

# WOMEN AS EQUAL PARTNERS

## GENDER DIMENSIONS OF DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

### COMPILATION OF GOOD PRACTICES





सत्यमेव जयते



## Disaster Risk Management Programme

Repeated disasters threaten sustainable development. Disasters destroy decades of human efforts and investments towards development, thereby placing heavy demands on society for reconstruction and rehabilitation. Between the years 1991 to 2000, Asia has accounted for 83% of the population affected by disasters globally. Within Asia, 24% of deaths due to disasters occur in India, on account of its size, population and vulnerability. The Indian sub-continent is highly prone to natural disasters. Geographically floods affect 40 million hectares of the land, cyclones affect particularly the east and west coastal areas and 59% of the land is vulnerable to earthquakes. High level of risks combined with low levels of local capacity to cope with the hazards result in major loss of lives, property and livelihood.

### **Disaster Risk Management Programme:**

The Gol (Government of India) and UNDP (United Nations development Programme) Disaster Risk Management programme provides support to the Government to set up an institutional framework addressing issues of disaster preparedness, response, prevention and mitigation. In addition, a sub-component of the programme focuses on earthquake vulnerability reduction in 38 cities falling in zones III to V (medium to high risk to Earthquakes) having a population of more than half a million each.

The programme objectives are:

- a. Capacity building to institutionalize systems for DRM in the government
- b. Support preparation of participatory multi-hazard preparedness plans, through preparation of response and mitigation plans for disaster risk management at state, district, block, and village and ward level in 176 most multi-hazard prone districts of 17 selected states (roughly covering 30% of India's population).
- c. Awareness generation and education programmes in disaster risk reduction and recovery
- d. Networking knowledge on effective approaches, methods and tools for disaster risk management, developing and promoting policy frameworks at state and national levels.

The DRM programme is being funded under a multi donor framework of \$ 41 million. Apart from UNDP other donors such as the European Union (EU), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Government of Japan, the Australian Agency for International development (AUSAID), Department of International Development (DFID), the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) and United Nations International Strategy for Disaster reduction (UNISDR) are part of this framework.

The use and sharing of information in this document is encouraged, with due acknowledgement of the source.

Front Cover: Village disaster management team members engaged in risk and vulnerability mapping in Bijnor district of Uttar Pradesh. © DPO Bijnor.

***WOMEN AS EQUAL PARTNERS***  
**GENDER DIMENSIONS OF**  
**DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME**

**COMPILATION OF GOOD PRACTICES**

**June 2008**

**GOI - UNDP DRM PROGRAMME**

## ***ACRONYMS***

CCP	Community Contingency Plan
CPR	Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation
DMT	Disaster Management Team
DPO	District Project Officer
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
GOI	Government of India
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Scheme
IEC	Information, Education Communication
NCC	National Cadet Corps
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NYKS	Nehru Yuva Kendra Sanghatan
PA	Programme Associate
PO	Project Officer
PSO	Project Support officer
SHG	Self Help Group
UEVRP	Urban Earthquake Vulnerability Reduction Programme
UNV	United Nations Volunteer
VDMC	Village Disaster Management Committee
VDMP	Village Disaster Management Plan
VDMT	Village Disaster Management Team
WEDC	Women's Economic Development Corporation

# Contents

<b>Foreword</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Gender Mainstreaming Initiatives.....</b>	
<b>1. Women leaders addressing differential needs</b> Bhadrak district, Orissa	<b>9</b>
<b>2. Women master trainers developing community preparedness</b> Barpeta district, Assam	<b>11</b>
<b>3. Youth volunteers' network to institutionalize disaster preparedness</b> West district, Delhi	<b>16</b>
<b>4. Interdepartmental coordination and media reaching out</b> Saharanpur district, Uttar Pradesh	<b>19</b>
<b>5. Women volunteers shaping a gender equal tomorrow</b> Puri district, Orissa	<b>24</b>
<b>6. Citizen leaders ensure sustainability</b> Sitapur district, Uttar Pradesh	<b>26</b>
<b>7. Women in street theatre</b> North-west district, Delhi	<b>31</b>
<b>8. Self help groups mainstreaming disaster management</b> Latur district, Maharashtra	<b>33</b>
<b>9. Accredited Social Health Workers as role models</b> Nagaon district, Assam	<b>38</b>
<b>10. Through the rise of sisterhood</b> Nagapattinam district, Tamilnadu	<b>40</b>
<b>11. Women as essential change agents</b> Mayurbhanj district, Orissa	<b>45</b>
<b>12. Developing gender sensitivity as a practice</b> Gujarat Experience	<b>48</b>
<b>13. Aanganwadi supervisors as an all women first aid team</b> Kolhapur district, Maharashtra	<b>54</b>
<b>14. Catching them young through puppet show</b> Tiruvallur District, Tamil Nadu	<b>57</b>





## Foreword



The primary objective of GOI-UNDP Disaster Risk Management (DRM) programme, which is being implemented across 176 multi hazard prone districts in 17 states, is sustainable reduction in disaster risk. One of the critical indicators of disaster risk reduction is gender equity in disaster preparedness. Therefore, in this programme strong emphasis has been laid on representation of women in disaster management committees and teams to ensure their increased and sustained involvement during different stages of disaster resulting in gender equitable community preparedness.

“Women as Equal Partners” documents significant gender mainstreaming initiatives taken up under the programme. These good practices attempt to capture ongoing gender equity initiatives and activities involving different stakeholders. The rationale of bringing out a special publication is to highlight gender dimensions of the programme and to record those initiatives that promote women's participation in areas where women are traditionally not well represented.

For better appreciation of gender equity in disaster risk reduction, UNDP with support from Women Power Connect - a national level organization of women's groups and individuals facilitated the compilation of “Women as Equal Partners”. The document is a collection of various experiences derived from the field as experienced by different departments of government, civil society organizations, members of disaster management committees and teams, Disaster Management functionaries, women volunteers, Health (ASHA) workers, Anganwadi workers, Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan volunteers, Panchayati Raj Representatives and community leaders. Their experiences in ensuring women's participation illustrate varied strategies adopted to address differential needs and vulnerabilities of men and women.

We are pleased to bring in this document as it highlights the involvement of women in disaster preparedness, creating new avenues for women to realize their inherent potential and empower them to influence people and decisions in the paradigm shift from women's vulnerabilities towards more comprehensive understanding of women's capacities.

We hope that this document will be effective in mainstreaming gender in to disaster risk management as a knowledge product and an advocacy tool.

Thank You.

**Rajeev Kumar**  
Director NDM III & Deputy National Project Director  
GOI- UNDP DRM Programme  
Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India

**Pieter Bult**  
Deputy Country Director (Programme)  
UNDP INDIA





# Acknowledgments

This document “Women as Equal Partners” is drawn from the experiences of women involved in the GoI-UNDP Disaster Risk Management Programme (DRM) and was prepared by team led by Mangathai Ramisetty. We thank all those women whose experiences have featured in this document for their committed involvement in the programme. Special thanks to state government functionaries who supported this initiative and Panchayat Raj Institution members, Self Help Group members, Anganwadi workers and other community members for their valuable contribution.

Special thanks goes to DRM Programme team especially Abha Mishra, Biranchi Rout, Tanushree Verma, Aditi Umrao, Rakesh Kumar Bhatt, Rahul Pandit, Ravi Ranganathan, Raja Vimal kumar.V, Kumar Sudhir, Sadashiv G.Thanke, Prasad Sankpal Vijay, Nandita Hazarika, Mukta Ram Deka, Siddhartha S.Chaliha , Kalika Mohapatra, Parimita Routroy, Bibhuti Bhushan Dalei, Subodh Ranjan Das, Purno Chandra Mohanty, B.R.Patel, Sarat Panda, Suneel Tiwari, Chetna Rajput, Himanshu Trivedi, Hiren Thakkar, Priyanka Paramar, Kamlesh Patel, Kamlesh Oza, Dhananjay Goswami, Mrugesh Raval, Kunjal Rao, Anugrah Abraham, Jacob John, Balaka Dey, Irene Stephen, Shafali Rajora and Sushil Chaudhary for their technical Support in accomplishing this initiative.

We acknowledge contribution of Women Power Connect (WPC) - a network of women's organizations led by Kanta Singh for developing the case studies. We thank Nandini Oberoi for editing this document and Eva van Beek (UNDP Communications team) for her valuable feed back.

The preparation of the document was facilitated by the enormous guidance received from the senior officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs (the executing agency of the DRM programme at the national level), and officers of UNDP country office, New Delhi.

G.Padmanabhan  
Officer In Charge  
DRM Unit UNDP India



# 01

## Women Leaders Addressing Differential Needs

*Bhadrak district, Orissa*



© D P O  
B H A D R A K

*Sulochana Behra Pradhan of Moharampur in a meeting with Disaster Management Programme functionaries and panchayat members.*

### In a nutshell

In Bhadrak district of Orissa, promoting women leaders under the Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Programme has paved the way for greater inclusion of women at the village level. Women leaders have emerged as role models for village women and the larger community. The community can now visualize women in new roles, surpassing the traditional gender divide between men and women and bring them to a common platform that enables them to participate in decision making.

