



BEST PRACTICES FOR ADAPTATION AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

**CASE STUDY-13: < PRE-POSITIONING OF EMERGENCY
RESOURCES AT COMMUNITY LEVEL>- <A MECHANISM TO
ENSURE FLOOD AFFECTED PEOPLE'S IMMEDIATE ACCESS TO
EMERGENCY MATERIALS >**



RURAL VOLUNTEERS CENTRE
VILLAGE+P.O=AKAJAN, VIA-SILAPATHAR
DISTRICT-DHEMAJI (ASSAM), INDIA
PIN-787 059



TITLE: < Pre-positioning of emergency resources at community level>- <A mechanism to ensure flood affected people's immediate access to emergency materials >

ORGANISATION: <Rural Volunteers Centre (RVC)>

1. THEME: CBDRR mechanism for reducing risks locally.

2. STATE/REGION/COMMUNITY: Assam/Upper Brahmaputra River Basin/Flood vulnerable population of Brahmaputra River Basin

3. BACKGROUND

Context: The economic, social and geographical situation:

Geographical context: The geographic area of operation of RVC covers the flood plains of Dhemaji and Lakhimpur District and Majuli Sub-Division of Assam in particular and whole of the 8 North Eastern states of India in general.

The District emerges from the foot hills of Arunachal Pradesh and stretches to the Brahmaputra River with Subansiri one side and the river Siang on the other. Geographically situated between the 94° 12' 18" E and 95° 41' 32" E longitudes and 27° 05' 27" N and 27° 57' 16" N latitudes, the district covers an area of 3237 Sq. Km and is a basically plain area lying at an altitude of 104 m above the Mean Sea Level.

The District Lakhimpur lies on north bank of the mighty river Brahmaputra. It is bounded on the north by Siang and Papumpare District of the state of Arunachal Pradesh and on east by Dhemaji District. Majuli, the largest River-island belonging to Jorhat District is on the south and Gahpur sub division of Sonitpur District is on the West. The exact location of the district is 26048' and 27053' northern latitude and 93042' and 94020' east longitude (approx.).

Being situated in a strategic location where the steep slope of eastern Himalaya abruptly drops, forming a narrow valley which makes the region, as well as the whole Upper Brahmaputra River-basin, immensely vulnerable to flooding, affecting 50% - 70% population every year for the last 3 decades. The mighty Brahmaputra River, the Subansiri River and numbers of their tributaries originating from the hilly terrain of Arunachal Pradesh account for the perennial flood problem of the region which has already caused irreparable damage to the region. In addition, extensive human interventions (deforestation, river stripping, construction of mega dams etc.) on the Brahmaputra River Basin compounded with probable impact of climate change are gradually making the whole of the Brahmaputra Basin immensely vulnerable to multiple hazards.



Socio Economical context:

- The District Dhemaji and Lakhimpur i.e. the immediate area of working of RVC is of rural character (98.5% populations are rural) and the economy is largely agro based.
- Livestock rearing is the main secondary livelihood practice of the community but the sector is yet to be commercially organized.
- Sericulture, fishing and driftwood business are practiced in smaller scale.
- Sand deposition, bank line erosion, shifting of river course and other adverse effects of chronic floods on fertile agricultural land have made even the affluent farmers land-less.
- Temporary or permanent displacement, crisis of water and sanitation facilities, health hazards are associated features of flood affecting the lives of the people every year.
- The depletion of agro based traditional livelihood practices has resulted in inter-District and inter state seasonal and permanent migration in large.

Rationale/ Justification for being a good practice and potential for scaling up /replication:

The “Pre-positioning of emergency resources at community level” is a good practice and potential to scale up because it is community owned and community managed practice which ensure flood affected people in distress to have immediate access to emergency materials and in turn to address emergency needs in their own.

Brief on the local condition prior to Project initiation:

Flood is a perennial phenomenon in this part of the globe creating untold miseries to the live of the people inhabiting in the riverine villages. On the other hand the attitude of the state organs and other stakeholders working on the flood issue is mostly reactionary i.e. largely rescue and relief basis, ignoring the vulnerability and preparedness aspects to mitigate the disastrous impact. The Assam Relief Manual, 1976 of Government of Assam is primarily a Government response manual with its primary focus on flood related disaster with limited thrusts on preparedness, risk reduction and mitigation. Moreover, the reactionary approach largely excludes the affected people in the remotest areas and in case not excluded addressed after a prolong period of utmost miseries.

