

## **SESSION D5: ROLE OF NGOs & CIVIL SOCIETY**

**Chairperson: Mihir Bhatt**

Director, All India Disaster Mitigation Institute, Ahmedabad

### **DISASTER REDUCTION AND THE ROLE OF NGOs**

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There has been a paradigm shift in our approach to disaster management during the last one decade. The shift is from a relief centric approach to a multi dimensional endeavor involving diverse scientific, engineering financial and social processes to adopt a multi disciplinary and multi sectoral approach with stress on building up capabilities of community to enable them to work towards their own risk reduction. The role of NGOs in this context therefore assumes added significance.

The High Powered Committee (HPC) on Disaster Management carried out a nation-wide consultation process with over 600 NGOs to address the lack of a well-coordinated network between the government systems and the NGO sector and also among the NGOs themselves. HPC recommended a nationwide network of NGOs for coordinated action encompassing all aspects of disaster management. The Disaster Management Act,2005 has given legislative back-up to this endeavor by entrusting the State Executive Committees and District Authorities with the responsibility to advise, assist and coordinate the activities of NGOs engaged in disaster management. The District Authorities are mandated to encourage the involvement of NGOs and voluntary social welfare institutions working at grass root level in the

districts for disaster management.

The role of NGOs in the pre-disaster phase should include awareness generation, education ,training, formation of village level Task Force,, Disaster Management Committees and Teams, development of Disaster Management Plans, conduct of mock drills, vulnerability assessment and coordination with Government and non government agencies. The NGOs can play a key role in the immediate aftermath of disasters by extending assistance in rescue and first aid, sanitation and hygiene, damage assessment and assistance to external agencies bringing relief materials. During the post disaster phase, the NGOs can take a lead by providing technical and material support for safe construction, revival of educational institutions and restoration of means of livelihood and assist the government in monitoring the pace of implementation for various reconstruction and recovery programmes.

We need to encourage NGOs already active at grass root level at each district or sub-district level. The larger NGOs can provide technical and material support to these NGOs since they are already working closely with the community and have better appreciation of their vulnerabilities, needs and the capacity for revival so as to bring them back to the pre-disaster stage at the earliest.

A well-coordinated approach giving a lead role to local NGOs with necessary linkages with larger NGOs and District Administration will go a long way in institutionalizing the role of NGOs in disaster risk reduction.



## **THE ROLE OF NGOS IN ENHANCING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

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The important function of the Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) is that of being a link between the Government and the community. It is so important that it is maintained effectively at all the three stages of disaster management viz, pre-disaster during disaster and post-disaster phase. This function is rendered through different mechanisms as per the requirement of a situation occurred. The World Disasters report 1997, defines humanitarianism as "a way of acting: carrying out actions which are and are perceived to be, impartial, neutral and, by extension independent from political religious or other extraneous bias. "The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movements and NGOs in Disaster Relief developed by themselves, voluntarily in 1994 and 'welcomed by governments in 1995 was the first attempt on this side of NGOs role in disaster management.

The code laid down ten: basic; principles of behaviour for NGOs and their staff and than outlined what the agencies expected from 'countries in order to adhere to these principles. In 1997, eleven UK- based international organizations, formed an alliance known as " People in aid", and issued the "People in Aid Code of Best Practice in the Management and Support of Aid Personnel." This voluntary code reflects their concerns for the vulnerability of aid workers and their commitment to effective aid, good management, and staff protection.

Based on morale and ideological questions to this tune have haunted the aid community for a long history of disastrous events in India. Is humanitarian aid the best way to responding to the emergencies today? What does humanitarianism mean in a fast changing world? Should agencies exist to provide band-aid relief or should they address the root causes of human suffering? Do the agencies have a right to exist and deliver relief ? Should the recipients have some say in the matter, or have some basic rights?