*It is s very important for women to be involved in training about DRM and decision-making, at the time of the disaster."*

*-Jyotsnamoyi Pradhan, Kolha Panchayat*

On entering Moharampur panchayat office, women in huge numbers are seen attending training on first aid skills in the event of floods. Sulochana was busily interacting with women responding to their queries along with her disaster management team members. Sulochana Behra and Jyotsnamoyee are the women leaders whose example illustrates how women leaders can engender community preparedness efforts.

Sulochana Behra Pradhan of Moharampur panchayat was elected President of the panchayat in March 2007 and is the coordinator for all women SHG groups in her village. Sulochana sounded confident and equipped with all the essential information about the village administration. The Disaster Risk Management programme functionaries had oriented her about the need and importance of trainings, especially trainings for women. These interactions have strengthened her interest in ensuring women's participation across all community initiatives. Since she holds an influential position in the village, she utilises public platforms like panchayat meetings and SHG group meetings to address issues pertaining to women.

Since Sulochana is also an active Disaster Management Team member women find it easy to approach her and get the needed information. She felt it was necessary to equip women with ways of dealing with both minor and serious accidents, since most of the women in village worked both at home and in the agricultural fields. It was with this understanding that women were largely trained in first aid. Sulochana ensures that women are informed and aware about training programmes, and encourages them to participate and build up their life-saving skills. These training sessions incorporate information about the basic health care of women; and provide a synergy between Disaster Risk Management Programme (from here on reffered To as DRM) objectives and women's needs in the village.

Women in the village have now gained a platform to express their concerns, relating to both domestic and social issues. They have come together as a body with a representative who can negotiate on their behalf. They feel that they can now contribute beyond their individual families and be a vital part of community activities. This level of participation entailed a long process, which began with orienting the panchayat leader, who in turn influenced men and women in the village to support DRM activities and ensured women's engagement in the trainings. Thus DRM programme began harnessing the potential of women leaders in the community in order to ensure greater participation of women and to address the specific needs of women in day-to-day life.

### Replicable good practice

Partnering with women leaders within local governance institutions may be considered a replicable good practice to address differential gender needs because:

- It provides an opportunity of partnering with the leader of the panchayat to put forth DRM programme agenda, and builds up an influential advocate for women's issues.
- Besides having sensitivity to understand and focus on differential needs, she has at her disposal tools to address the needs.

### Lessons learnt

Highlighting the role and potential of women leaders empowers themselves and inspires women in the community. It increases their credibility and entails increased trust from the community.

### Challenge

Strong women leaders who exercise genuine influence in the community and can advocate the potential role of women need to be identified, which is not an easy task as they are difficult to find.

### Recommendation

Careful identification and nurturing the capabilities of women who can be potential leaders within the community will create a critical mass of able women leaders committed to address differential needs of men and women in the broader development processes.



© D P O B h a d r a k

*Jyotsnamoyi Pradhan of Kolha Village who is taking special interest in sensitising community on Disaster Risk Management Programme*

# 02

## Women master trainers developing disaster preparedness

Barpeta District, Assam



© D P O  
B A R P E T A

*A woman trainer along with a medical practitioner imparting first aid skills during a block level Disaster Management training and mock drill*

### In a nutshell

When women were inducted as master trainers in Assam, they contributed to change the traditional gendered roles of women as caregivers and nurturers. These master trainers paved the way for the greater participation of women in trainings for first aid as well as in trainings for search and rescue operations. Women were comfortable learning from women trainers. Subsequently, their candid participation in the planning process has resulted in broader, engendered and more effective disaster preparedness.

*“Earlier we would question a woman's ability to do heavy work (search and rescue operations); since we felt that a woman is not as strong as a man. Now we feel that if didi (sister) can learn and teach, then so can we.”*

*- Kajol, woman Disaster Management Team member*

Government of Assam under the GoI-UNDP Disaster Risk Management programme, sought to build the capacities of volunteers to act as trainers to impart disaster preparedness skills in the community. The volunteers drawn from the community with the help of civil society organizations underwent a Training of Trainers course at the block level. It was felt that women master trainers would provide an enabling environment for other women to learn. In addition, these trainers would act as facilitators in the process of developing a contingency plan at the village level and assist in the formation of Disaster Management Teams (DMTs).

A meeting with the gaonbura (village headman) facilitated the process of reaching out to the community and the selection of members of the DMTs. Since the women were aware of the resources available within the community and could identify the needs of the community in a disaster situation, they played a central role in the discussions.

A mapping exercise to analyse the vulnerability, resources and social set-up in the village was carried out before preparing the disaster management plan. The presence of the women master trainers created a comfort level for women and encouraged them to participate in the formulation of the Community Contingency Plan (CCP) and the selection of the Disaster Management team members.

In this block, trainings have been imparted in first aid and search and rescue operations. However the participation of women had been primarily in the first aid trainings. The woman master trainer, who leads the training in a particular block, facilitated the involvement of women in the entire training process and

helped to enhance their capacities, by virtue of her own status and role in the project. Being a woman-trainer, she had an advantage over her male colleagues, as she could talk to women individually, in their homes and convince them of their potential and the contribution that they can make towards prepared community. The master trainers explained that women do not need to be at the periphery of such programmes and impressed upon them that they should learn the skills that will equip them to take up an active role while faced with a calamity. The training was imparted to a mixed group of men and women. Since the team of trainers had a woman master trainer it was easy to demonstrate certain actions like Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), a technique which would have been uncomfortable for women to learn from a male-trainer.

Although a number of women took training in search and rescue methods, they refrained from becoming members of the team. Nevertheless they feel confident and are well equipped to save their families and assist the team in rescuing people when struck by a disaster. They are dispensing the impression that they are physically weaker than men and are unable to do tasks that need muscular strength.

The training given to the women by a woman-trainer has meant an alternate vision of a woman's role in society, as the space that has always been occupied by men is now shared with women. These women have also started taking an active part in other programmes run by the government and other organizations.

### Replicable good practice

Women master trainers may be considered a replicable good practice to build the preparedness capacities of the community because:

- Women as master trainers contribute to breaking prevalent gender stereotypes, since the task of training on disaster preparedness has traditionally been seen as a male bastion.
- This has led to an unprecedented participation of women in search and rescue training.
- It has meant the involvement of women in resource mapping, planning and the constitution of DMTs, which in turn has ensured engendered decision-making.

### Lessons learnt

- Women's participation in 'search and rescue' is possible and beneficial. When efforts are made to ensure a culturally sensitive environment for women to learn new skills, women are willing to shed their inhibitions and come forward to learn.
- When women see a clear application of skills-learnt to building the resilience of their families and community, they take significant steps towards overcoming social barriers to acquire those skills.
- Given the right environment, women can play a dynamic role in community mapping and planning, as they are most aware of the available resources within the community and relate better to the day-to-day realities, which ensue in a disaster.

### Challenges

- Even though women acquired specialised skills in 'search and rescue', they remain hesitant to take up responsibility within the DMT. The gender barriers in carrying out these roles still prevail.



## Recommendation

- An understanding of the root causes that hinder women from becoming members of the search and rescue DMTs is needed to overcome these barriers.



*School Girls in a sensitization rally on the eve of International Natural Disaster Risk Reduction Day*



*Women DMT members during a community risk assessment exercise in Surat dist. Gujarat*



*Women from Residents Welfare Association doing vulnerability and resource mapping in West Delhi dist. Delhi*





*Anganwadi Teachers engaged in mapping and life saving skill training programmes  
UEVRP Kochi Kerala*



# 03

## Youth volunteers' network to institutionalize disaster preparedness

West Delhi district, Delhi



© D P O  
W D E L H I

NYKS women volunteers during a training programme in West Delhi

### In a nutshell

One of the key elements of Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Programme is to establish and sustain partnership linkages with important stakeholders. One such partnership with Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) of West Delhi district highlights the potential of partnering with a youth volunteers' network in institutionalizing the DRM programme. Women volunteers from NYKS are striving to enhance the participation of women by supporting the district administration. Their efforts have succeeded in generating interest among women and persuaded them to come forward and contribute to building the disaster preparedness of their community.

*"Each time we perform in a slum colony, girls from that basti (cluster/small village) come to us and ask how they can get involved in the play. They also want to know our telephone numbers so that they can talk to us later. I feel like a star there."*

*- Pooja, a NYKS volunteer*

# N

Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) is an autonomous body of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, and was set up in 1972. NYKS organizes vocational trainings, adventure activities, sports events, youth leadership camps and camps that create awareness on social and cultural issues through its youth clubs, with the objective of involving youth in nation building. It is considered as a perfect platform that reaches out to the youth and also to a larger segment of the population. Since NYKS has a significant number of women members, their involvement is sought as facilitators to enhance women's participation in DRM activities. DRM has been integrated across the programmes of NYKS - in rallies, conventions and community interactions.

Lalita Kumari, Youth Coordinator (NYKS) has played a catalytic role in integrating DRM into NYKS activities, since 2003. She has involved herself and other women volunteers in all the disaster management activities conducted by Office of Deputy Commissioner West since the initiation of the programme in year 2003.

Today, around 61 registered NYKS clubs of male and female volunteers are operational in this district. Around 140 women volunteers from NYKS had undergone Disaster Management Training in 2007. It has been noticed that with the help of these trained women volunteers mainstreaming of women in Disaster management activities are taking place in much rapid way.

