve three others concepts: disaster risk reduction, sustainable development and adaptation.

The most important gap is the lack of sustainability of humanitarian and development strategies or more specifically a framework for intervention. Unfortunately, according to the 2004 worldwide report on disasters by Red Cross, current studies tend to focus more on vulnerability factors

than on strategies to strengthen "resilience" capacity.

The second gap is the lack of quality information. The challenge is now to identify the specific information on each field on SES, the business opportunities and structure policies for socio-environmental projects such that they could be financially viable. The involvement of the private sector in SES management is of paramount importance. The reason is that the private sector is never restricted to one idea and different entrepreneurs will try out various methods to address hazards, in the end the best idea will prevail. One important aspect to keep in mind will

1 The number of people suffering from chronic hunger has increased from under 800 million in 1996 to over a billion now'. Managing Climatic Risks to Combat Land Degradation and Enhance Food security: Key Information Needs P.K. Aggarwala, W.E. Baetheganb, P. Cooper, R. Gommessd, B. Lee, H. Meinkef, L.S. Rathoreg and M.V.K. Sivakumarh.



18 months after *Aila* cyclone, people stay dependant of "cash for work" program. Without certitude that the embankment they build will resist to the tidal force or the next cyclone.

be that the private sector need not necessarily imply large corporations, but can be thought of to include small local entrepreneurs with good knowledge of the locality and its customs of the private sector. Having said this, large companies can synergize with the local community to promote resilience, which will be in the interest of large companies too. Growing numbers of people are advocating the role of the private sector in this area as a method of a polycentric approach to address hazards risk reduction and long term resilience, while removing abject humanitarian crisis in the short term. The notion of financial viability has come in as the most effective monitoring mechanism as espoused in a concept known as 'Financial Gradients'.

"The resilient systems and organizations are the ones that quickly acquire information on their environment and as quickly modify their behavior and structure, in spite of chaotic circumstances. They communicate easily and freely with others and widely mobilise networks

of expertise and material support" (Perrow 1999).

"Resilience Centre" (RC)

The 'Resilience Centre' is a concept developed to tackle the complex questions of 'resilience' in face of environmental crises linked to several factors affecting our life on the planet. 'Financial Gradients' approach will be put in practice within a new quality hazards risk management framework. The quality of the process, product and structure to improve the 'resilience' of SES will be the heart of this new financial and social approach.

An RC would be a physical location situated within a district, a sub-district or even a village. In the first stage, an RC will disseminate relevant information to public and private actors on the management of resources in that area. The information stage will help bring out an informed consensus in that area. In the second stage, an RC will support a project arrived at by consensus and implement it. Finally, in a few years an RC might even be

in a position to give out 'resilience' or 'development' certificates much in the lines of Renewable Energy or Energy saving certificates.

Currently, it remains difficult to get the attention of the general public and of governments on the urgency of reinforcing 'resilience' of socio-ecological systems. Several reasons for this can be put forward: budget constraints, the lack of financial mechanisms and technological resources, the importance of other emergency issues not related directly to hazard, the

uncertainty about the path to follow and the weakness of the governmental agencies which lead to the paralysis of the strategic implementation. But we notice that when a company is located in a region where 'resilience' is strong, the negative impacts of present or potential hazards on profit and economic activities are reduced. Investing in preservation and protection will increase socio-eco environmental profits as well as real financial profits.

In short, the idea here is to have a polycentric approach to capacity building for resilience; while at the same time reducing fiscal dependence and increasing economic activity. There is also a huge potential of employment generation at each resilience centre as well.

There is a huge need for "Resilience Centres", and it is hoped that all stakeholders attend this 'atypical wedding'. ■

– Arnab Bose,
Centre for Global Environment
Research, TERI, New Delhi
and
Camille Raillon,
PhD student from France

2 Definition from the International Strategy for Disaster Prevention, of the United Nations, available at:<http://www.unisdr.org/eng/terminology/terminology-2009-eng.html>

Cash Transfer Programming

While the majority of humanitarian aid to victims of a disaster is provided in-kind, there is an increasing tendency to supplement or replace some of this assistance by the provision of cash or vouchers to the most affected and excluded among the victims. Cash Transfer Programming is not a sector but an instrument that can be used in certain circumstances to meet the objectives of a sector such as community managed disaster risk reduction. For instance, a food security humanitarian response could provide cash instead of food or a shelter intervention provide vouchers to buy shelter material instead of providing the materials or victims could be provided cash dole for purchasing tools of livelihood towards community managed economic recovery.

There is a growing body of evidence of the benefits of cash and vouchers,

so the conversation around Cash Transfer Programming has moved from whether it is a suitable means to meet the needs of people affected by humanitarian crises to how it can best be used to meet these needs or can it be used widely for community managed risk reduction tool.