This paper is an effort to get the answers of these questions. What is existing systems and what should be the ideal systems, for disaster reduction through NGOs is the main focus / or content of this paper. This paper is divided into four parts” (1) Introduction (covering rationale). (2) Humanitarian Model for NGOs role in disaster management (3) Case Study of NGOs in some disastrous events in Gujarat / India. (4) Conclusions and Suggestions.

## **ROLE OF NGOS IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

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Sustainable development focuses on improving the quality of life for all of the Earth's citizens without increasing the use of natural resources beyond the capacity of the environment to supply them indefinitely. It requires an understanding that in action has consequences and that we must find innovative ways to change institutional structures and influence individual behaviour. It is about taking action, changing policy and practice at all levels, from the individual to the international. One major detrimental factor towards achieving sustainable development is natural disaster - causing major loss to life and property.

Natural disasters and India have had a long unfortunate relationship together. Floods, droughts, cyclones, earthquakes and landslides have been recurrent phenomena. About 60% of the landmass is prone to earthquakes of various intensities; over 40 million hectares is prone to floods; about 8% of the total area is prone to cyclones and 68% of the area is susceptible to drought. Latur, Bhuj and the very recently tsunami disaster left thousands homeless. A recent World Bank report showed that India received much more loans from the World Bank for rehabilitation and reconstruction works than China and Brazil.

Institutional arrangements for disaster response are the heart of disaster management systems. There is no dearth of personnel, both civilian and military, experienced in handling situations arising out of natural disasters. However, there certainly is a pressing need for improvement and strengthening of existing institutional arrangements and systems in this regard to make the initial response to a disaster more effective and professional. Most of the resources and expertise needed already exist with the Government. What needs to be streamlined is how they should be integrated, trained and used on a sustainable basis.

## **ROLE OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT**

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Whenever disasters strike, they do not discriminate or differentiate amongst men and nations, poor or rich, young or old, they simply come, kill and destroy causing irreparable losses. When these hazards strike, the communities are the first to react, irrespective of their profession, status, cast or culture.

“NGO’s are Non-profit organizations or associations of private citizens with *a common interest to assist the disaster affected people.* “

India is the most dominant area in NGO activities and they play an important role in different stages of Disaster Cycle, and different elements are attributed for its successful operation. Technical skills of NGO’s are important for rescue, coordination and for relief activities. Commitment is the key word for reconstruction and rehabilitation and cooperation of different stakeholders is important for preparedness. Sustainability, flexibility and motivation are the key words for the successful NGO operation in the field of disaster management and role of NGO’s is well appreciated. NGO’s provide linkage between the people and help the people during, before and after the disasters.

The critical role of the NGOs in disaster reduction and response has been widely acknowledged. More and more NGOs are involved in disaster-related activities in Asia; however, networking and collaboration among them has

been weak due to the lack of resources and organizational constraints. Yet, networking and enhancing the capability of the NGOs is considered to be an important strategy for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of disaster risk reduction and response activities, especially at the local level in various aspects such as training and public education, sharing of information, experience and expertise on best practices, and transfer of relevant technology in disaster reduction and response. The role of NGO's in rehabilitation and reconstruction in the recent Tsunami affected areas of Tamil Nadu was crucial. They played a major role in educating the people in the disaster areas.

## **CIVIL SOCIETY AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN ORISSA: A DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE**

Disaster has always affected mankind and will probably continue as long as life exists on this planet. This exists all over the world and India is one of the most vulnerable regions. As a welfare state, it is the responsibility of the government to look after disaster management. Many a times it is observed that civil society organisations have actively involved themselves in disaster management process.

Civil society's influence is not merely limited to development alone but it has entrenched on the issues of disaster management. A major shift in the role and responses of civil society has occurred from its traditional strategies of support from development to more specialised areas like rescue, relief, construction of transit and temporary shelters, rehabilitation of disaster victims, counselling and trauma care, participative training and sensitisation campaigns etc. In fact, civil society has been playing commendable role in creating greater interaction and empathy in disaster management initiatives because it is equipped well with local knowledge, indigenous methods and skilful activities to deal with the problems of disaster.