According to Lalita on one hand a lot of positive development has been seen in these women volunteers like they are seen to be more confident in coordinating and managing any programme and their mobility has increased as most of them belong to conservative families in Delhi Haryana border.

Some of these women volunteers were placed in the Deputy Commissioner's office and are making an outstanding contribution by providing support in the implementation of the District Disaster Management Plan. These women volunteers also assist the District Project Officer (DPO), DRM in creating awareness among women in different communities, resource mapping, plan formulation and in conducting trainings. Following the training they received from Aradhya (an NGO specializing in street theatre) they are enthusiastic about organizing street plays. They consider street plays to be very effective in creating awareness among the women, many of whom are illiterate.

Women volunteers have helped in reaching out to women, who hesitate to come out for awareness camps and performances. They themselves have undergone a change as a consequence of their involvement in the DRM Programme. I can see a very positive development in terms of their ability to organize and manage things. Their own mobility has increased and they are considered role models in their families and communities. They also motivate more girls to get involved as volunteers.”

- Ms Lalita Kumari, Youth Coordinator, NYKS

The favourable orientation of DPO West Delhi towards gender issues helped guide the volunteers to bring women on board. It has been noticed that participation of women has increased because of women volunteers. They are able to communicate and foster better acceptance among women in the community. The impact is evident when these women volunteers conduct programmes especially in villages and slum clusters. Women volunteers have worked very hard to make a place for themselves in society. The response of their families and from the community towards their work has been very positive.

### Replicable good practice

Partnering with a network of youth volunteers' may be considered a replicable good practice to institutionalize disaster preparedness because:

- Utilising existing networks institutionalizes the programme effectively and provides a wider outreach and smoother coordination.
- Youth networks like NYKS have a fair gender balance because they comprise of a pool of young and dynamic women, who strive to bring gender equity in community activities.
- Since these women volunteers are budding leaders, they act as a constant reserve for programme sustainability.

### Lessons learnt

Women volunteers are more sensitive in their interactions with women from the community. They show flexibility in adjusting the timings of performances or meetings to suit women, because they understand the differential gender roles and the constraints faced by women.

### Challenges

- While rural women respond well to awareness programmes, it is difficult to mobilize women from the slums as most of them work outside the home.
- Finding an appropriate venue in the slums, where women volunteers feel comfortable and safe, is often a challenge.



## Recommendations

- NYKS can play a role in motivating and training Self Help Groups to take up a more proactive role in disaster preparedness.
- Using the visual medium to communicate awareness messages would help to reach women with limited reading skills.



© D P O W D E L H I

*NYKS volunteers enacting a street play on disaster risk management on the streets of West Delhi*

# 04

## Interdepartmental coordination and media reaching out to women and girls

Saharanpur District, Uttar Pradesh



© D P O S A H A R A N P U R

Training in Islamia College for Girls under Sarva Siksha Abhiyan of Saharanpur

### In a nutshell

In the Saharanpur district of Uttar Pradesh, involvement of various government departments has helped the Disaster Risk Management (DRM) programme reach out to women and girls in the community. The departments assumed the responsibility of communicating the DRM messages through their already active network of women stakeholders. This district has successfully engaged with the media in creating mass awareness, with a special focus on the initiatives of women and girls. The local television channel and local newspapers cover most of the programme activities like mock drills, first-aid training and search and rescue demonstrations. The programme has been able to leverage media attention to effectively reinforce the need to prioritise DRM.

*“Men get information from different sources like newspapers and from talking to each other. They never share the news with us. Firstly, we do not have access to the papers and secondly we are laughed at even when we try to pick up the paper. Most of the women in the village are illiterate, so the only way we can learn something new is through TV or workshops like this.”*

*- Shanti, one of the women trained*

Saharanpur district is vulnerable to both natural as well as human-induced disasters. The town has a number of small and medium sized industries. Since safety norms are not followed, the industrial areas are particularly vulnerable to fire, gas leaks and electric shocks. Proprietors are reluctant to invest in training workers in industrial safety methods. In the rural areas LPG related mishaps, snake bites and floods are common. In both these contexts, it is the women who face a higher degree of vulnerability, due to their greater exposure to risk combined with the lack of adequate knowledge on how to prevent and cope with emergency situations.

In order to reduce disaster risks, the involvement of women and girls has been specifically advocated through government programmes and departments, like Sarva Siksha Abhiyan, Integrated Child Development Scheme, Mahila Samakhya, National Service Scheme and education, health and industry departments. As a result, these programmes and departments have provided Disaster Risk Management inputs in their women-specific trainings, workshops and rallies. As these functionaries are primary implementers of a spectrum of programmes in the district, their role has been critical in institutionalizing DRM with gender equity into government processes. The good rapport of DPO with other Project Officers has helped the DRM agenda reach various platforms.

*“Participation of women volunteers from NSS is a significant step and if all girls become aware, then our society will change for the good and will progress.”*

*Vimal Dubey, Upper Divisional Commissioner, in a media report (Manav Jagat, 12 January 2007)*

Since the programme makes a special attempt to reach out to students, regular training activities are conducted that target boys and girls in schools and

colleges. Girls have been especially encouraged to participate. After the initial hesitation, a number of these girls began to take lead roles in the workshops. These interventions have had an excellent impact on the target groups and have attracted media attention.

I will be very happy to make my own team in the village. I am sure there are a lot of girls who want to do good work but there are no opportunities like this. Once we start organizing young educated girls as volunteers, others will follow us”.

-Seema, a college student

The DPO has made a commendable effort in involving the media in DRM initiatives. Newspapers cover the different events organized under the programme, which helps to popularize Disaster Risk Management and makes it part of household conversations. When girls or women make outstanding contributions, their efforts are given special media coverage. This generates further interest and acceptability. To allow a broader reach, short films have also been made with the support from local media agencies to train the semi-literate rural population, in which women and girls are lead actors.



## Replicable good practices

Interdepartmental coordination and engaging the media is considered a replicable good practice to reach out to women and girls because:

- It creates a platform to mainstream DRM in departmental activities, especially in programmes with stakeholders like, the health, education and industry department and Mahila Samakhya , NSS and ICDS programmes. When these women, as agents of change, convey Disaster Risk reduction messages to the community, the information is instinctively reached out to men and women equally.
- Maintaining good relations with other district officials and fellow Project Officers helps in the practical implementation of programmes. The use of print and electronic media attracts the attention of different sections of the community and effectively reinforces the need to prioritize DRM.

## Lessons learnt

Many young girls are being trained to take up the task of educating other women which empowers them, helps in developing their personalities and increases women's participation.

Short films and media coverage of DRM training programmes featuring proactive women volunteers have proved to be effective not only in motivating more women volunteers but also in creating awareness amongst women and breaking many gender stereotypes.

## Challenge

Sustaining interdepartmental coordination mechanism is a challenge, since in the absence of an institutional mechanism; the onus is on the initiative of proactive officers.



## Recommendation

A systematic and strategic partnership with the media can multiply these efforts. Workshops with local media persons can be mobilized to generate awareness and highlight the role of women in DRM programmes.



Media Coverage of women's involvement in disaster risk management in Saharanpur district



*NSS volunteers at Ambaji fair preparing for emergency aid in Banaskantha dist . Gujarat*



*Women Volunteers enacting a street play in North West Delhi dist. Delhi*





*A woman being rescued by DMT members during flashfloods in Uttar Kasi dist. Uttarakhand*



*Women DMT members explaining a risk and vulnerability mapping in Bijnor dist. Uttar Pradesh*

# 05

## Women volunteers shaping a gender equal tomorrow

*Puri district, Orissa*



© D P O  
P U R I

*Demonstration of CPR technique by Haripriya, a woman volunteer working in puri district*

### In a nutshell

The Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Programme in Puri district of Orissa has engaged young women as master trainers to impart training on first aid techniques and other requisite skills. The devastating super-cyclone that hit Orissa in 1999, led to a surge in community response and participation in development interventions. In their attempt to involve women, the DRM programme functionaries decided to engage young women as master trainers. These master trainers would further facilitate in preparing the communities in building a gender responsive community disaster risk reduction plan.

*"The doctor's on the move!"*

*-Chinmoy Mohanty from Oriei village*

# H

Haripriya, Girima and Manini are the doctors referred here, who started to work as field volunteers with Sampark, a local NGO that works in the area of disaster preparedness. These young women are in the 21 to 23 year age-group and are actively involved in imparting training on first aid to both women and men. Haripriya Panda, Manini Raut and Girima are three women from Oriei village who have been associated with the DRM programme since its inception, in 2003. During these years, these women have gone through a unique journey and have discovered their capacities; fine tuned their skills and has inspired other women to actively participate in a similar process. Ever since the three of them joined Sampark, the participation of women has increased as expected. Besides the increase in the number of women volunteers, which was a direct result of their involvement, there were a number of other results which proved to be very positive for the larger understanding of gender roles within the community.

Hari Priya is a DMT member and the president of a local women's group called Mahila Swaasth Sangathan. In spite of being very busy, she has taken out time to train DMT members in first aid, in more than 150 villages. She says that though her family has been supportive of her engagement in the DRM programme, she has often faced resistance from her community and people from the villages near by. She rides to villages on her bicycle, challenging all stereotypes that restrict the mobility of women. To her surprise, people including some women have passed remarks like "such girls will one day stain the face of womanhood!" She was initially a bit uncomfortable with mixed participation of men and women but as she used to conduct these trainings she became more comfortable with the new environment and the initial hesitation faded away.

