

ADVANCED CENTRE FOR ENABLING DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Pilots Brief 3

Institutionalizing Disaster Risk Reduction

In an effort to learn how to make disaster risk reduction sustainable, the Advanced Centre for Enabling Disaster Risk Reduction (ACEDRR) at Tata-Dhan Academy, has supported four pilot projects that try to mainstream disaster risk reduction into long term policies, programs and practices.

Aid practitioners in forward-thinking government departments, non-governmental organizations and universities have worked on disaster risk reduction with vulnerable communities for years. And climate change intensifies the need for this type of work.

But many disaster risk reduction experts struggle with the question of how to make efforts sustainable.

The Advanced Centre for Enabling Disaster Risk Reduction at DHAN Foundation believes that one way to make disaster risk reduction efforts sustainable is to institutionalize them—to integrate them into permanent structures, systems, bodies and processes already in place.

This might mean empowering community members to reduce their disaster risks by forming their own contingency plans and response committees. It might mean broadening mandates of local panchayats. It might mean expanding the roles of microfinance institutions.

However, people and institutions often get stuck in daily routines. Rarely do they take the time to consider their role in preventing, mitigating or responding to future disasters.

In light of this, ACEDRR has commissioned four pilot projects which look at ways to integrate disaster risk reduction activities into



the daily work of vulnerable people, the panchayats that govern them, and the microfinance institutes that serve them.

Preparing Communities to Reduce their Risks

Given their daily struggle to make ends meet, it can sometimes be hard for poor people to feel as though they have enough time or money to take the extra steps required to reduce their disaster risk.

To this end, ACEDRR commissioned the Indian Network of Federations of Microfinance Self-Help Groups (INFOS)—a national network of microfinance self-help groups founded by DHAN in 2004—to conduct a pilot project that would help prepare self-help groups in the Kadaladi block of Tamil Nadu to undertake disaster risk reduction activities.

“The need for disaster risk reduction was not their felt need,” said Narendran, project leader at INFOS. “They are experiencing problems, but we have to make them aware of the root causes of the problem and the need to address those.”

“Many of these people institutions focus only on savings and credit, and just a few federations have started insurance, health and education,” Narendran explained. “This is the first federation to take this kind of disaster risk reduction initiative in all of India.”

Kadaladi, a drought-prone mix of coastal and farming land, faces a number of development problems including an influx of migrants straining the availability of already limited resources and inflaming social tension, and birth defects caused by a concentration of chemicals in the salt-pan where many people work.

INFOS practitioners collected data on vulnerability, which included vulnerability not only to droughts but also to house fires, crop failure, and loss of life or limb due to manual labor.

They shared all this information with federation leaders, and asked federation leaders to brainstorm ways that they could reduce vulnerability to disasters by making changes within their organization at every level, from the federation level, to the village level self-help groups.

Federation leaders resolved to make disaster risk reduction a main focus of their work at every level. This resolution means that now, when determining who should get loans, the federation will give preference to projects that have a disaster risk reduction component. And when a crisis befalls a member, this will become the priority for the federation.

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With this resolution, individuals in crisis “can easily come to the federation and get claims,” said Narendran, when they would otherwise go to a moneylender, “who would not solve their problems.”

Before this project, the federation would prioritize education and health needs and consumption. “The most important outcome is the resolution that they have taken, that disaster risk reduction is very much needed for their members,” said Narendran.

At the general meeting in June of this year, every federation member will gather together and vote on it the resolution taken as a result of this work. Box 1 is a list of the actions they came up with.

Beyond passing this resolution, which would free up funds for disaster risk reduction loans, the federation leaders, each members of small village level self-help groups, brainstormed ways that their groups could better reduce their disaster risks.

Each federation leader will present these ideas, and this new commitment for disaster risk reduction to their village level self-help groups.

“Activities for addressing disaster risk reduction should start at the group level,” said Narendran, emphasizing that—although INFOS used the apex institution, the federation, to share information about disaster risk reduction—the planning and implementation of disaster risk reduction policies should be implemented from the bottom-up. “Many federations are not focusing on the real issues people are facing,” because—though these federations are “people institutions,” and therefore are responsive to the people—“people aren’t demanding this need.”

People who have to make ends meet do not often have the luxury of also preparing for a disaster. In this pilot project on preparing communities, INFOS had to develop the capacity of the federation to think proactively about these kind of initiatives.