The current paper will focus on the role of civil society organisations and particularly NGOs on disaster management practices in Orissa. This paper is based on field study that will give importance to development aspects in disaster management. For the analysis of development aspects, the importance of disaster risk management (DRM) programme has given most priority. In this context, the intervention of NGOs adoption of DRM to

prepare successful disaster management practices is highly significant. Herewith, the study finds paradigmatic shift on the part of the NGOs in disaster management. Now proactive measures like preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation are given due emphasis in place of previously practiced reactive measures. Here, the present paper will elaborately discuss various facets of different proactive measures i.e. Preparedness, Response, Recovery, Mitigation.

## **MAKING NGOS' COORDINATION A REALITY**

**A. Tiwari**

It is unfortunate that in the event of any disaster we start talking about the need of NGO coordination and try to evolve a coordination mechanism between NGOs afresh. The Non-governmental Organisations in the country have diversified experience on various issues and areas. So far, there has been no regulatory authority for these NGOs, except registration under Societies Act, to define a code of conduct and to establish a meaningful coordination mechanism on issues and areas of operation between them.

There have been localized efforts to establish a coalition of NGOs sharing similar issues or common geographical areas resulting in to conflict of interests between them and non-performance at the time of need. In order to ensure and establish a more permanent type of linkage and coordination between NGOs, we have to, by and large, understand the needs of the community and NGOs serving those communities depending on areas and issues of operation. There is a need to establish such mechanism on a national level in order to establish an equilibrium between the community needs and a modern approach for effective and efficient functioning of NGOs at all levels to make NGOs' functioning more professional and accountable.

There are various independent agencies and individuals functioning as consultants and practitioners. They have evolved their own regulatory body which decides on the norms and regulations they are supposed to follow and

any violation thereof would lead to cancellation of their membership and they would be blacklisted from such group.

Chartered Accountants, Advocates, Doctors, Engineers, Architects and many other professionals are also serving the communities, though on chargeable basis, and have their regulatory bodies, which are manned by the members elected by them. They have an elected governing council, to enforce the rules and regulations formulated by such regulatory body. They evolve rules and regulations acceptable, by and large, to all the members and certain codes of conduct are formulated to be strictly followed by the members. Examples are Institution of Chartered Accountants, Bar Councils, Indian Medical Association and many similar institutions for engineers and architects too. Membership to these organizations is mandatory for these professionals.

Since NGOs have different capacities, resources and areas of interest, accordingly regulations and guidelines can be evolved by making different categories of NGOs so that they meet the requirements of all kinds of NGOs. The governing body of such regulatory authority would comprise of elected members from different categories of NGOs and the rules and regulations will be binding upon them.

With the evolution of such coordination mechanism, it would also be easier for the government and other agencies to come to a common forum and channelise their resources with the approval of such autonomous regulatory bodies. It would also be binding on these NGOs to keep such regulatory

body informed about their efforts on different issues and areas so that duplication and gaps in efforts can be avoided.

For ensuring legitimacy, any agency can ask these NGOs to provide a certification of membership of such regulatory body. This regulatory body would also attempt for collection, compilation and collation of various data, which may be used by different members, government, and other agencies as and when required. Once such kind of a regulatory body becomes a reality, it would be much easier to mobilize and coordinate NGOs' efforts in any disaster situation in an efficient and effective manner.

## **NGOS - A MAJOR STAKEHOLDER IN REDUCING DISASTERS IN HIMALAYAN REGION**

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The Himalayan region has always been susceptible to different natural and man-made disasters due to its fragile eco-system. The geological changes occurring inside the *living mountains* has been compounded by unplanned and haphazard urbanization leading to various kinds of disasters such as earthquakes, landslides, avalanches, soil erosion, cloud bursts, flash floods, forest fire, drought etc. Frequent natural disasters have caused tremendous loss in the habitat of Himalayas.