They were comfortable with the idea of giving Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation

(artificial respiration) to anyone, (whether a man or a woman) in an emergency. The community might be uncomfortable with the idea of women giving CPR to men but the volunteers believe that life saving skills cannot be wrong. They have also shared that now women were more comfortable during the trainings and many of them have also applied their learning.

Hari Priya and her colleagues said that women who were sensitized acknowledge the fact that men and women have different needs in situations of emergency like floods, however, they reiterate that equipping both men and women, avoids absolute dependence on men. They felt that men and women both should learn all the skills that can help them face a disaster, as disasters do not differentiate on gender! This has indeed been the underlying orientation in the trainings done so far.

### Replicable good practices

Bringing in women as master trainers may be considered a replicable good practice because:

- Women being cast in the role of the forerunners of knowledge leads to a positive change in the understanding of gender at the community level.
- Women being trainers can facilitate greater participation by women in the trainings, which in turn enhances their life skills.
- The involvement of women master trainers boosts their confidence and self esteem and increases their exposure to the world

### Lessons learnt

- Involving women as master trainers can ensure involvement of the entire community in the trainings, easing out the hesitation of men and women coming together to share the same space and learn the same skills.

### Challenges

- Traditional perspective towards women's gender roles and allowances still hampers their mobility.
- Too much emphasis on women training women in first aid might result in typifying the skill being imparted as useful only to women.

### Recommendation

- Women SHGs may be approached in these villages to initiate training programmes with women through the existing trainers.



*Hari priya, First Aid Trainer on showing first aid techniques in Gop village of Puri district.*



# 06

## Citizen Leaders ensure sustainability

Sitapur district, Uttar Pradesh



© D P O  
S I T A P U R

Archana, an active Citizen Leader displaying IEC material on the Disaster Management Programme

### In a nutshell

To ensure the sustainability of its programmes, the Disaster Risk Management (DRM) programme proposed interventions aimed at developing the capacities of institutions and individuals so that they can play a lead role beyond the programme. In Sitapur district, of Uttar Pradesh, a promising initiative has prepared a large team of responsible women and men as Citizen Leaders. These Citizen Leaders are playing a direct role in increasing local resilience and addressing the root causes of vulnerability. Since most of these Citizen Leaders are women, their unique role in effectively mobilizing the whole community is worth highlighting.

*I go and talk to the village Pradhans to seek their support in organizing events in the villages. Initially other women laughed at me but now they envy my position. I get to travel to different blocks for training and meet many important people."*

*- Archana, a Citizen Leader, Sitapur*

Sitapur is one of those districts, where in spite of a large number of development programmes, the desired change or development has not occurred. One of the major reasons for this is the lack of community leadership and initiative. During field visits and after a close observation of the local dynamics, the idea of Citizen Leaders came into existence. In order to attain these desired outcomes it was necessary to develop the idea of citizen leadership.

In this context, the DPO organised a three-day training session in each block and encouraged voluntary participation by providing a direct link between the programme and their daily lives. It was encouraging to see eight enthusiastic young people come forward to volunteer their time and effort towards this endeavour. In addition to them, few volunteers from Self Help Groups (SHGs) have come forward along with local NGOs. Together this pool of volunteers is referred to as 'Citizen Leaders'.

Citizen Leaders were different from the Master Trainers. Master trainers were usually selected on the basis of their training skills, their enthusiasm towards the programme and their desire to contribute and take the message forward, while Citizen Leaders were people who were not only were committed to the Disaster Management Program but have also been associated with all the community development activities in society. Significant fact about the citizen leaders was that they were not chosen by anyone, but volunteered. Now Disaster Management was no longer district programme functionaries' agenda alone, it became citizen leader's agenda and they were taking DRM functionaries help to take the programme forward and to make it sustainable in the community.

As a consequence of regular inputs, trainings and mutual interactions, their

capacities have developed. As citizen leaders assumed ownership of the DRM programme, their potential was revealed as active agents of change in the community. Out of 21 Citizen Leaders of the district, 60 percent are women. This complements the efforts of the DPO as these volunteers are well prepared and trained to make the impact of this programme sustainable. Some of these Citizen Leaders are illiterate but they conduct regular mock drills and training programmes.

Archana is a Citizen Leader. She is an agricultural labourer and lives in Machreta, Sitapur. She has studied up to class 12 and was very keen to do something special in her life but was not getting the right platform. When DRM training programmes were organized in her block, she participated as a trainee. She also took part in the five-day Master Trainers' training. Her outgoing personality and immense interest in the ongoing activities made her very popular and useful for various activities. Volunteers like Anita are involved in organizing follow-up meetings with village women to improve their ability and confidence to share their experiences, needs and concerns about disasters.

Women leaders contributed significantly in enhancing the quality of inputs and helped in increasing the participation of women in community-based disaster management. In the blocks where women Citizen Leaders were involved, women's participation in trainings and other events was found to be higher than in other areas. The DPO is confident that these Citizen Leaders will ensure sustainability of this programme.

### Replicable good practices

Developing citizen leaders to ensure sustainability may be considered a replicable good practice because:

- A team of committed volunteers that model citizenship in the community is a critical resource that also provides sustained follow-up to the programme activities.
- Young people coming forward on their own accord leads to long term community ownership and sustainability. The potential of these Citizen Leaders may be utilised for a broad range of social development initiatives.

"We try to look beyond the programme mandate. There are man-made disasters taking place everyday in our home (in the form of female foeticide) and on the road (sexual harassment of women). Our group is also trying to sensitize students in schools and colleges on these issues. Of course our major responsibility is to equip them to help themselves and others during and after natural disasters."

- Deependra Saini, woman Citizen Leader

"I am trying to add value to the existing systems by investing my time in developing these human resources. I am confident that my team members will not only be responsible citizens themselves, but will lead towards holistic development."

- Aditi Umrao, DPO (Sitapur)

### Lessons Learnt

Women citizen leaders in this case study began with enthusiasm but showed a lack of confidence possibly due to their social conditioning.

Regular motivation and inputs has changed their orientation and they have realised their potential as agents of change.

### Challenge

Finding a leader is a challenge and the migration of Citizen Leaders is a loss to the ongoing efforts and leaves a vacuum till new leaders are built up.

## Recommendation

Incentives in the form of long term training in a good training academy, scholarships, honorariums, insurance, etc. may be considered to encourage more young people to come forward as Citizen Leaders.



©  
D  
P  
O  
  
S  
I  
T  
A  
P  
U  
R

*Women Participants attending a DRM sensitization Programme in Sitapur District*





*Women Mason's training in Ahmedabad UEVRP Gujarat*



*Women Volunteers practicing Chair Lift technique in a Search and Rescue Training in Jowai Dist. Meghalaya*



*Women involved in analysing PRA map for developing Village Disaster management plan in Jajpur dist. Orissa*



*Women volunteers practicing different emergency shifting techniques in Angul dist. Orissa*



# 07

## Women in street theatre

North-west district, Delhi



© D P O N W D E L H I

*A street play being performed by an all-woman cast to show disaster preparedness play at a school in North West Delhi*

### In a nutshell

The Gol-UNDP Disaster Risk Management (DRM) programme seeks to develop awareness among school children on disaster preparedness. Street theatre has proved to be an effective tool in these awareness campaigns. However, prior experience has shown that street theatre troupes consist largely of men and girl students were not forthcoming in participating and interacting with these troupes. To address this, an all-women's theatre troupe was formed in north-west district of Delhi that succeeded in breaking down gender barriers effectively.

*I will go home and tell my mother not to throw water on electrical items and switches at the time of fire. I did not know that we could use sand to extinguish fire. My father also has to be careful about where he drops his beedi after smoking. It could be very dangerous."*

*Puneeta - a student of class IV after watching a street play*

Awareness generation is one of the key components of the School Safety Initiative under the DRM programme. Within this, street plays have been chosen as a medium because they can effectively engage the attention of the children, and can retain their interest in the training, planning process and in the mock drill that follows. These plays spread awareness about disasters, list basic dos and don'ts, highlight the need for community planning and the role and responsibilities of community volunteers before, during and after a disaster.

Since most of the theatre troupes consisted largely of men, girl students were seen to be reluctant to participate in these interactions. Further, the absence of women from the street plays reinforced the negative gender stereotype that women play a limited role in disaster management.

To address these challenges, District Project Officer north-west Delhi, encouraged Aradhya (an NGO which specialises in communicating social messages through street theatre) to set up an all women's theatre troupe to take the message of disaster preparedness to everyone in the community, in 2004. This theatre troupe consisted of seven young women in the 20-25 year-age-group, who were students in Aradhya's vocational training centre. Since women's participation in theatre groups is not socially acceptable in Indian society, these young women have succeeded breaking two gender stereotypes, first that women can act and educate through theatre and second they have helped to change the dominant mindset that disaster preparedness and information dissemination are tasks that are to be done only by men.

For the past three years, this troupe has performed throughout north-west Delhi covering schools, slums, resettlement colonies, villages, etc. Their efforts have been widely appreciated. The plays are scripted, planned and customized

according to the audience. If the audience consists of young children, the play will be made humorous and fast paced and will reiterate the main messages repeatedly. Besides enacting the play, the women's team also helps the teachers in initiating and updating school disaster management plans, assists in the formation of task forces, in evacuation drills, in drop-cover-hold drills and in distributing IEC material.

