



BEST PRACTICES FOR ADAPTATION AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

CASE STUDY-9: < MINIMUM STANDARD PACKAGE FOR
REDUCING RISKS OF PREGNANT WOMEN AND
LACTATING MOTHERS WITH HER BABIES DURING
FLOOD DISASTER >



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



TITLE: < Minimum Standard Package for reducing risks of pregnant women and lactating Mothers with her babies during flood disaster>

ORGANISATION: <Rural Volunteers Centre (RVC)>

1. THEME: DRR of Pregnant and Lactating Mother.

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.
- The depletion of agro based traditional livelihood practices has resulted in inter-District and inter state seasonal and permanent migration in large.
- Access to basic needs (water, sanitation provisions etc) of the flood affected population is largely denied.

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

The “*Minimum standard Package for reducing risks of pregnant and lactating mother during flood disaster*” is a good practice and potential for replication because it is comprehensive (*addresses the vital issues of mother and the baby viz maintaining personal hygiene, access to safe drinking water, protection from vector borne diseases like malaria, encephalitis etc as well as protection from catching cold*) ready and easy to use with high potentiality to ensure healthy living environment to the Pregnant and lactating mother in time of flood. *The idea was conceived on the belief that the pregnant and lactating mothers with their babies need special attention during flood disaster to reduce their specific risks.*

Brief on the local condition prior to Project initiation:



Local conditions in general: RVC's experiences of working on the flood plains of Brahmaputra River Basin reflect that damage to shelter, inundation and water logging for a prolong period due to flood combined with non accessibility to safe drinking water, non-availability of minimum essential materials for maintaining safe personal hygiene, lack of minimum essential **materials** to prevent vector borne diseases make the pregnant women and the lactating

mother along with her baby highly vulnerable to health problems. Every year a huge chunk of pregnant women as well as lactating mothers along with their babies have to live a life of extreme miseries for a period of not less than 4 months. The pathetic living conditions are beyond imagination of the outside world. It is mentioned to worthy during this period service delivery by the “sub-health centres” and the “Anganwadi Centres” are also largely get disrupted which put the pregnant women and the lactating mother along with her baby in more risks. It has also been



observed that the ASHA workers engaged under National Rural Health Mission focuses only on immunization and institutional delivery. Thus it is easily understood that there is no state owned service delivery mechanism to address the risks of the pregnant women and lactating mothers along with their babies.

The other aspect of the issue is that the Government's flood response mechanisms largely guided by the Calamity Relief Fund (CRS), National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF) and in Assam part of Brahmaputra River Basin the "Assam Relief Manual 1976" have no special attention towards these most vulnerable groups.

The other observation is that the non-governmental organizations (both national and international) working on flood response gives priority to the pregnant women and lactating mothers in their responses but it is under the common response without any specific attention towards the critical needs of these vulnerable groups.

The above understanding had led RVC to think of a "minimum standard package" to address the risks of these lots of vulnerable groups and after critically analyzing the risk factors RVC in the year 2007 conceived the "Minimum Standard package for the flood affected Pregnant and Lactating Mothers".

Project / Intervention Formulation:



After the devastating flood which had ripped through the Dhakuakhana Block of Lakhimpur District on 9th September 2007 affecting 1,50, 000 population from 161 villages RVC conducted a detail assessment in 10 worst affected villages (Identified by Government as well as other NGOs). Analyzing the assessment thoroughly it was found that Arkep village of Kherkatta G.P. and Janjhi villages of Matmora G.P. were the worst affected villages. Analyzing the damage, external aid and vulnerability aspect it was found that pregnant women and lactating mothers along with their babies were the most vulnerable group and were in urgent need for external support mainly on the issues of (i) Personal hygiene (ii) Safe drinking water (iii) Protection from water borne and vector borne diseases (iv) Prevention of diseases from catching cold.

Analyzing the vulnerable groups and the associated risks RVC has designed a "**minimum standard package**". The design which was largely done on experimental basis basket consists

of the following items:

Sl. No.	Support	Items details
1.	One hygiene kit per beneficiary	4 pieces of bathing soap, 4 pieces of baby soap, 4 pieces of washing soaps, 1 litre disinfectant(Savlon), 1 number of bucket, 2 numbers of bowl(1 for washing clothe and the other for bathing of the baby), 1 mug, 2 numbers of towels(1 for the mother and 1 for the baby)



2.	1 steel filter per beneficiary	
3.	2 numbers of mosquito nets every beneficiary	
4.	2 numbers of blankets per beneficiary.	
5.	1 set of Winter wear for the baby	

Goal and Objectives:

Goal:

Pro and specific flood response measures in favor of pregnant women and lactating mothers living on Brahmaputra River Basin have reduced their specific risks from flood.

Objectives:

To ensure that the pregnant and lactating mothers have access to a “minimum standard package” to reduce risks of flood disaster.

4. KEY ELEMENTS

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

Geographical Coverage: Dhemaji 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:

The project activities involve the following steps:

- (i) Selection of beneficiaries (pregnant and lactating mother) through village meeting.
- (ii) Orientation of the beneficiaries on flood related issues (water borne diseases, vector borne diseases, personal hygiene etc) of “pregnant and lactating mothers” and linking the issues with the components in the “Minimum Standard Package”.
- (iii) Providing the “minimum standard package” to the beneficiaries.
- (iv) Providing related IEC materials.
- (v) Orientation of the recipients on using “SAVLON”.
- (vi) Monitoring and gap analysis.

Key Technical Inputs:

No technical input is required. Orientation of the beneficiaries on “how to use Savlon” was focused during intervention.

Impact – Social / Environmental/ Economical/ Policy Changes.



Social impact:

- Accessibility to “minimum standard package” has ensured a convenient living environment to the pregnant and lactating mothers during flood and post-flood session has in turn encouraged other women to adopt safe measures.
- Right to special care of the pregnant and lactating mothers during flood emergency has been asserted.

Economical impact:

- The “minimum standard package” has assured hygienic living environment of to the pregnant women, lactating mothers along with the babies has eliminated sufferings from water borne, vector borne and other common diseases otherwise prevalent in the region during and post-flood session which in turn has cut down the health expenditures of the families and thereby enabling the families to take special care of the pregnant women, lactating mothers and the babies in other aspects.
- The “minimum standard package” has largely attributed towards day to day household economy of the families by providing access to day-to-day essential needs (bathing soaps, washing soaps, mosquito nets etc.) and thereby enabling the families to rebuild their lives fast.



5. COST INCURRED:

Rs. 1400.00 per beneficiary.

6. MONITORING MECHANISM:

No external formal monitoring mechanism is required except few field visits during initial days to ensure best storage and uses of the materials.

7. CHALLENGES:

- 1. The only challenge is to link the support with sustainable behavioral change.**

8. LESSONS LEARNT (both Positive & Negative)

Positive:

- Access to essential commodities for maintaining hygienic living conditions largely influences people's practices in a sustainable manner.

Negative:



- There is very less opportunities to influence Government's flood response mechanism to adopt the package in near future.

9. CONCLUSION

In the year 2007 RVC designed a **"minimum standard package"** to reduce the risks out of flood disaster of the pregnant and lactating mothers through ensuring accessibility to specific essential commodities during emergency situation. The package which had been designed in experimental basis was also expected to bring about behavioral change at community level in the long run. The intervention was highly valued by the Office of the Sub-Divisional Officer as well as office of the Sub-Divisional Medical Officer. The package has been today adopted as model package by several National and international agencies working on the flood plains of Indian River Basins.

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

Photos are included.

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