

A comprehensive study to manage disasters at community level- A case study of Haryana

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ABSTRACT

In managing disasters, community participation is the most effective element. According to the common theory used by disaster management professionals, the government alone cannot be able to manage disaster without active participation of the community of that particular area. Therefore, it is very much essential to empower the community towards making disaster resilient. The present study highlights the efforts taken by Government of Haryana in regard to the same.

KEYWORDS: Community participation, disaster risk reduction, disaster management

1. Introduction

“More effective prevention strategies would save not only tens of billions of dollars, but save tens of thousands of lives. Funds currently spent on intervention and relief could be devoted to enhancing equitable and sustainable development instead, which would further reduce the risk for war and disaster. Building a culture of prevention is not easy. While the costs of prevention have to be paid in the present, its benefits lie in a distant future. Moreover, the benefits are not tangible; they are the disasters that did NOT happen.”¹- Kofi Annan.

Evidence shows that disaster management programs implemented with top to bottom approach sometimes fails and even increased people’s vulnerability because they do not address specific local needs of vulnerable communities, ignore the potential of local resources and capacities. It surges the need to have a process in which risk communities (people) are actively engaged in decision making and implementation of disaster risk management activities such as identification, analysis, management, monitoring and evaluation of their disaster risks in order to reduce their vulnerabilities and to enhance their capacities. This process launched on the strategy of Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction.

2. Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction measures

PRIs and Local Governments are the major role player in the process of changing the reactive approach into proactive at community level. PRIs and Local Government are the mediocre to transfer the information from bottom to top and top to bottom. In this direction, Government had taken some definite steps by making 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments which recognize Panchayati Raj institutions as “institutions of self and government”. Because of which, financial and administrative powers are decentralized and reached upto Gram Sabha levels through a proper tiered structure.

Local people of the community are the first who face the consequences of the disaster whether it is minimum or maximum. Simultaneously, they are also the first responders in any emergency situation. To enhance community participation before a disaster strikes, it is important to focus on risk reduction issues, and therefore CBDRR has become increasingly emphasized. In the event of actual disasters, the community if well aware of the preventive actions and preparedness measures to be undertaken can substantially reduce the damage caused by disasters. The efforts of the people in taking initiatives in protecting their lives and properties can be seen in areas where the Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction process has been established.

The aim of community based disaster risk reduction is to facilitate and provide support to the community members in preparing their own community/neighborhood/village disaster management plans and to ensure maximum participation of all sections of the community irrespective of class, caste, sex, and occupation.

3. Community based Disaster Risk Reduction initiatives in Haryana

District Disaster Management Authorities have been constituted in all the twenty two districts of the State. In which Chairman Zila Parishad is acting as Co-chairperson of the authority. Many capacity building projects are being implemented in the state targeting community capacity enhancements.

¹ Kofi Annan, “Facing the Humanitarian Challenge: Towards a Culture of Prevention”.

To prepare the local people to face disasters, National Disaster Management Authority jointly with Indira Gandhi National Open University and State Government has implemented pilot project on “Capacity Building in Disaster Management for Government Officials and Representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies at District Level in the areas of disaster prevention, preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery” in 54 selected districts of 11 States identified on the basis of their vulnerability. Under this project in each selected district 75 government officials and 300 people have been trained out of which 225 were the representatives of PRIs/ULBs. The project was implemented in districts namely Gurugram, Panipat, Ambala, Yamuna Nagar and Rohtak.

Under a centrally sponsored scheme “AAPDA MITRA” 200 volunteers have been identified and get trained in flood response in the district Ambala. The scheme aims to equip the volunteers with skills that they would need to respond to their community’s immediate needs in the aftermath of a disaster thereby enabling them to undertake basic relief and rescue tasks during emergency situations such as flood, flash-floods and urban flooding. Under this scheme, a first responder kit to each volunteer and emergency stockpile at block level is also being provided by NDMA.

Mass awareness generation programmes are also being implemented in the State.