### Replicable good practice

Women in street theatre may be considered a replicable good practice because of the following outcomes:

- Having women in the theatre troupe, nurtured an environment conducive for students (especially girls) and teachers to participate freely in the event which led to greater clarity on disaster preparedness.
- The composition of the cast of the play allowed young women a space in the mainstream, and highlighted a gendered understanding of the potential role of women.
- Encouragement of the role that women can play in disaster preparedness through an all-women theatre group contributed to a gender sensitive IEC campaign.

Doing this has changed me as a person... I feel satisfied that I am spreading knowledge about something everybody needs to know today. I may leave my job eventually if I go for higher studies, but I will never leave acting like this, as it is both informative and fun."

....Poonam, actor in theatre troupe

### Lessons learnt

- Significant involvement of women in IEC teams leads to more effective and gender sensitive communication of DRM messages.
- Sustained, appropriate and gender sensitive IEC interventions do contribute to a broader understanding of disaster preparedness among children.

### Challenge

Social barriers faced by all-women theatre groups in terms of acceptability have been a persistent challenge.

### Recommendation

The IEC campaign would be able to generate further interest among small children if troupes such as this one were to utilize other methods like pantomime and films.



©  
D  
P  
O  
  
N  
W  
  
D  
E  
L  
H  
I

**A Woman performer in the street plays explaining disaster preparedness to school children**

# 08

## Self help groups linking disaster management to development

*Latur district, Maharashtra*



© D P O  
L A T U R

*Women SHG members during an awareness campaign in Killari village*

### In a nutshell

Latur district in Maharashtra is a region that is no stranger to disaster. Although the people of Killari (a village in Latur), welcomed the Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Programme, a low response from women was experienced especially in the rural areas, as they are more reticent in participating in public. In order to address this challenge, an initiative to train Self Help Groups (SHGs) was undertaken. This initiative has successfully ensured increased participation of women in orientation meetings, participatory activities and trainings.

*Women belonging to SHGs all over Maharashtra are very forward thinking and are eager participants in group activities for the benefit of the entire community. In fact, I would go so far as to say that it is the spirit of these women more than men that has made the programme such a success in Killari."*

*- District Project Officer Latur*

**K**illari village, the epicentre of the Latur quake is one of the villages where the UNDP-Gol led DRM programme has been launched. Previous experience at the village level revealed a general difficulty in convincing women to come out of their homes to join the programme. Apart from agriculture related work, the only other significant activity women engaged in was in Self Help Groups (SHGs). Therefore DRM programme functionaries found that SHGs were an effective launch-pad to encourage women's participation in disaster risk reduction activities.

The formation of SHGs in Killari was initiated by the Women's Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) and their representative provides guidance to the SHGs. The groups are visited regularly by representative from the Corporation. All the SHGs in Killari have been functioning for at least a year. Over time, they have grown to become closely-knit collectives of women, with a well developed sense of group consciousness. Since they are involved in other group activities, the members of these groups are already oriented to working collectively in the community interest, and almost all the adult women of the village are involved.

It was with the help of WEDC representative, the District Project Officer of Latur and the trainer from Maitreyi Foundation (a non-governmental organisation involved in the training of DMTs in Latur) that the DRM programme was introduced to women. As the women were approached by a familiar agent (WEDC field worker), they were more receptive to the idea of disaster preparedness. As many of these women had a first hand experience of the 1993 earthquake, they could instantly relate to the need for disaster preparedness. Those women who had moved to the region after the earthquake and had no prior experience of a large scale disaster revealed that they were initially drawn in by the discussions relating to issues like how to deal with commonplace

accidents and they gradually became appreciative of the DRM programme, as it was explained to them.

The experience of the awareness generation and training sessions in Killari reflect the joint participation of both men and women from the stage of the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) to the formation and training of the first aid team and the 'search and rescue' team. However, even though the trainings were conducted jointly for men and women, men and women were separated into different groups for the mock drills, as the women were uncomfortable performing the activities in front of the men of the village.

"It was essential to conduct the mock drills separately for men and women, so as to allow the women to let go of their inhibitions."

- Mr. Dhananjay Gaekwad, Founder Chairperson, Maitreyi Foundation

SHG membership in Killari reveals a widespread network which offers the additional benefit of an effective channel of communication. It is precisely by roping in these groups that the DRM programme in Killari has benefited from the active participation of women.

### Replicable good practice:

Partnering with SHGs is a replicable good practice for successful mainstreaming of gender because:

- SHGs form an unparalleled channel of communication, taking the message of disaster preparedness to even those who are not directly associated with the programme.
- These are closely-knit collectives of women with a well-developed sense of group consciousness and advocacy with this group ensures sustainable impact in the community.
- Women's groups are good campaigners of community activities not only among women, but also with their families and in their neighbourhoods.

### Lessons learnt:

- Partnering with already existing forum of communities like SHGs facilitates the mobilization of women to participate in activities for community-preparedness.
- Duration and timings of the programme to be finalized to suit the convenience of the women.

"We work in the fields from 10 am to 6pm everyday and attend to housework when we return home. It is not possible for us to attend training sessions continuously for two to three days, as it means letting go of our bread and butter. It would better if the training is organized for a single day, but about twice or thrice in a year, so that we can refresh what we have learnt and reassess its relevance from time to time."

- Ratna President of an SHG in Killari

### Challenges:

- The conduct of mock drills separately for men and women may serve the immediate purpose of ensuring that women's participation but its long-term utility is questionable, as it does nothing to address gender relations and popular stereotypes.
- There is a need for the training sessions to be continued over a sustained period of time, as after some time, the trainees report a disconnect with the activities they have been trained in.

## Recommendations:

- If this programme is to be truly inclusive from the point of view of gender, it is essential that the trainers systematically wean themselves away from the practice of conducting separate mock drills for men and women.
- It is essential to make each individual find a connection with the programme, to identify with the need for disaster risk management, in order to ascertain their wholehearted commitment to the same.



*SHG women in a sensitization workshop on community preparedness*





*Chair person of VDMC explaining vulnerability mapping to civil defence volunteers & VDMT members in Manipur*



**First Aid training programme for Women Disaster Management Team volunteers of Kolkata Municipal Corporation under UEVRP West Bengal.**



*Fire dept officers interface with Women DMT members on emergency community response in Kannya Kumari dist Tamil Nadu*



*SHG and DMT members meeting along with one of the consultants in Nagapattinam dist. Tamil Nadu*



# 09

## Accredited Social Health Activists as role models

*Nagaon district, Assam*



© D P O  
N A G A O N

*ASHA worker explaining village mapping exercise to DMT members*

### In a nutshell

Assam is prone to natural disasters like earthquakes, floods, landslides, cyclones and occasionally even droughts. The Disaster Risk Management programme was launched to reduce the vulnerability of the communities to natural disasters in this multi-hazard disaster prone area. In Nagaon district, the programme was launched in 2004, with the help of women 'Accredited Social Health Activists' (ASHA workers) who are a link between the public health centres and the villagers. They are drawn from the community where they serve and are therefore conscious of the needs and available resources. It is these women who have dared to step out of their houses to take up community responsibilities and act as powerful change-agents to influence women in the village.

*"We feel very useful and are filled with pride, when we see ourselves fulfilling our responsibilities towards the family and community".*

*- Mitali Goswamy ASHA worker Nagaon*

# T

The women in this district constrained by their traditional gender roles were not participating actively in any programmes and were tied to their household tasks. The ASHA workers managed to rope in a large number of women to participate in the awareness campaigns, in the designing of Community Contingency Plans and other DRM programme activities. ASHA workers who assist the health department in preparing the village health plan, proved to be resourceful in formulating the DRM plan. The ASHA workers share a rapport with everyone in the community and are looked up to by women, as they have gone beyond the conventional boundaries of their gender. It was perceived that the gendered status of women could be challenged and changed by reaching them through ASHA workers. Through them information about the programme was disseminated and women were motivated to attend the meetings/orientation programmes.

ASHA workers became members of the Disaster Management Teams (DMTs) and inspired other women to join in the DMTs as well. As a result ten DMTs were constituted and there was adequate representation of women in each of them. ASHA workers also facilitated first aid and search and rescue training for a large number of people. The women never thought that they could balance the responsibilities of their families with the membership of a team, are now surprised that they can take on additional tasks. The DRM trainings especially search and rescue trainings have enhanced their confidence and they feel that they are capable of handling any situation during a calamity. The realization that they can contribute to the community life qualitatively and still keep up with their domestic tasks, has given them a new confidence to explore new dimensions of their own personalities and reassess their position vis-a-vis men. The young girls in the community were also encouraged to undertake the training in first aid and in search and rescue methods.



The ASHA workers were aware of the available formal mechanisms and played the lead role in these women's groups and ensured that their needs were addressed. The groups have come together to form a gender advocacy group and a network for social action that works to meet the most pressing needs of the community. This networking has brought to the fore their common needs, concerns and the views of the community.

### Replicable good practices

Partnering with ASHA workers may be considered a replicable good practice to address differential needs because:

- Capitalizing on the existing structures has resulted in achieving the desired results.
- They are an effective link between the community and other stakeholders.
- Using a woman as an entry point to reach out to other women has helped gain maximum participation.