“Federations that fail to meet this need often lose members who feel like their needs are not being met,” said Narendran, “They leave the federation and go to other NGOs that are competing for their attention. This sort of initiative would help the people to be with the federation indefinitely.”

FEDERATION INSTITUTIONALIZED DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

As part of this pilot project, the Neithal Federation came up with a number of ideas for institutionalizing disaster risk reduction that they will implement in the future. These include:

- Networking with other stakeholders in the block such as panchayat and NGOs for disaster risk reduction.
- Acting as the rouser agency for disaster risk reduction in the block.
- Creating disaster risk reduction fund at the group, cluster, federation and block level.
- Organizing a series of trainings in collaboration with resource institutions on disaster preparedness, relief and recovery for their members, the general public, and school and college students.
- Promoting village information centres to serve as the point location for early warning system.
- Introducing crop insurance to free farmers from debt due to loss in production due to failure of the monsoon.
- Developing housing product for members living in hut houses and electricity product for those without electricity in their homes.
- Providing alternative livelihood during the non-agricultural season and for those with low incomes, especially the poor women on the block.
- Setting up health camps and de-addiction camps for people addicted to alcohol.
- Preventing the damages to houses from fire by promoting fire-proof building materials.

Context Specifics

Many of the people in Kadaladi work in the salt-pan, work that requires close contact with chemicals. As a result of this work, people here face a lot of diseases and sometimes bear children with birth defects. As a result, there is high in number of differently-abled people in this federation, the group decided to focus some of their disaster risk reduction efforts on this specific population.

The federation has started a separate program, a resource centre, to improve income generation of differently-abled people, to teach them skills to help them become more independent. The resource centre also provides counseling, motivational course, skill training program, and supports people to take advantage of government schemes.

ACTORS TEACH THE VALUE OF DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

The DHAN practitioners on this study estimate that they've reached 20 percent of the self-help federation, or Kalanjiam members with their work so far. In order to share the import of disaster risk reduction with the other 80 percent of the group, the Kalanjiam put together this team of players.

"All the huts are burning!" someone cries. Actors embody the feelings of fear and loss that many people in Kadaladi block of the Ramnad District in Tamil Nadu face every year.

This reenactment of a common disaster is part of an effort by the Indian Network of Federations of Microfinance Self Help Groups (INFOS) to inspire communities to take action on disaster risk reduction and disaster preparedness where they live.

Few people think of disasters unless they are imminent. But for the very poor, who work hard to make ends meet daily, this kind of contingency planning may feel like a luxury they cannot afford.

This project asks the question, how can practitioners best prepare communities to engage in disaster risk reduction activities?

Kadaladi, the mix of coastal and farming land where the pilot project took place is also suffering from inflamed social tensions as a result of limited resources. There are high unemployment rates, gambling and gang-fights, and many people are indebted to moneylenders.

It is in this context that the people of Kaladadi face droughts, cyclones, epidemics and accidental fires, without even an early warning system.

By presenting this information to federation leaders, INFOS was able to demonstrate the need for disaster risk reduction strategies.

Federation leaders were moved to take action. In addition to resolving to make disaster risk reduction a main focus of their work to reduce poverty, they established a cultural team to share the importance of disaster risk reduction with villagers.

The cultural team wrote skits, based on the real vulnerabilities and hazards faced by communities in the Kaladadi block. They performed them for self-help groups all over Kaladadi, inspiring group members to consider disaster risk reduction strategies they could take.

"A burning hut is not only found in this drama," the actor says at the end, "We have seen the same situation, even in our Kalanjiam family."

With these decisions and policies adopted by the federation leaders, INFOS practitioners estimate that they have increased disaster risk reduction awareness for about 20 percent of the Kaladadi microfinance association, impressing upon them the need for disaster risk reduction activities and inspiring them to action.

But how to reach the other 80 percent?

The federation called together a team of actors to share these messages with self-help groups at the village level, to reach the other 80 percent of members. The actors have written a skit that highlights risks people face everyday, and how these risks become personal or community disasters. The goal is to highlight ways the self-help groups could address vulnerabilities of their members, and inspire them to take up disaster risk reduction in their work.

As mentioned earlier, in June, 100 percent of federation members will vote to approve the resolution. If it is approved, they will start implementing disaster risk reduction-focused microfinance programs.

