

CHAPTER VII

**SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION
AND CONCLUSION**

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7.1 Social Work Intervention and Conclusion:

Floods are among the most common and destructive natural hazards causing extensive damage to infrastructure, public and private services, the environment, the economy and devastation to human settlements. Recurring flood losses have handicapped the economic development of both developed and developing countries.

Floods usually are local, short-lived events that can happen suddenly and sometimes with little or no warning. They usually are caused by intense storms that produce more runoff than an area can store or a stream can carry within its normal channel. Rivers can also flood its surroundings when the dams fail, when ice or a landslide temporarily block the course of the river channel, or when snow melts rapidly. In a broader sense, normally dry lands can be flooded by high lake levels, by high tides, or by waves driven ashore by strong winds. Small streams are subject to floods (very rapid increases in runoff), which may last from a few minutes to a few hours. On larger streams, floods usually last from several hours to a few days. A series of storms might keep a river above flood stage (the water level at which a river overflows its banks) for several weeks. However, all floods are not alike. Some floods develop slowly, sometimes over a period of days. But flash floods can develop quickly, sometimes in just a few minutes and without any visible signs of rain. Flash floods often have a dangerous wall of roaring water that carries rocks, mud, and other debris and can sweep away most things in its path. Overland flooding occurs outside a defined river or stream, such as when a levee is breached, but still can be destructive. Flooding can also occur when a dam breaks, producing effects similar to flash floods.

Analyses of response to past disasters have highlighted reaching out to the victims within the critical period during an emergency as a major requirement to protect people and assets. This has resulted in developing mechanisms to mitigate disasters at the grassroots level through participation of communities. Communities being the first responder and having more contextual familiarity with hazards and available resources are in better position in planning and executing immediate rescue and relief actions. In areas that have experienced repeated disasters, the communities are realizing that they need to work out a plan to prevent losses and at the same time

enable faster recovery in the event of an emergency situation. To convert this realization into an effective plan, they need guidelines which will help them to prepare their own Community Based Disaster Management plans to safeguard lives, livelihood and property.

The **Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP)** planning referred to in the following sections pertains to preparedness, mitigation and response plans. The primary goal of CBDP is to reduce vulnerability of the concerned community and strengthen its existing capacity to cope with disasters. The approach of preparing the CBDP plans considers people's participation a necessary pre-requisite for disaster management. By involving the community in the preparedness phase, it not only increases the likelihood of coordinated-action by the communities to help in mitigating disasters but also brings the community together to address the issue collectively. There are evidences of collective and coordinated action yielding good results and to a great extent it has been effective in lessening the impact of disaster. In view of the above, the Government of India and United Nations Development Programme reviewed various models of CBDP being conducted in the country. Several entities have been supporting communities in developing CBDP. The concept varies; for some, CBDP is getting the communities organised to maintain a cyclone structure and having a well developed evacuation plan. Similarly, the process followed also differs - some organisations have been developing the plan and explaining the components to the communities; others preferred to develop the plan with the involvement of the communities. Most of these processes remained outside the Government system and it has the inherent danger of communities forgetting the roles and responsibilities, especially if they did not have to use the plan over a period of time. Preparation of CBDP plans are being promoted under the GOI-UNDP Disaster Risk Management programme in 169 districts in 17 states by institutionalising the process within the Government system, with the local authorities playing a dominant role in partnership with other key stakeholders.

It is a scientific approach, tested in some pilot states and covers all aspects of disaster management through a process involving communities at risk. Recently the Government of India has decided to launch a project in the remaining multi-hazard regions of the country.

7.2 Components of CBDM and Social Work Intervention :

a. Disaster Management Committee:

Village Disaster Management Committee (VDMC) is formed in each village and it is responsible for initiating disaster preparedness activities. It consists of local elected representatives, grass root level government functionaries, local Non-Government Organisations (NGOs)/Community Based Organizations (CBOs), members of youth groups such as the National Service Scheme (NSS) and Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), women groups, youth club members, grass root level government functionaries, etc. The size of VDMC is based on the population and need of the villagers. The head of the VDMC takes a lead in mobilizing the community for the preparation of the CBDM plans. *VDMC meeting on Planning Process.*

b. Review & Analysis of Past Disasters: It refers to prioritizing disasters based on its frequency and analysis of the estimated losses. This can be carried out by taking the help of elderly people of the village. The villagers analyze the losses that they had incurred during various disasters and learn the best practices carried out. This is an important activity as it forms the basis for preparedness and mitigation plans.

c. Seasonality Calendar of Disasters: While analyzing the past experiences pertaining to various natural disasters, communities develop the seasonality calendar based on the occurrence of disaster events. In the calendar below prepared by the community show the month of occurrence of the disaster and month for preparedness and mock drill.