"It is beneficial to teach young girls because they further educate two families; the parental and that of their in-laws."

- Haricharan Deka villager

### Lessons learnt

- Decision making at the grass-roots level facilitates empowerment. By involving themselves in the decision-making processes related to the community, members have increased their self-confidence in making decisions about their personal lives as well.
- Informal support networks encourage peer counselling. ASHA workers help other women to cope with daily life through sharing of insights and new ideas

### Challenge

- A strategy is needed that can sustain the community's interest in this programme.

### Recommendations

- There is a need for a refresher course for ASHA workers to sustain the interest of stakeholders.
- The DRM programme should not be executed in isolation but integrated with other programmes of the government.



©  
D  
P  
O  
  
N  
A  
G  
A  
O  
N

*A mock drill in progress with women's participation in Naogaon district*

# 10

## Through the rise of sisterhood

*Nagapattinam district, Tamilnadu*



© D P O  
N A G A P A T T I N A M

*Women self help group members practicing in a Search and Rescue skills in Nagapattinam*

### In a nutshell

GOI and UNDP Disaster Management Programme intervened in the district of Nagapattinam, with an initiative that sought to create disaster preparedness among the communities. All women Self Help Groups have emerged as an effective medium to reach the communities and have led to successful implementation of the programme. It was through these village level SHGs, running since the year 2002, that the local implementation team could break the ice and attract the attention from the communities of various villages and urban settlements in the district. The Kilvelur Panchayat level SHG federation is one body, where the women members of the SHGs are also the taskforce members of the village Disaster Management Teams. The support and facilitation provided by these women has been exemplary and of immense significance in the process.

*If I were not a part of the DRM, I would have thought that there are certain things that only men can do during a disaster, but not now."*

*– Poorna, SHG and DMT member*

Abandoning the traditional way of approaching the community, the DRM team in Nagapattinam led by District Project Officer began by harnessing the influence of the SHGs in the villages. Recognizing the strong hold that the all-women SHGs had on the community, they were chosen as a medium to reach the people. Ever since, these women have been central in carrying out the processes involved like mobilizing the community for attending the trainings, arranging trainings and the constitution of the taskforces. They also conduct review meetings for the trainings held, and they utilize the platform of their group meetings and hold discussions among their members for this purpose.

When these SHGs were formed in the year 2002, nobody imagined that they will develop into such a useful resource. SHGs started disseminating information about the programme through their informal networks in the villages. Due to a long presence of SHG operations in the area, men and women could talk to each other freely in public spaces and exchange information. Such informal discussions led to mass mobilization of the community and brought the desired attention and participation to the training programmes. Since the SHG members enjoyed a better status in their homes and villages now, they could exert influence on their husbands and other family members to understand the importance of the programme and facilitate it as a community initiative.

Men in the community, who have been categorically against the idea of a public forum for women in the villages, now agree that these SHGs have been a central point of communication for the DRM programme, and have helped to equip the community with essential knowledge and skill to face disasters.

“The SHGs covers the limitations of illiteracy of a large number of people in the community, now in spite of being illiterate they can access all the information concerned with their village.”

- Jiva, a taskforce member

The role of the SHGs is significant at all the levels of the program. Many women after getting trained in first aid and search and rescue methods now have taken up the role of volunteers, trainers and facilitators to conduct awareness sessions and trainings. Discussions and reviews about the programmes progress in the area are held during the monthly meetings of the SHGs. The minutes of these meetings are then discussed in the panchayat assemblies, where the entire village can then contribute in suggestion building and support the smooth working of the programme in the village. These suggestions and reviews are shared with the area DPO, who then facilitates the necessary changes and amendments in the implementation.

If there were no all-women SHG groups, our village will go back 15-20 years in time; all the women will be behind the doors and social problems will prevail.”

- Mumtaaz, SHG and DMT member

The women members themselves feel much more equipped with all the information and skills imparted to them during the trainings. They realize that these trainings are required and very informative. Being a crucial part of the entire process gives them a sense of adequacy and contentment.

The women notice a positive change in their domestic relationships with men and their presence and visibility in the community. Their identity as a strong group at the community level makes them feel empowered both emotionally and financially. They too are now trained in something from which everybody can benefit and the community at large acknowledges this. These women take pride in their newly acquired status, as they can now intervene in community level decisions and get socially involved with each other's problems, whether domestic or otherwise. They agree that their activities are smooth and fruitful because all of them have acquired a level of mental compatibility in all these years of togetherness.

### Replicable good practices:

- Harnessing the strength and reach of an existing local institution to introduce the programme facilitated the process and saved the effort of creating an alternate structure and then gaining the required acceptability by the community.
- Involvement of women as communicators and facilitators in the processes promises a holistic approach to the assessment of community needs.

### Lessons learnt:

- SHGs can be used as a medium for introducing new initiatives to the community. This initiative utilizes an existing resource and at the same time adds to its capabilities and scope.
- Outside agencies contacting women groups for initiative introduction adds to their visibility and perceived credibility, hence elevating their present status in the community.
- Any community programme will be incomplete without the much required participation of women.

### Challenge:

Since the community is not aware about the natural processes that lead to a disaster, their involvement remains restricted to preparedness.

### Recommendation:

Women can be trained formally in life skills, communication methods and processes of natural disasters. An introduction to the processes and environmental issues in general will equip them better to understand what leads to a disaster and can also help in the prevention of local disasters.



*Women and men learning shifting techniques in a search and rescue training of Nagapattinam District*





*Women DMT members in a Water Rescue mock Drill in Surat district Gujarat*



*Women DMT members making a make shift stretcher with local resources in Barpeta dist.Assam*



*An NSS volunteer learning rope rescue technique for high rise buildings in Vadodara dist. Gujarat*



*Women Trainer in rescue in a mock drill in Angul Dist. Orissa*

# 11

## Women volunteers as essential change agents

Mayurbhanj district, Orissa.



© D P O  
M  
A  
Y  
U  
R  
B  
H  
A  
N  
J

*Bhasvati, a woman volunteer teaching different bandages as part of first aid training in Debasthal village of Mayurbhanj District*

### In a nutshell

In Mayurbhanj district, women's role in development initiatives has traditionally been restricted to the so called 'women related activities' because of gender bias and resistance by the community to accept women as changeagents. In this background, the DRM programme's interventions promoted and encouraged women volunteers to spearhead community preparedness for hazards/disasters. The programme initiatives in the community not only involved these women as the entry points for reaching out to the other women in the villages; but also mainstreamed their efforts and participation.

*"At best, we could have saved few lives from the flood waters but would have left them to starve. Only women could think of mobilizing food materials and the setting up of a kitchen from anganwadi stock and ran a free kitchen, collect medicines from the Public Health Centre (PHC) and could check the outbreak of epidemics!"*

- Raju Mohanty Unchewali

# W

When the programme for Community Based Disaster Preparedness was launched the activities involved mostly men, as the traditional understanding of the community alluded to men only. Later the need for women's involvement was realized. The DRM programme was perhaps the first in the gram panchayats of Salgaol and Unchewali that stressed on immediate participation of both men and women for disaster preparedness in the villages.

The mainstreaming strategy was that women can be reached through a new resource pool of active women volunteers, drawn from within the community. Introduction and inclusion of women volunteers brought about a whole new perspective to women's work at the community level, focusing on the indispensable contribution women make in disaster risk reduction at the grass root level.

Bhashvati Dixit, is one such woman volunteer from the Debasthal village. She has been keenly involved with women's development since her college days. She understands how the gender stereotypes often keep women away from the mainstream, resulting in their non-participation in decision-making at the village level. She is now a DMT member, for both the first aid and the search and rescue team. She has been associated with the DRM programme for the past one year and feels that this programme has proved extremely beneficial women in the area, as they no longer feel helpless nor do they have to rely on men during a disaster.



“ A mother doesn't feed her child till the time it cries. So, until we women come forward and demand for our rights, people and the government will not make that happen!”

- Bhashvati Dixit, volunteer and DMT member, Debasthal village.

Bhashvati who is now in her mid thirties does not intend to get married as she believes that social institutions like marriage always hinder women from achieving the goals in their lives.

Savita Dixit, is another such volunteer from Unchewali Grampanchayat, who has always been proactive in dealing with issues that affect women and in community service, ever since her husband died some 25 years back. She received trainings in the year 2005 and since then she has been engaged in motivating the community people for better disaster preparedness. Her proactive role during floods in October 2007 was highly appreciated. She was in constant touch with the Emergency Operations Center that is operational at the District Collector's office, for weather updates during heavy downpours which last for three-four days continuously. Anticipating heavy floods, she mobilized other DMT members and initiated evacuation from the low-lying areas of the village. Together, they even initiated a free kitchen to feed the flood victims. The well-timed response and initiative taken by Savita and her team members, has been acknowledged by the men in the village and they recognize the importance of women's participation in community based initiatives.

She feels that the trainings on First Aid and Search and Rescue techniques have facilitated a smooth entry of women into the mainstream community space and given to them an acceptance by the men, which was extremely difficult to acquire.