In case of the INGOs and also the National NGOs it was observed that after the event (disaster) the field NGOs (suppose RVC) sent reports (on the basis of assessment and secondary data collected from the administration) to the Funding agencies (INGOs or National NGOs) which consumes few days. The report followed by few updates reports. After receiving the reports the Funding agencies analyzed the reports and then representative of the concerned agencies arrange field visit. The whole process used to consume not less then 15 days. The visit followed by further analyzing the data, compiling the data by the agencies , formulation of proposal along with budget by the field NGOs. *The process consumes almost 45 days to 60 days on reaching materials to the affected communities which not only put the community in high risks but also largely diluted the objectives of the intervention.*



Lessons from 2004 flood:

In the year 2004 devastating flood had ripped through the Brahmaputra River Basin on 17th August 2008 largely affecting the people of Dhemaji District, Lakhimpur District as well as Majuli Sub-Division of Jorhat District. During assessment it was observed by the emergency response team of RVC that emergency shelter materials was one of the critical needs of the flood affected community in distress. Taking concern over the people in distress RVC had put effort to mobilized tarpaulins in favor of the affected people. Although RVC put its effort to mobilize resources from 20th August 2004 (after completing and compiling the assessment) the materials (tarpaulins) reached RVC on 4th October and 7th October and from RVC to the community within the period 8th October 2004 to 19th October 2004.

It is easily understood that the emergency materials reached to the people in distress almost after 50 days. Moreover it had taken 4 days for reaching the materials to the people in distress from RVC.

Project / Intervention Formulation:



The above understanding led RVC to think alternative strategy to address the need of the people in distress immediately and started negotiating with the support agencies for “Contingency stock” at RVC level. The idea was largely appreciated by 2 numbers of RVC’s partner agency and with their support RVC initiated the “Contingency warehousing”

at RVC premises from pre-flood session of 2005. But further discussion within the team on the basis of previous year’s experiences it was felt that contingency warehousing at RVC level will not also serve the objective totally. *It was well understood that it will take at least 4 days time for reaching the materials from RVC to the community. These 4 days time is consumed by assessment, beneficiary selection, and transportation of materials to the villages.*



The crucial understanding had led RVC to think alternatives so that in time and accessibility to emergency resources is ensured to the community inhabiting the remote affected/vulnerable villages, where the misery of the people goes unaddressed for a prolong period and thus the “Pre-positioning of emergency materials at community” level has been conceived by RVC and started from the year 2005.



The first initiative:

Process	Village	Date/time of assessment	Type of pre-positioned items provided	Date/time of distribution	Follow-up and lessons learnt
Tarpaulin has been provided to DPS and thereby RVC has initiated Community level pre-positioning from the year 2005.	1. Sumania		Tarpaulin- 10	12.09.2005	Follow up of the community level pre-positioning is a regular activity of volunteers of RVC.
	2. Dighalipam		Tarpaulin- 10	12.09.2005	
	3. Nepalipathar		Tarpaulin- 20	12.09.2005	
	4. Mothadang		Tarpaulin- 20	12.09.2005	
	5. Palengi		Tarpaulin- 20	12.09.2005	Follow up assistance on utilization of the materials have been intensively facilitated by RVC aftermath of Storm on April 2006 mainly in Nepalipathar and Panbari villages through organizing village meeting.
	6. Michamari		Tarpaulin- 20	12.09.2005	
	7. Kebaranga		Tarpaulin- 20	12.09.2005	
	8. Lahram Kunti		Tarpaulin- 20	12.09.2005	
	9. Sitalmarhi		Tarpaulin- 20	12.09.2005	
	10. Panbari		Tarpaulin- 20	12.09.2005	
<i>TOTAL</i>			<i>180</i>		

Goal and Objectives:



Goal: The flood vulnerable people of Brahmaputra River basin are equipped to reduce risks of disaster by immediate response of their own.