This project demonstrates that by looking through a disaster lens, self-help groups for microfinance can take a number of creative steps to institutionalize disaster risk reduction activities; both in their own work, and by communicating the importance of these activities to the people they serve.

Micro Insurance for Disaster Risk Reduction

The District Fisherman's Youth Welfare Association (DFYWA) has been working with fishing communities in Andhra Pradesh for many years, helping to strengthen the livelihoods of fishing families by enrolling them in microfinance programs, and by fighting for their legal rights.

Sponsored by ACEDRR, DFYWA conducted a pilot project in which they integrated micro insurance plans into the ongoing development programs in this community.

First, DFYWA identified key development programs of the state/district administration that are reaching out to at least four marine fishing villages where DFYWA is already implementing livelihood or other development activities. Then they conducted participatory rural appraisals with community to understand disaster vulnerability, and to profile ongoing development programs and the coping strategies for disasters.

This fisher woman sorts through the day's catch. By drying and selling these fish, fishing families in Andhra Pradesh can earn Rs. 35 per month. While their earnings are small, if they can save some of it to invest in micro insurance, it will keep them out of the pockets of moneylenders, and reduce their vulnerability to disasters.



MICRO INSURANCE BUILDS RESILIENCE AFTER TSUNAMI

Fishing families in Andhra Pradesh rely on micro insurance to keep them out of debt to money lenders and to help them save some of what they earn.

If Devudamma Ummidi's family were still uninsured, her son's high fever would have cost her a huge percentage of her yearly income, and indebted her to loan sharks.

But now that she has insurance, she can afford to take him to a clinic to get checked out.

According to Devudamma, many mothers here face the same dilemma when their child comes down with a fever. Fevers could mean malaria or dengue, both of which are potentially fatal.

"Because they don't know what it is, the tendency is to rush to the hospital," said Devudamma, "But they charge a lot. That's where insurance is very handy."

Many fishing families in the Pudimedaka village are deep in debt, borrowing money to rebuild boats, to cover daily costs when the catch is small, to cover their needs when injury or illness keep them from working, or, like Ummidi, to pay for medical care.

When fish are plentiful, families have to pay back their loans, usually with a high percentage of their catch. But health insurance, as part of a broader economic plan, is opening up new possibilities here.

Three years ago, the District Fishermen's Youth Welfare Association (DFYWA) a local NGO and ACEDRR partner, helped families in this village determine that medical expenses were a huge drain on their resources, costing some up to a quarter of their yearly income.

Now, for what they make in a day, families like Ummidi's can purchase an annual policy, protecting themselves from the costs of sickness, accidents – even the death of a breadwinner.

With money saved on medical care, families here are buying ice-boxes, fishing nets and fish drying and processing equipment. These investments can help them earn a little more on their catch than they did before.

Health insurance is a great first step, but ultimately, the people of Pudimedaka need a more comprehensive insurance package to keep them out of the pockets of moneylenders.

Beyond medical costs, fishing families would benefit from insurance that covers assets including boats, houses and even the day's catch.

Mahalakshmi Kara, a grandmother in the village, has relied on a health insurance policy for at least a year and has started saving a small percentage of her earnings. "We never thought that we could save, but we're doing it," she said.

"I don't know how it will be helpful," said Kara, "but if [saving] can lift us even an inch out of poverty, I'll be very happy."

After gathering this information, DFYWA held a consultation workshop with local development workers, government staff and insurance agencies to analyze how to integrate insurance-linked disaster risk reduction strategies in ongoing programs by these groups.

From this meeting, DFYWA developed a strategic guidance document that outlined a set of DRR activities and insurance options to be integrated in to the ongoing development programs.

For example, through a series of district-level and block-level consultation workshops, DFYWA convinced the government to offer insurance to rural fishermen who work as wage labourers in the off-season, through the government's National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA). The Act guarantees each adult in a rural household 100 days of wage labour per year, often on infrastructure projects. Now, in this area, the work will come with health insurance benefits.

DFYWA also helped communities develop their own contingency plans for emergency response that link with ongoing development programs. They rigorously trained community members who would participate on a “task force,” that is responsible for promoting various aspects of disaster risk reduction and various insurance schemes.

DFYWA and a community-based task force they created, worked closely with communities to get a sense of the needs of the community and to convince fishing families that insurance was a worthy investment. Some people in this village were sceptical of insurance, because they know someone who had been tricked by con artists who claim to sell similar schemes.