Thus the DRM programme functionaries in consultation with the local leaders and representatives identified active women volunteers and sensitized them on disaster risk prevention and reduction. These women volunteers were mandated to mainstream gender equity through increasing women's involvement in community disaster preparedness activities and their support was solicited in bringing women to the orientation and training programmes on disaster preparedness and its management. As a result of the efforts of volunteers, there was increase in women's participation in the meetings and they shared a common space with men, in the decision-making process. It was initially difficult to get women to be articulate; however continuous follow-up and support from the women volunteers gave them the confidence to put their views forward in the orientation and planning drives in the villages.

### Replicable good practices

Forming a resource pool of women volunteers and using them as to mobilize the community may be adopted as a replicable best practice because;

- Women volunteers are a strong influence among the women in the community. This potential could be harnessed to rope them into long-term community initiatives, thus mainstreaming their presence and contribution.
- It is necessary to sensitize the larger community about the wider role that women can play and the responsibilities that they can discharge in time of a crisis. The perceptions of society regarding the traditional notions on women's abilities need to be changed.
- The Uchenwali experience has proved that women can be involved in the mobilization of the community, and in an evacuation and emergency response as effectively as men, once they have the appropriate orientation and training.



## Lessons learnt

- Balanced and sustained participation from the community can be achieved through long-term planning and involvement of both men and women.
- Men and women can be involved in different activities that demand necessary participation of both and ensure long-term and positive results.

## Challenges

- Challenges from cultural rigidities remains a challenge for women that limits their level of participation.
- It was noticed that though women were trained in search and rescue methods, they did not take the lead in demonstrating rescue methods.

## Recommendation

- The initiatives of the women volunteers in the community should be documented and widely showcased. This will not only encourage their efforts at the village level but also add to the popularity and desirability of their involvement in the community activities, and help to take their participation to the next level.

©  
D  
P  
O  
  
M  
A  
Y  
U  
R  
B  
H  
A  
N  
J



*Bhashvati during a high rise building rescue training in Debasthal Village*

# 12 Developing gender sensitivity as a practice

## Gujarat Experience



© D P O  
V A D O D A R A

Disaster Management team women members during a Search and Rescue training in Vadodara district

### In a nutshell

The DRM programme in Gujarat covers a total of 14 districts in the State. Apart from the State programme staff, there are 30 National United Nations Volunteers (NUNVs) working at the block level. This study is a documentation of the various innovative practices employed to ensure equal participation of men and women in the Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Programme in various districts of Gujarat.

*“One of the villages in my area is populated with a community that maintains strict segregation of men and women in public. When the men and women refused to attend the meeting together, I convened separate meetings for them, but spent a lot of time discussing the need for joint participation before addressing the need for disaster preparedness.”*

*-UN Volunteer, Rajkot*

Gujarat enjoys the distinction of being one of the States covered by the DRM programme in the first phase of its implementation. In the course of time, the Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority (GSDMA) has developed into a role model for other State Disaster Management Authorities, by taking the initiative to adopt the DRM programme and making a special plan outlay for it in the State budget. Also, the programme staff in the State has been very successful in mainstreaming gender issues in their practices.

Beginning with the awareness generation stage itself, special attention is given to ensuring that women are drawn into the programme. The NUNVs report the need for a good deal of persuasion to convince women in most rural areas to attend these meetings, and this may even involve orienting the men of the village to the necessity of women participating in a programme of this nature.

While fixing the timing for meetings at the cluster level and the village level, care is taken to avoid a clash with the timings of the daily chores of the women or even their leisure time activities, in order to make it convenient for them to participate. Once the meeting is convened, attempts are made to sustain their participation by including in the discussion issues that they can immediately relate to. Issues such as how to treat small and common injuries that children incur during play or that one could incur during daily activities, and means to prevent the same are what women tend to respond to.

"We engage all means we can find to get the women to participate in the DRM programme. Sometimes we even make emotional appeals to them, telling them that what they learn could probably help them save the life of their husband or children or other family members."

*-UN Volunteer, Kutch*

They can contribute meaningfully to appraisals/ vulnerability and resource mapping as they spend more time in the village than at work in the fields, and therefore are more aware of the activities that occur in the village including different areas where people are concentrated at during a particular time of the day etc. Sometimes, the women who participate in the PRA become reticent when it comes to participating in the training for a particular team. In fact, there are instances where they send their male relatives to join the teams on their behalf. In such cases, the UNVs make use of the social networks of the women in the villages to address them and explain to them the fact that their participation is essential if the programme is to make any impact on the disaster preparedness of the village.

The UNVs also reveal that they have developed greater awareness of the need to promote partnership between men and women, after they attended the workshop on mainstreaming gender issues within the DRM programme. While they always encouraged women's participation, the workshop oriented them to the need for the joint cooperation of men and women in any community-based activity. Earlier they saw women's participation as something that could be an additional benefit, but after attending the workshop, they realized that women's participation alongside men is a pre-requisite for the success of the programme.

"Even before the workshop we used to encourage women to participate. However, it was without understanding of the specific benefits of their participation, and of the positive impact that their involvement in the programme could have upon their personal lives. Now we try our best to draw them in by convincing them of the way that the activities would be beneficial to them personally and to the village as a whole."

*-UN Volunteer, Baroda*

When such an understanding established itself in the minds of the UNVs, they began to seek different ways of integrating women into the practice of DRM. They sought out the various forums where they could address women, such as in the Gram Sabha meetings, Self Help Group (SHG) meetings, Mahila Mandal meetings etc. They spoke to all-woman audiences about the need for them to contribute to the process, in order to make the mitigation of risk feasible. In several places, meetings were organized with the help of the aanganwadi workers and the health workers, who shared a very close rapport with the women, and were also respected by the men due to the nature of their profession.

"The workshop was extremely beneficial in terms of making us all view women as being not just as a vulnerable group during disasters but as having the potential to be the strength of the programme."

*- Programme Associate Gujarat*

The women UNVs reported some difficulties arising in their work owing to their sex. A major concern they all share is that of safety. Since the Gram Sabha meetings in most villages are held after the day's work in the evening, it becomes difficult for them to travel to these meetings and they have to ensure that they are accompanied by reliable and locally respected men. Their mobility as individuals is therefore restricted unless they make proper arrangements for their safety. This issue is particularly amplified in the case of areas dominated by tribals, as the villagers here are usually intoxicated in the evenings, and makes it very

difficult for the women to carry out the programme as intended. Another common problem faced by the women is that male villagers do not converse with them openly, and sometimes view the programme as being an initiative for women alone. They find it difficult to accept the leadership of a woman UNV. Another point brought forward by the women is that they are inconvenienced by the lack of safe and secluded toilets in the villages.

UNVs tackle these problems by ensuring that the talatti (Village Revenue and development Officer) or any male government representative travels with them to visit the villages, and it is through this that they draw in the men as well. They also say that they enjoy certain advantages of being women, such as the ability to talk to inhibited women individually, in the privacy of their homes, and convince them of their potential to contribute towards making the village more secure.

### Replicable good practices:

- Taking the help of the aanganwadi women is an extremely beneficial practice, as they share a close bond with the local women and are in a good position to encourage them to participate.
- Coordinating with other popular non-governmental organizations working in close association with the local communities can be used as an effective stepping-stone to establish an element of credibility of the programme in the minds of the men and women.

### Lessons learnt:

- It is important to gather the support of the prominent members of the community, especially those who hold a position of influence among the local women, so as to capitalize on their position and rapport to draw women into active participation.
- People place greater faith in a programme that is run by the government than in a non-governmental initiative, as government support and the presence of officers such as the talatti, the Block Development Officer etc. lends to the programme a level of sustainability and permanence.

### Challenges:

- A common limitation that arises from the experiences of all the UNVs is the lack of time and energies to devote to resolving larger issues that run through the programme, such as those of gender inequality, caste segregation, religious and cultural differences.
- Women UNVs sometimes face serious problems in villages owing to their sex, and this often hampers their efficiency.

“If the focus is more on equality, the main objective gets lost. Since this is a time-bound programme, we are compelled to pay more attention to the immediate need, which is to collect people and impart training to them. As far as possible we try to ensure that men and women work in partnership, but where this does not happen, we must find other ways around the problem, such as convening separate meetings and trainings.”

- Project Officer UEVRP, Ahmedabad

### Recommendations:

- While the UNVs appear to be employing several strategies to bridge the gender gap, their efforts need to be fortified with regular workshops that could bring to them information about innovative practices that have been tried in different parts of the country. Regular workshops on



the progress of gender mainstreaming in the DRM programme with representatives from each district at the State level, and each State at the national level could prove beneficial by helping the programme staff share experiences and learn from them.

- Appropriate support structures such as safe transport facilities for women UNVs are essential in order to help them combat the hazards that they face in their work.



©  
D  
P  
O  
  
J  
U  
N  
A  
G  
A  
D  
H

*Women DMT members learning emergency lifting of injured in Junagadh district*



**Mizo master trainer explaining First Aid techniques to Young Mizo Association and DMT members in Aizwal**



***Paramedical staff in emergency health management training in Tripura***





*Girl is in action in Uttarkasi dist. Uttarakhand*



*Women Master Trainers learning special water rescue skills in a TOT on Search and Rescue in Angul Dist, Orissa*

# 13

## Aanganwadi supervisors as an all-women first aid team

Kolhapur District, Maharashtra



© D P O  
K O L H A P U R

Demonstration by All Woman First Aid Team of Aanganwadi supervisors in Kolhapur district

### In a nutshell

Kolhapur district in Maharashtra has been experiencing severe floods every year since 2005. Realizing the need for women's involvement in mobilizing communities for disaster risk management and to ensure that women take a leadership role in the programme, an all-woman First Aid Team has been formed, at the district level. This has been an innovative initiative, being the only group at the district level in the entire country comprising exclusively of women.