NGOs have, during the last few decades, taken over increasing responsibilities in development sector in the Himalayan region. A large number of them have demonstrated their effectiveness in working out alternate strategies in generating people's power and harnessing it for development processes.

Prolonged learning and experiences of NGOs working in various disaster situations has crystallized their role in various aspects disaster management. A comprehensive role of the NGOs at micro and macro level could be consolidated, covering all the needful measures for effective disaster mitigation and management in the sensitive and hazard prone areas in Himalayas.

## **Role NGOs Played in Kashmir Earthquake5 – Lessons learnt.**

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The recent Earthquake which hit both parts of Kashmir on Oct. 8<sup>th</sup> 2005, has unveiled many aspects of the picture. While on the one hand it has revealed that there are limitations vis-a-vis resources related to search and rescue, on the other it has also told upon our poor state of preparedness in disaster management. However, the presence of the Army and other para-military forces along the LoC and the affected areas of Uri and Tangdhar proved to be a blessing for the area as it was the security forces which could manage to reach the victims within 20 minutes of the event. Several gaps were found especially with regard to poor communication network, lack of adequate health and sanitation facilities and above all absence of any Disaster Management Plan.

The strengths that were witnessed in the aftermath of the killer quake was the quick response of all the stake holders especially the Govt. Agencies and the Non-Governmental Organizations and other social service organizations. The relief material which poured in from every nook and corner of the country was an exemplary strength of secular India. The adoption of most of the villages by the various agencies especially the NGOs revealed that, ‘although economic resources have a boundary, human hearts don’t have any’.

The paper aims at highlighting the roles played by various agencies especially the NGOs and the strengths and weaknesses experienced during the different stages of post-earthquake phase. The strengths can be taken forward and the weaknesses can be looked into, to turn them into strengths in future events. It may not be out of place to mention here that in certain areas where some NGOs have adopted the villages for Reconstruction, the people feel that they are part of their families. This is the greatest reward for any NGO.

## **NGOs AND COASTAL AREA DISASTER MITIGATION**

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The regular occurrence of disasters both natural and man made in Coastal Andhra Pradesh in India has had a series of repercussions on the state and country's economy, its development policies, political equilibrium and daily life of millions of Indians.

Keeping in view of the problems encountered by victims of disasters, CADME, (Coastal Area Disaster Mitigation Efforts) a net work of 20 voluntary organizations working together has initiated a programme called "Community induced early warnings and preparedness" in more than 350 most vulnerable villages in the coast and established taskforce groups at each vulnerable village to mitigate the effects of disaster as well as to help their co-villagers in pre during and post disaster situations. As many as 5000 taskforce members are well equipped with the skills and knowledge of disaster preparedness and are ready to render their services at any part of the country, where ever disaster strikes. As many as 350 village level contingency plans have been developed with the involvement of local communities and village taskforce groups. Each contingency plan indicates the vulnerable areas, vulnerable people in the village, evacuation plan, elevated and safer places near by and actions and responsibilities of taskforce group members in different disaster situations (pre, during and post).

The network is using entertaining media (play) in schools to teach children in 50 villages of East Godavari district to protect themselves and others during cyclones. This programme is based on the notion that children can absorb and disseminate information to their parents and other community members, which in turn can lead to change.

The effort made by CADME is a successful one involving the local communities in developing their village contingency plan to combat the disaster situations and to mitigate the effects of disaster. Community is now prepared to encounter the problems arise during and post disaster situations.

## **ROLE OF NGOS IN KNOWLEDGE AND TECHNOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL COMMUNITIES**

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Based on extensive research and development experience in the tsunami-devastated Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the east coast of Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry UT, the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) views that much greater emphasis must be laid on enhancing the resilience of the vulnerable rural communities. Doing so will help in greatly reducing the loss of lives and livelihoods, and also in enhancing the ability of the affected people to bounce back to the pre-disaster level of functioning in a short time. The routine relief and rehabilitation hardly promotes resilience. Further, in a developing country with a huge rural-based population like India, the poverty, natural disasters and environmental degradation (including 'climate change') form a mutually-reinforcing vicious spiral.