Cash assistance is not a panacea: it's not always feasible or appropriate and not in-kind distributions can be replaced by the provision of cash or

Cash Transfer Programming is not a sector, but an instrument that can be used in certain circumstances to meet the objectives of a sector such as community managed disaster risk reduction.

vouchers. Whether cash can be used will depend on factors such as the state of local markets and the local context. However, when cash is appropriate it can have many advantages over an in-kind response. Cash can be much faster than an in-kind distribution, as it's logistically simpler. Cash is nearly always cheaper and easier to transport than in kind assistance, reducing the operational costs and so leading to a more cost effective response which increases the percentage of funding spent on directly meeting the needs of the affected population. It also provides opportunities to the victims in manage their risks on their own. Perhaps one of the greatest advantages of cash is that it's more flexible to the varying needs of families affected by a humanitarian crisis and so provides a greater choice and dignity for the population benefiting from a humanitarian response. Cash assistance also encourages productivity, stimulates markets and can have strong multiplier effects on the local economy.

Humanitarian agencies like Save the Children have successfully used Cash Transfer Programming in recent humanitarian crises in India, including the Humanitarian Response to Cyclone Thane in Tamil Nadu, or the Humanitarian response to the 2011 Odisha Floods. The experiences of these agencies suggest cash should be strongly considered as response mechanism to assist the recovery of Leh. ■

– Juan Scouller,

Save the Children

More information and resources on Cash Transfer Programming can be obtained from the Cash Learning Partnership (CALP, <http://www.cashlearning.org>).



Cash for work is an important component of post disaster immediate response.

Towards Green School Safety in High Altitude Regions



Schools are important venues to show-case locally adaptable eco-friendly initiatives.

Apart from being a high altitude region, Ladakh is also a dry and arid – so called "cold desert in high altitude". With spread of science and technology, people of Ladakh are now more exposed to electronic devices, and like in any other part of the world, it has eventually become very much part of their routine life. With spread of such technological awareness, people of Ladakh have also learned the important of education. For the past few years the local administration has put in a lot of effort in making the education system strong. Ladakh have a scattered but strong education system. The unique aspect of the education system in Ladakh region is that monasteries and schools both are formalised and recognised as institutes for education.

Several schools and monasteries have been damaged in the flash floods and they need both structural and non-structural mitigation measures to ensure safer environment for education. CENSFOOD – a local partner of AIDMI in Ladakh – has already approached 10 schools during pre-winter 2011 needs

assessment. Several schools have approached CENSFOOD to request mitigation measures in their respective schools. During the joint phase - I immediate intervention to the year 2010 flash floods, three of these assessed schools have already been covered for structural mitigation measures. One of the encouraging parts of this pilot initiative has been that schools still use conventional roof which consist of locally available sand and a species of grass. This combination helps them maintain temperature in the class rooms and also functions a water proofing solution. Natural resources are still adapted in the modern era towards making schools resilient to local risks.

It may be lack of natural resources, it may be lack of funds, it may be negligence, but people of Ladakh have strong bonding to its society and local ecology. No development has been taken on at the cost of deteriorating local ecology. People and administration must be aware of consequences of growth at the cost of losing local ecology. This practice also passes on a good message to the next generation and citizens of

tomorrow about procuring local ecology, and of the advantages of being close to Mother Nature in a high altitude arid region. Not just classrooms and schools but green classes and schools; not just classroom education, but lessons for life; not just personal development but green development including the society.

These initiatives are small. Communities are as sensitive towards local ecology as the ecology itself is. When a school is chosen by local stakeholders for mitigation measures guardians, local engineers, local community, village leaders all help the local skilled-unskilled workers in making the school stronger and greener than before. The local administration also promotes this practice and provides necessary support in making schools greener and sensitive towards culture of safety and ecology of Ladakh creating sustainable growth and uninterrupted education for children. This attitude is good for other high altitude regions. This practice can set examples for inclusive and green approach towards making education and schools safer in high altitude places. ■ – Sanchit Oza, AIDMI

Green Livelihoods: Reviving Ecology and Economy for Local Recovery

Introduction:

The sustainable livelihoods approach is a way to improve understanding of the livelihoods of disaster affected people. It draws on the main factors that affect poor people's livelihoods and the typical relationships between these factors. It can be used in planning new development activities and in assessing the contribution that existing activities have made to sustaining livelihoods.

The Sustainable Livelihood framework places people, particularly rural poor people, at the centre of a web of inter-related influences that affect how these people create a livelihood for themselves and their households. Closest to the people at the centre of the framework are the resources and livelihood assets that they have access to and use. These can include natural resources, technologies, their skills, knowledge and capacity, their health, access to education, sources of credit, or their networks of social support. The extent of their access to these assets is strongly influenced by their vulnerability context, which takes account of trends (for example, economic, political, technological), shocks (for example, epidemics, natural disasters, civil strife) and seasonality (for example, prices, production, employment opportunities). Access is also influenced by the prevailing social, institutional and political environment, which affects the ways in which people combine and use their assets to achieve their goals.¹

Background:

A series of cloud bursts occurred in August-2010 for

1 www.ifad.org/sla/index.htm

the first time in the noted history of the Leh district. Successive cloud bursts caused tons of loose soil, rock and stones along with rainwater to inundate the valley and low lying areas. Around 15 to 20 feet of debris and water accumulated in these regions; causing heavy damage and destruction and impact on lives, property and infrastructure. Over 240 deaths have been recorded, more than 70 people were missing and thousands were displaced. Leh is a quaint little town located 11,500 feet above sea level and 424 kms away from Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir. The damage to community infrastructure has been extensive.