d. Mapping Exercises: One of the most important activities of the CBDM is the mapping of risk, vulnerabilities and capacities of the Village by the community itself because it is considered to be a very simple and cost effective tool to collect ground level data. This is done through Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) exercise. Before the mapping exercise starts, the community members first discuss among *Mapping Exercise in a Village* themselves, about the experience of previous disasters they have faced or the disasters they may face in future. It aims to provide a pictorial base to the planning process especially for the semi-literate populace and ensures maximum community involvement across gender, caste and other divides. It has also been found

to be very effective in raising awareness among the community and thereby enhancing participation of the community in problem identification. The maps generate awareness among the community about the avenues for smooth evacuation during any imminent disaster. The strategy adopted is to use locally available resources rather than depending on the external agencies for help and support. The villagers/ community members are encouraged to draw the maps on the ground using locally available materials such as stone, sand and various colour powders for different items and indicators. The maps drawn need not be to scale. The types of maps are as follows:

7.3 Resource Map: Resource mapping focuses on identifying locally available assets and resources that can be utilized for building the capacities of the community during and after disasters. Apart from infrastructure and funds, this could be individuals with specific skills, local institutions and people's knowledge as all these have the capacity to create awareness and bring about changes in the community. A resource map is therefore not limited to a map depicting the available resources but also *Community's Local Resources* plotting of the distribution, access and its use by taking into consideration prevailing sensitiveness within the village.

7.4 Risk and Vulnerability Map: In the vulnerability map the community members have to identify the hazards that the village is prone to and the possible areas that would be affected. They also demarcate the low lying areas, areas near the water bodies such as the sea and river, direction of wind, etc. Through this mapping exercise the community members identify the location of groups at risk and the assets that require protection from *Villagers mapping their Risk & Vulnerability* various hazards.

7.5 Safe and Alternate Route Map: In a similar exercise, the villagers identify safe areas such as strong houses / buildings, raised platforms etc. These act as a shelter

place for the people in the event of an evacuation. It would be useful to identify the alternate approach routes which could be used during the time of an emergency.

Community Sensitization meeting paves the way for community decision making process in Lahotighat Block, Karinganj District of Assam.

7.6 Disaster Management Team :

Village level Disaster Management Teams (DMT)/ Task Forces are formed to outline coordinated response during crisis situations. DMTs have sectoral focus such as early warning, shelter management, evacuation & rescue, medical and first aid, water and sanitation, carcass disposal, counselling, damage assessment and relief and coordination. Based on a needs assessment of the teams, specialized training could be provided to the members. DMT members would be linked to the existing service providers for continuous training and discharging of their responsibilities effectively.

7.7 The Roles and Responsibilities of The DMT :

- 1) **Early Warning Team:** The members of this team are responsible for providing latest warning information to the villagers so that the villagers get ample time to get prepared for the advent of the hazard. At the time of the disaster the members of this team keep a track of the developments. Emergency contact telephone numbers are collected well in advance of the hazard season, tools such as radio, television etc. are to be kept in working condition prior to the hazard period. During the occurrence of the event, the team would be responsible to inform every household of the latest position. They would also keep a track of the situation and listen to the de-warning messages to decide on the timing for calling off the emergency state.
- 2) **Shelter Management Team:** Members of this team take care of the identified shelter buildings in pre, during and post disaster scenario. Care needs to be taken to stock necessary material such as food, drinking water, medicines, bleaching powder, firewood, lantern, etc. Special care needs to be

taken for the animal stock during any disaster. The team needs to ensure hygiene in and around the shelter place. Women are generally active members of the shelter team as they are well acquainted with house management, and are able to manage shelters during emergency. The team leader or any other team member should have the keys of the safe shelters so that prior to the disaster they will clean up the place and make available the necessary materials like food, water, medicines, bleaching powder, firewood, lantern, etc. required for the evacuees during disaster period.

- 3) **Water & Sanitation Team:** Members of this team ensures availability of safe drinking water and the cleanliness of the village so that there is no danger of epidemics even after the event. They will make arrangements for storing drinking water and water for cooking and other chores.
- 4) **Medical & First Aid Team:** This specialized team is responsible for preparing and updating the list of vulnerable population like old and ailing people, pregnant ladies, children etc. They also have to procure the necessary medicines before the hazard season and conduct a routine check-up of the ailing people in the village. They have to collect health related information and make the community aware of the health measures to be taken up. Women and existing health practitioners of the village are the members of this team. This team would receive periodic training from the local medical (local health centre) personnel.
- 5) **Relief and Coordination Team:** This team maintains the list of all household members so that they can arrange or procure sufficient quantity of food materials for each category of people. They are also responsible for the distribution of relief materials. And in the post disaster period they will make arrangements for getting relief materials from the Block office. They should have the list of shops/ wholesale dealerships where food grains are available for use during the time of emergency.
- 6) **Carcasses Disposal Team:** The team is responsible for the clearing of carcasses (if any) after the disaster. They are exposed to different types of carcasses disposal methods. The team should put in all their efforts to check

spread of diseases by disposing of the carcasses at the earliest and in the right manner.