4. Process of preparation of disaster management plans for community through community involvement

Village Disaster Management Plans are being prepared in the State, in the phase wise manner, targeting most vulnerable villages on priority basis in all the districts of the State from the year 2012-13 under the project “Building the Capacity for Disaster resilient Haryana”. Approximate 600 village disaster management plans have been prepared, so far. Trainings are being provided to community at village level for preparation of Village Disaster Management Plan. Village disaster management plan comprises basic profile of the village, situational analysis, hazard risk and vulnerability profile, capacity and preparedness assessment, response plan, mitigation plan and contact information. These VDMPS are being prepared through community involvement because they are the best judges of their own vulnerability and are capable of making the best decisions regarding their well being. The activities involved in the process of preparation of disaster management plan are as follows:-

4.1 Activity 1: Situation analysis of village

Before starting with the planning process, situation analysis of villages are being done by collecting basic information about the village such as population, economic condition, area, occupation and logistic system, land use planning, literacy rate, income, road, industries, hospitals, drinking water resources, major hazards of the community, etc. with the help of villagers and village representatives.

4.2 Activity 2: Hazard, Risk, Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment

The next important activity in preparation of Disaster Management Plan is identification of hazard, risk and vulnerability and assessment of capacities of the community to cope up any untoward situation. Traditional knowledge of the community is very much useful in assessing the risk of hazard, its nature, intensity, pattern of occurring past disasters in the village. Community also identifies vulnerable people groups and locations within their specific area. The experience of local people is being shared and used in this process. The local community also has a lot of inbuilt capacity and resources for handling the disasters at community level. A resource map can be prepared and shortest and closest route to reach out to these resources can be decided by the local people of the village. Following resources are being identified:

- Medical facilities-Hospitals, dispensaries, parks, doctors, doctor and trained medical assistants
- Communication system: radio televisions, telephones, mobiles,
- Transport facilities: buses, tempo, cars, trucks, taxis, pakka roads, kaccha roads
- Water facilities: water tanks, bore wells, hand pump, water ponds, tube wells, rivers, canals
- Temporary shelters: School, colleges, community halls etc.
- Sanitation facilities: Power stations, torches and invertors
- Public toilets, community bathrooms, solid waste disposal sites and cremation etc.
- Logistic support: shops, kerosene depots, petrol pumps, gas agencies, JCB, cranes, cutters, bulldozers, ropes, lamps and ladder etc.

4.3 Activity 3: Mitigation & Preparedness Plan

In this activity Standard Operating Procedures are lay down for Early Warning & Information Dissemination, First Aid, Carcass Disposal, Evacuation etc. villagers are also sensitized on how to reduce their vulnerabilities.

4.4 Activity 4: Preparation of Response Plan

Response plan has been prepared by including the following aspects:

4.4.1 Constitution of Village Disaster Management Committee

Village Disaster Management Committee is being constituted including the representative from community like teachers, school or college principal, leaders, social workers, aasha workers, anganwadi workers and PRIs members to take village level decision. The committee would coordinate the activities of the disaster management teams.

4.4.2 Preparing disaster management teams

After constitution of village disaster management committee village disaster management teams are being formulated. The teams are being prepared by the village disaster management committee. The members are selected from community youth clubs, self help groups, literate youth of the community, school teachers and health workers. Roles and responsibility of village disaster management teams are as follows:-

Search and Rescue Teams: The aim of the team helps the affected peoples to move out at safer locations. Search and rescue team would trace and locate people who are trapped in disaster sites.

Early Warning and Information Dissemination Team: This team will ensure that the warning of disaster must reach to every single household and person in the community. This team would provide accurate and immediate information about the situation at all level.

First Aid Team: This would be responsible to provide first aid to the injured person's until external medical assistance reached at the disaster site. The team comprised of persons who are literate, having the knowledge of first aid, women and members of the community.

Evacuation Team: This team will ensure the evacuation of persons from the disaster sites to shelters.

5. Conclusion

Community based disaster risk reduction can be very effective mechanism to reduce risk at the grassroots level. Through the involvement of local community in preparedness, mitigation, response and reconstruction community can make a better way out to reduce the vulnerability and improve coping capacity as per their environment. By community based disaster risk reduction policy and practice of disaster management can be coordinated from village to national level. Like above mentioned initiative more strategies can be prepared to involve the community in disaster management activities. A series of training programme can be organized at community level to spread preparedness and awareness including representatives from PRIs and ULBs. Disaster management community familiarization programmed should be organized on regular basis for the local people. Social media can be used as early warning and information dissemination method. Disaster risk reduction practices can be introduced in all the development related work.