*"It is essential to involve women in this programme because it is the women of the household who spend most of the time at home. When her husband is out to work, she remains at home with the children and the elders. In the eventuality of a disaster, it falls upon the woman to safely evacuate her family members from the household and attend to the injured."*

*- Chitra an aanganwadi supervisor*

Aanganwadi supervisors have a considerable role in the development activities of local communities by virtue of their profession, as they coordinate and guide aanganwadi workers of different villages/ habitations. Their association with any programme lends to it an element of credibility in the eyes of the local people, especially the women. Realizing this District Project Officer of Kolhapur district collaborated with the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) to form all-women first aid team with aanganwadi supervisors. The result of this was that fifty aanganwadi supervisors were selected from across the twelve talukas of the district, for specialized training in first aid at Kolhapur city.

To begin with, the aanganwadi women were given an orientation on disaster preparedness, in the light of their personal experiences of disasters / accidents, and highlighting the need to learn from past experiences. Being educated (each of these women possesses the minimum qualification of a graduate degree), they took little time to grasp the need for and the importance of disaster and risk reduction related information shared with them. As Kolhapur district has experienced severe floods every year since 2005, women revealed a deep interest in learning not just techniques of first aid and search and rescue at the time of the disaster, but also in learning preventive and remedial measures to deal with problems arising in the post-disaster situation.

Involving women has had a very positive influence on the participation of other women in this programme at the taluka and village levels. The fact that the aanganwadi women have taken lead in training on first aid also inspires community women to be more than mere observers or passive supporters due to the comfort level created by women functionary / trainer.



"I have observed that it is much easier to gather women of the villages for meetings with the help of the aanganwadi workers. An aanganwadi worker shares a strong bond with people in her villages, as she interacts with them on a regular basis. Also, people, especially the women, respect her opinion a lot as they view her as an independent, educated member of society. She is a symbol of progress to them."

- District Project Officer, Kolhapur

This partnership has ensured effective interweaving of disaster preparedness with the ICDS programme by drawing in aanganwadi supervisors from the taluka level through their network, who in turn mobilize their participation in community preparedness. This is being achieved through organizing meetings and conducting awareness generation programmes with women in all the talukas.

The inclusion of the aanganwadi supervisors has also strengthened DRM Programme with a well-organized and motivated team. These women are already part of a strong network of professionals that work across the district, and have the valuable experience and knowledge of working in a group. Several women have taken inspiration from their example and discovered their own ability to learn and contribute to the process of disaster risk management.

### Replicable good practices:

Formation of all women first aid team with aanganwadi workers may be considered a replicable good practice to reach out to women and girls because:

- Aanganwadi supervisors are found to be well suited as master trainers in this programme, as they can utilize their skills and rapport with various ICDS officials and at taluka and village level with relative ease to galvanise them into action.
- Women associated with aanganwadis are well oriented to the practice of mobilising communities for participation as they are usually the first ones to get inducted into implementation of any grass-root level government or non-government initiative.
- Aanganwadi supervisors reveal an appreciable level of sensitivity and understanding of the need to make men and women equal partners in any programme for disaster preparedness.

"When we go to conduct meetings in the village, we make sure that as many women as possible come out of their homes. Since we enjoy a comfortable rapport with the women, we do not hesitate to enter their homes and convince them to come and join us."

- Savitri an aanganwadi supervisor

### Lessons learnt:

- The presence of a woman trainer who is closely involved with the community is of irrefutable value in encouraging greater women's participation in training programmes thus sending a strong message about the spirit and capability of women.
- The integration of existing networks and structures into new programmes can increase their efficiency, effectiveness and enhance their sustainability.

### Challenges:

- Forming an all-woman first aid team may not be able to address gender relations by considering one sex alone.
- Formation of an all-woman first aid team and the absence of a similar search and rescue team (apart from the NCC girls team) reinforces gender stereotypes.

### Recommendations:

It would be more appropriate to set up combined teams of men and women for First Aid as well as Search and Rescue to effectively address gender issues. Exhibiting the complementary roles that men and women can play in disaster situations would be a good illustration of gender equality.



© D P O  
K O L H A P U R

*Demonstration making and use of stretcher during times disaster by All Woman First Aid team of Aanganwadi supervisors in Kolhapur district*

# 14

## Catching them young through puppet show

Tiruvallur District, Tamil Nadu



© D P O  
T I R U V A L L U R

*Puppet show on disaster risk reduction in Progress in a girl's high school.*

### In a nutshell

In Recent past, India has encountered various kinds of disasters and has experienced few disasters' impact on school like the Gujarat Earthquake (2001) and Kumbakonam Fire Accident (2003). Responding to this Disaster Risk Management Programme of Thiruvallur district has undertaken awareness generation campaign in the form of Puppet show, in the schools. A well educated and sensitized girls and boys will take the disaster preparedness knowledge to his family and community thus enabling community preparedness and safety.

*At a certain point of time in play It is shown that one of the woman characters, who lives on the banks of a river, takes more preventive measures by insuring her household things to safeguard from any kind of hydro-meteorological disasters. The same characters also talks elaborately about the uses of insurance, which is one of the key preparatory measures of any disaster and enables the male character to understand about the preventive measures.*

*- Scenes from the puppet show*

After seeing this puppet show the audience understood that a woman can play major role in safeguarding the lives and property of the households and in turn the society. It was also illustrated in this show that Indian women who were hitherto marginalized are becoming more resourceful in sharing information regarding hazard and risks through different awareness Programmes. District Project Officer Thiruvallur along with his district team evolved a unique and entertaining method for dissemination and awareness building with the schools in the area. A team of Professional Puppeteers was chosen to carry out the activity. Kalai Trust, a development communication organization, which caters to versatile needs of communication to different groups of stakeholders, was roped in for the purpose of addressing school students. A specially designed and crafted puppet show for the school students of 45 minute duration was prepared for information dissemination on disasters.

It was observed in this initiative that a puppet show could immediately catch attention and send across the right messages in an interesting way and was thus suitable as a medium with students of all ages. The content and script of the puppet show has been adequately designed to reach out to a child's curiosity and answer questions as they rise eventually.

The activity was also planned to address gender mainstreaming concerns with special focus on sensitization programmes in girls' schools. The objective of this initiative is to mainstream information among both boys and girls of the schools without discrimination against the girl students. The Puppet Show was carried out in the various Schools of the District, covering nearly 75,000

Students of 41 Schools. The Programme was carried in many of the girls' schools of the district; of these 41 schools, 31 schools were girls' schools. The Spectators were both boys and girls of the schools along with their teachers.

Gender sensitive script was made with different characters where both male and female is given equal chances to play and narrate different information regarding disasters. The other social issues like literacy, health and hygiene are also included in the script, to give awareness upon the society to the pillars of our society, the children. Special emphasis was given to woman character to illustrate the essence of womanhood and gender mainstreaming. In order to that the female characters were shown to be more responsible upon the family and community and also woman being more aware upon the issues and preventive measures of the disasters.

After the puppet show at the schools, the DRM programme had a further follow up activity of planning a "safe evacuation route" in the school developed by the Emergency Response committee formed by students. This route plan would help the students to identify the safe route. Following, a "mock drill" activity is planned to be carried out to help the students envisage the practical session of safe evacuation.

### Replicable good practice:

Puppet shows as a sensitization tool in the schools is a replicable good practice to address successful mainstreaming of gender because

- This is an interactive teaching and learning method with the children
- It helps the students to gain a very clear picture about disasters and its implications
- Gender sensitive script orients the children towards ideals of social equity

### Lessons Learnt:

Schools have a DRM module in their curriculum which was rather outmoded now. Introduction of unique medium of instruction has helped teachers employ better methods like student presentations in the classrooms to teach the module.

### Challenges:

- The puppet show should have follow up activities for the students to nurture preparedness among the school children

### Recommendation:

- School administration, teachers and students suggested to carry the same activity in all the schools of the district
- Keeping in mind of gender mainstreaming, the girl students of the schools are to be included in the committees of the co-education schools

*Applause of children enjoying puppet show in girl's high school Tiruvallur*



© D P O  
T I R U V A L L U R





Capacity development of UNVs during Guwahati gender consultation.



DMT Training UEVRP Vadodara



*DRM Practitioners working Gender Action Plan in Konark gender consultation*



*Women's participation in training of -NCC-Master trainers , Manipur*







**For more information contact :**

National Disaster Management Division III  
Ministry of Home Affairs Government Of India  
North Block, New Delhi - 110011  
[www.mha.nic.in](http://www.mha.nic.in)

United Nations Development Programme  
55 Lodi estate, P.O. Box: 3059  
New Delhi - 110003 INDIA  
[www.undp.org.in](http://www.undp.org.in)

**For any queries please email: [info.in.undp.org](mailto:info.in.undp.org)**



**INDIA**

**DFID** Department for International Development



**Australian Government**  
**AusAID**



United Nations  
International Strategy for Disaster Reduction