Objective: The flood vulnerable people of Brahmaputra River Basin has accessed to emergency materials immediately.

4. KEY ELEMENTS

Target Beneficiaries: The initial targeted beneficiaries are the flood vulnerable/affected people inhabiting the Upper Brahmaputra River Basin.

Geographical Coverage: Dhemaaji District, Lakhimpur District and Majuli Sub-Division of Jorhat District (Presently).



Key Project Activities/ Key Innovative Features - (capacity building, institution building, awareness, empowerment, etc) and methodologies/practices

- Identification of villages.
- Identification of Hazard wise vulnerability and risks through PRA/ PLA activities.
- Prioritization of the community's needs in time of disaster according to the identified risks through PRA/PLA activities.
 - Identification of physical resource to address the most critical needs.
- Identification/ Formation of groups/Samitis to take responsibility of resource management.
 - Mobilization of resources.
- Handing over the resources to the resource management group through proper orientation.
- Periodic monitoring and evaluation.

Key Technical Inputs:

None.

Impact – Social / Environmental/ Economical/ Policy Changes.

Social impact:

- The major social impact that the “Pre-positioning of emergency materials at community level has brought” is it has initiated “community based collective action” to reduce risks of disaster through own management system.
- Accessibility to emergency resources has increased people's willingness and capacity to plan for reducing risks of disaster manifold.
- Access to resources as well as responsibility to manage resources have influenced and increased women's participation on planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating disaster risk reduction manifold.

Economical impact:

The economical impact of Duryug Pratirodh Samiti can be understood from several angles:

- Using of the materials (mainly emergency shelter materials) on revolving basis has reduced the capital cost incurred on disaster response (mainly on temporary shelters) every year.
- It has minimized the lost of community by providing immediate access to emergency materials and thereby attributing to the household economy of the affected population.

Policy change:



Although no change in policy has been initiated by Government regarding pre-positioning of emergency materials at community level but numbers INGOs working in flood plains of Brahmaputra River Basin have adopted the practice and replicating the same in vulnerable villages through their field based partner Organizations.

5. COST INCURRED:

It depends upon the materials to be pre-positioned. Our experiences reflect that it varies within the range of Rs. 15000.00 to Rs. 30000.00 for an ideal size of village having 50 to 60 families with a population size of 300 to 350 i.e. a per capita invest of Rs 50 to Rs 100. Evidences are there which reflects that the investment have yielding result for last 4 years.

6. MONITORING MECHANISM:

- The volunteers of RVC attend the meetings of the resource management groups (DPS, SHGs, Youth club etc.) in periodic interval.
- The members of resource management groups are engaged in various trainings/workshops conducted by RVC mainly on policy advocacy.
- The resource management groups as well as RVC maintains a stock registrar and same are updated when new materials received by the resource management groups as well as when materials are written-off out to depreciation.
- Exposure visit arranged by RVC to the villages also develop a monitoring mechanism.

7. CHALLENGES:

1. Selection of beneficiaries by the DPS in time of emergency.
2. Recollection of materials disbursed by the DPS.
3. To ensure effective participation of women in planning meeting.
4. To ensure that the pre-positioning materials are used only for disaster response.
5. Influencing policy to adopt the mechanisms by the PRIs and other concerned Government stake-holders.

8. LESSONS LEARNT (both Positive & Negative)

Positive:

1. Disaster affected population have access to emergency materials in no time and have a prior plan for using the same.
2. Community's ownership over the emergency resources increases life span of the resources manifold.
3. Women's participation in Disaster Risk Reduction planning, actions, monitoring and evaluation crops up.
4. Disaster related women's issues, children's issues and issues of other most vulnerable groups (disable persons, core-poor, older persons etc.) are better discussed and accordingly interventions are designed.



Negative:

None significant.

9. CONCLUSION

The process has ensured right of the people vulnerable to disasters or affected by disasters to plan and implement according to their needs, priorities and choices and thereby reduce risks that the disaster/s induced on them in their own.

10. Submission may include photographs, graphs, charts, and other illustrations.

Photos included.