- 7) **Trauma Counselling Team:** The existing relief system does not have any provision for treatment of mental health; which enhances suicidal cases after any major disaster. It has been seen that most of the community members are traumatized due to loss of family members and assets. After the large scale damages, it becomes difficult for some of the victims to get back to normalcy. In such a situation, the counselling team is responsible for counselling the victims to ease them of their trauma.
- 8) **Damage Assessment Team:** With things getting better after the disaster, the damage assessment team carries out an assessment of the damaged houses, livelihood assets and crops etc. Usually a Govt. functionary from the state Revenue Department carries out such assessments after a particular period. During this exercise, the damage assessment team helps him/her in making a timely and useful assessment.

7.8 Mock Drill: Mock drill is an integral part of the village (BDP plan, as it is a preparedness drill to keep the community alert. Keeping this in view, mock drills are organised in all villages to activate the DMTs and modification of the DM plan based on the gaps identified during such exercises. Basically this is a simulation exercise, which if practised several times, would help in improving the cohesiveness of the community during an emergency.

7.9 Social Work Intervention: Need for the Hour:

- **Awareness Campaign:** A massive awareness campaign is necessary to support the community in preparation of the disaster management plans. These campaigns are carried out through various means like rallies, street plays, competitions in schools, distribution of IEC materials, wall paintings on do's and don'ts for various hazards. Meetings with key persons of a village such as

the village head, health worker, school teachers, elected representatives and members of the youth clubs and women also motivate the villagers to carry forward these plans for a safer living.

● ***Training of Gram Panchayat/Block Members:*** In several states of India Gram Panchayat is the intermediary administrative unit between block and village level, which has a vital link for disaster management activities. It is the responsibility of the Gram Panchayat Disaster Management Committee to supervise and guide the community in this process. Similarly block is the administrative unit that executes all developmental programmes in the rural areas, and has a very good linkage with the upper level of administration. Therefore, both levels of functionaries are very important to ensure risk reduction as a part of the development programme. The district level master trainers are responsible to train the functionaries of GP and blocks before initiation of the activities at the village level.

● ***Identification of Village Volunteers and Training:*** One of the major objectives of the CDBP process is to develop a cadre of trained human resources at community level to carry out all disaster management and mitigation initiatives. An innovative method is used in this programme to train at least two persons as disaster management volunteers who, after being trained are supporting the community in development of the village disaster management plan. These volunteers are selected by the representatives of local self-government" block functionaries and CBOs. Most of the volunteers are from local youth clubs, women self help groups or from CBOs and belong to the same community.

● ***Training of PRI Members:*** The three tier Panchayati Raj system (peoples' representatives) existing in India has laid down responsibilities of elected local government officials at various levels. To mainstream CDBP, it is suggested to involve PRIs in the process to address the vulnerability reduction initiatives through the developmental programme because they are responsible for the local area's development. All PRIs are oriented by the master trainers on disaster risk management initiatives and encouraged to be involved to reduce the disaster impact. These oriented PRIs would help the trained volunteers and

community on disaster preparedness and management. They are vital players in the disaster reduction programme and help to sustain the same.

- ***Sensitization Meeting at Vii/agelCommunity Level:*** Village sensitisation meetings are organized with help of the representative of local self-govt, trained volunteers, local NGOsetc. for the implementation of disaster preparedness and mitigation initiatives. In some villages the communities are ready for disaster management planning and other activities in one meeting or in some places they require more efforts.
- ***Specialized Training of DMTs:*** Each of the DMTs comprise groups of women and men volunteers and are assigned with a specific task to discharge. Specialized training is provided on search and rescue, first aid, trauma counselling and water & sanitation teams for skills up gradation. All DMTs are linked with existing govt. service providers for continuous training. Some of the- training institutions have been strengthened for regular training of DMTs at various levels.
- ***Women Participation in Community Based Disaster Preparedness:*** Women, children and old age people are the most vulnerable groups in any emergency situation and need special attention and support. While preparing the preparedness and response plan of a village, importance is laid on the vulnerability of women and children. It gives equal opportunity to women groups to participate in the preparedness and mitigation initiatives of the village. Women are encouraged to be the members of shelter management, search & rescue and first aid and water and sanitation DMTs. Special trainings such as swimming, first aid etc. are organized to enhance the skills of women DMTs to perform their duties better during the time of an emergency. In formation of DMCs/DMTs, efforts are being given to ensure 30 percent membership for women to improve the local level planning and response process. This would also provide equal opportunities to show their capability, sincerity and dedication.