The need of the hour is therefore the integration of scientific, technological, ecological, economic and social dimensions of disaster management with sustainable management. The social, gender and economic inequities should be reduced, if not totally eliminated. In the field based-activities, the focus has to be on ecotechnological and knowledge empowerment of the resource-poor farming and fishing as well as landless communities. The MSSRF's 'biovillage paradigm' and the modern ICT-based village knowledge centres have already shown the way to empower

the resource-poor, illiterate people towards achieving sustainable on-farm and non-farm livelihoods and capacity to manage serious natural hazards. The NGOs with expertise in harnessing science and technology and in the management of diverse aspects of ecological, economic and social issues need to work together the goal of enhancing the resilience.

## **ROLE OF NGOS AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION ...A PERSPECTIVE OF HUMAN TRUST**

**S. Moni**

Disasters both natural and human made negatively impacts sustainable development. Our experience shows that resources usually pour into emergency management. We consider this as important. However governments and NGOs fail to make connections between Disaster Risk Reduction and Sustainable Development.

The role of NGO is to mainstream disaster risk reduction into poverty reduction & sustainable livelihood; Natural Resources Sustainability (that is possible with social economic benefits for those involved), governance and post recovery programmes.

This very understanding and practice could only emerge from a sound understanding of 'Sustainable Livelihood' and well worked out and tested 'Disaster Risk Reduction Strategies'.

These vulnerable to disasters should have the resources, capacities and opportunities to cope and recover from stresses and shocks. Until we achieve such socioeconomic improvement, the redirection of development resources to emergency response will continue and achieving the desired level of growth will remain a distant goal.

Our livelihood initiatives build on the capacities of people and leave permanent assets with communities and which they could build on from the economic benefits. We believe that these vulnerable communities with some more DRR strategies like risk transfer through micro insurance can empower the people to cope and recover.

**WIDENING GAP BETWEEN DEMAND AND SUPPLY OF PUBLIC GOODS IN EMERGENCIES: ROLE OF NGOS IN PROTECTING RIGHTS OF VULNERABLE CITIZENS**

**Khurshid Alam**

International Disaster Reduction Specialist

78 percent of the people who die from natural disasters comes from Asia. The increasing trend is taking place when critical public services are also being privatized and real aid for disaster victims falling short, leaving the poor and vulnerable population in fragile protection system in disaster. This situation poses number of serious challenges for public and private officials:

- a). demand for critical services in the time of emergencies is likely to increase as a result of increasing disasters trends;
- b). existing deficit of supply of and inaccessibility to critical services will be increased in the context of neo-liberal regime in most south Asian countries (which means erosion in public goods).

Then, important question remains whether governments alone be able to ensure protection of the rights of the millions of vulnerable and disaster victims each year?

This paper examines how best national and international NGOs can play an important role in disaster reduction and complement government's responsibility of protection of rights? What are the key legal, operational and practical problem NGOs face in recent disasters in south Asia? What are the possible areas NGOs should limit engagement? And finally, how best government can facilitate and mobilize global experience of NGOs and their

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leverage to access public money in order to protect rights of their citizen and established a safer world.

## **DISASTER PREPAREDNESS – EXPERIENCE OF CHAITANYA JYOTHI WELFARE SOCIETY**

**S. Rao**

Chaitanya Jyothi Welfare Society (CJWS), situated at Nellore on Southern Coastal line of Andhra Pradesh. We are working particularly on Disaster Risk Reduction and Management in the Coastal Mandals that are Indhukurpet, Muthukur, T.P.Gudur, Bogolu, Alluru, Vidavalur, Chillakur, Kota, Vakadu, Sulurpet and Tada of Nellore District since 1998. We are working on the following activities pertains to Disaster Situations.