Ecology Based Livelihood Restoration Efforts:

Building on the success of pilot relief intervention to provide support to flash flood August-2010 affected communities of Leh, AIDMI has remained in constant coordination with local partner CENSFOOD and local administration LAHDC to provide affected and marginalised communities a secure and sustainable livelihood, with use of their traditional skill in income generation activities. The Local partner

CENSFOOD has received request from village leader of Gya to provide ecology based livelihood support for restoration of canal, which was heavily damaged in flash floods of year 2010. The catchment area of the canal became dry due to non receipt of water flow. Till the date neither government nor any agencies have focused on the restoration of the damaged canal. The canal was useful in firewood collection for Gya and surrounding villages' local women. The Gya village is situated in a remote area and approximately 95 Km away from district headquarter - Leh. The village community waited for more than one year for their canal to be restored so that they could easily meet their basic necessities of firewood and water.

The women of Gya and surrounding villages have to go far away in extreme winter and have to pay high cost for fire wood. Once the canal restoration work would be completed at the end of June 2012, the dry catchment area will get water again, village community of Gya and surrounding villages' women will get sufficient firewood soon, local community can do agriculture work from this spring season, animal husbandry, wool collection, improve environment and increased oxygen level for the long term are some of the features that Gya village head, community and local engineer have identified. The secured and sustainable ecology base livelihood support will provide them with the opportunity to make their traditional livelihoods sustainable and help in reduction of their economic vulnerability. ■

– Kalpesh Prajapati, AIDMI



Ecology based livelihood is backbone of rural and sustainable livelihood.

Giving Money, Helping Communities

Hundreds of non-governmental organisations around the Commonwealth benefit from our responsive grants. Our grants programme is committed to giving one million GB Pounds in total. We support activities such as short training courses, workshops, conferences, festivals, study visits or voter education activities.

As the Commonwealth Foundation embarks on a re-launch and a new strategic planning process, we are also undergoing an overhaul of our grants programme to bring it more inline with the objectives of the organisation. A more streamlined process will have more impact where it's needed, a goal we should all be striving towards.

Grant giving in disaster hit regions is a commonality but not in the way one might expect. For instance after the devastating tsunami in December 2004, nearly 230,000 people lost their lives and many more their homes and livelihoods. Many survivors along the coasts of India and Sri Lanka used to fish to earn their living. But a second, less publicised but equally devastating catastrophe was to follow. The disruption from the tsunami was used as an opportunity to move local people off the land they relied on for survival to make way for luxury tourism.

Thyagarajan, a fisherman from Kerala, India explains: "The land which I owned had lots of coconut, and I was able to live with that. Now I have to go for casual work. I was not interested to sell the land. They bought the land on either side and put up a fence. And then they started to file false cases against me saying that I was breaking their fence. The



Community capacity building strives towards locally led DRR.

agent was doing this because if I didn't move he wouldn't get broker fees. I was harassed by them. At last I sold my land."

There are many like Thyagarajan. Whole communities have been talked into selling by developers, only realising the consequences when it is too late. Developers have also been 'privatising' communal beachfront land by posting security guards. In Tamil Nadu, on India's east coast, whole communities remain in temporary shelters while their homeland is sold: a prime example of what Canadian journalist Naomi Klein has called "Disaster Capitalism" (The Shock Doctrine, 2008).

Survivors and experienced civil society activists are sharing their knowledge to push for more just and sustainable land use.

As part of this work, the Commonwealth Foundation

supported a study visit for young Sri Lankan activists in their twenties to learn from their counterparts in Kerala and Tamil Nadu. At the heart of human rights work is access to information; the Sri Lankans learned methods of monitoring and documenting abuses. They received three days of theoretical teaching, as well as visiting the affected communities.

As the Commonwealth Foundation re-evaluates its work and aims for more relevance for the people of the Commonwealth, its grants programme must also continue to reach people and build the capacity at the community level. Learning, sharing and exchange will continue to be our watch words and impact and relevance will be what drives the work that our tiny organisation does. ■

– Marcie Shaoul,
Head of External Affairs,
Commonwealth Foundation UK

LESSONS FROM GUJARAT FOR COMMUNITY MANAGED RECOVERY IN LEH AFTER FLASH FLOODS 2010



A group of 10 community leaders led by Shri Rigzin Spalbar, Chief Executive Councilor, LAHDC, met Her Excellency the Governor of Gujarat state Dr. Kamla Beniwal as a part of their exposure visit to Gujarat. As a part of this exposure visit – facilitated by AIDMI – the group also visited CBOs and communities of Gujarat during February 08-14, 2012 to learn about various community managed disaster risk reduction (CMDRR) initiatives in Gujarat in the past ten years. The visiting group consisted women SHG leaders, representatives from education department, local CBO and youth from Ladakh.

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