7.10 Other aspects of Social work Intervention:

The present study knowledge about the flood affected communities and undertake appropriate activities to strengthen self-help capacity of communities for improved integrated flood management. The following activities are envisaged by the social worker:

1. Strengthen people's ability to understand flood warning messages and use them in combination with their own assessments through traditional methods.
2. Undertake programme to enhance awareness, preparedness, and coping strategies of flood affected people.
3. Provide assistance for improving the flood responses by the local people.
4. Prepare a manual using guidelines provided by the national flood response strategies that are available in each country and knowledge generated through local surveys and consultations.
5. Identify specific non-structural measures beyond the ability of the local community, which have to be provided by the government and NGOs / CBOs in each location to help reduce flood vulnerability.
6. Facilitate confidence building and dialogue amongst individual professionals, and institutions dealing with the issues involved in flood management.
7. Identify effective modalities of managing floods through effective regional co-operation as well as specific activities to accelerate such co-operation.

Two physical outputs are expected out of this study, the first is the manual on community approach to flood management and the second is establishment of some organized communities aware of improved integrated flood management and ready to make use of the manual.

7.11 Conclusion:

Due to its unique geo-climatic conditions, India is one of the most disaster prone countries in the world. 24 out of 35 States and Union Territories are vulnerable to one or the other geo-climatic disaster. According to the insurance company estimates, natural disasters represent 85% of insured catastrophe losses. If one adds the losses in countries like India, where most of the property of the people, especially in the rural areas remains uninsured, the losses are astronomical. The unique geo-environmental setting of the North eastern region vis-à-vis the Eastern Himalayas, the heavy rainfall, weak geological formations, accelerated rates of erosion followed by silting and meandering of rivers, very high seismicity makes the North East one of the most disaster prone regions in the country. Considering this, and the comparative inaccessibility, the North-eastern region demands special attention to minimize loss of lives and social, private and community losses and to ensure sustainable development. Vulnerability to natural disasters combined with socio-economic vulnerability of the people living in the region pose a great challenge to the government machinery and underscores the need for a comprehensive plan for disaster preparedness and mitigation. Training and capacity building of the officials dealing with emergencies would be an important instrument of disaster reduction and recovery. While natural hazards cannot be controlled, the vulnerability to these hazards can be reduced by planned mitigation and preparedness measures. There needs to be concerted and sustained steps towards reducing the vulnerability of the community to disasters. Taking into consideration the value of development gains which are wiped out through disasters, as also the huge quantum of funds required for post disaster relief and rehabilitation, any investment in disaster mitigation will yield a higher rate of return than any other development project. Also considering the developmental gains, which are wiped out because of disasters, all development schemes/projects will need to incorporate disaster assessment and vulnerability reduction as critical components in order that the development process be sustainable.

Therefore, a paradigm shift has now taken place with the shift in focus from reactive to proactive ie from relief to prevention and mitigation of disasters.

In the Government of India, the Ministry of Home Affairs is the Nodal Ministry for disaster management except for drought, which because of its nature will

continue to be handled by the Ministry of Agriculture. Where a calamity/disaster pertains to a specific sector it will continue to be handled by the relevant Ministry with the assistance of the Ministry of Home Affairs - thus rail accidents will continue to be handled by the Ministry of Railways, Airlines accident by the Civil Aviation, Epidemic by the Ministry of Health, etc. enhance the synergy and to extend the resource base for more effective implementation of flood preparedness programs. The IMD has been promised a major upgradation of its observational network, which should help improve the ability to forecast episodes of unusually heavy rain at least a day or two in advance. The Indian Space Research Organisation is creating a digital database with detailed terrain information that can be used for hazard zonation and damage assessment. The space agency is also acquiring an aircraft that will be equipped with an airborne radar so that imageries of disaster-hit areas can be quickly acquired and used to supplement information from earth-viewing satellites. A National Disaster Management Authority(NDMA) has been established as per the provisions of National Disaster Management Act, 2005 and similar bodies are set up at the State and District level too to enhance preparedness and provide a coordinated response in the event of a calamity. But it is most important to make sure that all these measures come together properly in order to improve resilience and enable an effective relief operation when catastrophes strike.

7.12 Community Based Flood Management Framework & Link with Social Work Intervention:

Diagram no. 7.1