1. Long term preparedness.
2. Preparedness just before the possible Disasters.
3. Preparedness for actions during Disasters.
4. Preparedness for actions after Disasters.
5. Disaster Management Cycle.
6. Task force and its strengthening from time to time as per upgraded skills to the following groups.
  - a) Warning Dissemination.
  - b) Rescue Operation.
  - c) First Aid
  - d) Evacuation and shelter Management
  - e) Relief Management.
7. Particularly Risks involved in Cyclones.
8. Risks involved in Tsunami Disasters.
  - a) Emotional Reactions of the Tsunami/cyclone survivors
9. Techniques used with Tsunami/cyclone disasters survivors.
10. Disaster warning signals.

11. Disaster warning indicators.
12. Livelihood support.
13. Family Level Disaster Preparedness (FLDP).
14. Children Disaster Preparedness including school children (we have developed special program which includes training, cultural program, mock drill for the children which is unique and first of its kind in South India).
15. Awareness campaign on Preparedness to the community on the following Disasters:
  - a) Geological related Disasters.
  - b) Medical Related Disasters.
  - c) Terrorist related Disasters.
  - d) Water and climatic Related disasters with special emphasis to cyclones, drought, famines, floods and drainage problems, cloud burst, heat/cold waves, sea coast erosion, thunder and lightning strike and Tsunami.
  - e) Biological related Disasters on cattle epidemics, food poisoning and pest attacks.
  - f) Chemical, environmental, industrial related Disasters on pollution, deforestation and wild life disasters.
  - g) Accident related disasters include structural collapses, explosion, urban and village fires, electrical fires, festival related accidents and rain/road accidents.
16. Liasoning with Govt. officials, volunteers in the District.
  - a) Traders for emergency response to provide food, clothes.
  - b) Transporters to mobilize people and materials.
17. Coordination with District Disaster Mitigation Committee.

## **CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION IN DISASTER MITIGATION AND PREPAREDNESS: NEED FOR CAPACITY BUILDING**

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The Indian sub-continent is one of the most disaster prone areas of the world. The geo-climatic conditions coupled with a rapidly growing population and rising urbanization scenario have manifested in increasing impact and devastation from disasters. Recent mega-disasters which took a toll of thousands of lives and displaced large populations have reinforced the urgent need for a comprehensive system, focusing on safe national development and local level risk reduction measures to inculcate a culture of prevention.

A disaster event transcends all divisions created by society and polity to affect the entire population in range. Therefore, prevention and mitigation of disasters also requires active participation of the entire population. It is increasingly becoming apparent that risk reduction initiatives taken at the local level, owned and implemented by the community are the most effective prevention options. Disaster management therefore presupposes active and coordinated participation from all actors.

Civil society organizations play a crucial role in enhancing community awareness and coping strategies. As part of the civil society, NGOs and CBOs provide a forum for organized community initiatives and also facilitate them. Primarily locally-based, these organizations have a clear

understanding of the local needs, customs and traditions and are thus more suited to undertake local level risk reduction measures along with the community. During a disaster, civil society initiatives play a crucial role in supplementing the efforts of the government machinery. However, these initiatives often suffer from lack of coordination between different organizations and groups and also with the government.

The need of the hour is to develop a coordinating mechanism involving all the organizations active in this field along with the government machinery so that all efforts are institutionalized within a system to ensure maximum utilization of available resources equitably.

In order to develop this system, there is a need for developing the capacity of the stakeholders. Human resource development along with institutional development, supported by a system of monitoring and evaluation are essential components of capacity building. The large spectrum of society which is affected by a disaster underlines the need for such activities to equip the population to cope with each calamity successfully.

Community capacity can be built with the participation of the voluntary sector. Human Resource Development is one of the most important components for building up a sound disaster management system. However, this single phrase encapsulates a huge universe/target population in need of training, sensitization and skill development in terms of sectors and levels of operation which needs to be designed for specific needs and equipped with a practical and technically sound

approach. Thus, a long-term initiative with a multi-hazard and multi-dimensional approach is the need of the hour for a disaster resilient society.

## **Civil Society Participation in Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness: Need for Capacity Building**

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