Additionally, fishermen are hesitant to purchase insurance, because they are often scraping by on very little income. They do not believe that they have the funds available to pay for it.

But because of their long relationships with community members, the DFYWA has earned the trust of most of the residents. It was the reliability of DFYWA, and their longstanding and good relationship with the community, that compelled people to trust this insurance program enough to participate, said residents.

“If someone has been coming to your house for five years, and you have been hosting them for five years, and they tell you something, why wouldn’t you believe them?” asked Mahalakshmi Kara, a grandmother in the village, who has purchased insurance with support from DFYWA.

Another way that DFYWA convinced people to invest in insurance was to show them the immediate impact it would have on their household expenses. DFYWA helped families calculate the amount of money they spent on health care every year for their families—with most families spending nearly a quarter of their yearly earnings. The cost of an insurance policy was small by comparison. Policyholders could spend their extra money paying down debt or investing in innovations that would add to their incomes.

So far insurance promotion has not been integral to development. This project demonstrates how disaster risk insurance could be made integral to the development process.

“By integrating disaster risk reduction with ongoing development programs, not only to we build the capacity of communities to do disaster risk reduction,” said Arjilly Dasu, founder of DFYWA, “but we also prevent the erosion of development gains.”

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These are some of the village members of a panchayat-level disaster risk reduction committee. They will be responsible for managing a contingency fund and identifying and implementing effective disaster risk reduction strategies.

In addition, by integrating risk reduction into ongoing development work, DFYWA points out, they have been able to minimize the costs of the risk reduction projects.

Connecting to Local Governance Structures

Since 2004, the DHAN Foundation's *Working With Panchayats* program has helped village level institutions incorporate themselves into the regular work of their panchayats, an effort to ensure people's participation in local governance. *Working With Panchayats* has also supported panchayats to access alternative funding and thereby reduce their dependence on state resources.

The DHAN Foundation believes that, ultimately, the responsibility for the well-being of citizens lies with their governments. Because the government of India will only provide services or disburse funds through the panchayat system, disaster risk reduction activities that are incorporated into the work of panchayats will be more sustainable than actions taken by MFIs, NGOs or CBOs alone.

Vasimalai, director of the DHAN Foundation tells of how he asked one district collector if he had a disaster management committee: "He told me, yes I have one," said Vasi, "and all

these other NGOs have one too, so if a disaster comes, I don't know what will happen." Without a disaster management committee within the government that can organize the haphazard work of NGOs, the panchayat will not be able to manage relief and rehabilitation after a real disaster.

ACEDRR sponsored a pilot project that connected the disaster risk reduction work of self-help groups in one village to the work of the local panchayat.

First practitioners guided the community through a participatory vulnerability mapping process and helped them form emergency response groups for early warning, evacuation, and first aid.

Working With Panchayats facilitated the participatory microplanning by the people then persuaded the Gram Sabha—a forum in which electors choose panchayat members, mandated by the Indian Constitutional Act—to approve. The group shared the plan with the District Level Disaster Management Committee.

But this project took these activities a step further by working with the panchayat to create an administrative body, affiliated with the panchayat, that would connect these CBOs to the work of the panchayat.

In order to do this, first they had to convince the panchayat that to hand over some responsibility for disaster risk reduction would be in its best interest.

"They were very positive about the idea," said Janakiraman, a leader on this project. "By sharing the responsibility for disaster risk reduction with CBOs, it reduces the burden of the panchayats."

Under law, Janakiraman said, any village panchayat can promote a working committee to address a specific need of the people living in the area. The disaster risk reduction committee was created and has validity under this legal provision.

While the panchayats get funds from the state and national government for infrastructure activities, their bylaws are set up in such a way that they cannot keep a contingency fund to use for disaster response, according to Janakiraman.

However, the new body created in this pilot project does, in fact, have the power to keep funds for that purpose. As part of this pilot project, ACEDRR has given seed money for a contingency fund to be managed by this working group.

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The disaster risk reduction committee is made up of three panchayat members, one development professional, and six community members involved in the community level emergency response groups.

Members meet monthly to discuss the risks, vulnerabilities and hazards that threaten the places where they live. Each group will bring their own strength to the conversation: Residents will have their fingers on the pulse of the disaster risk reduction needs of their communities; the development professional can provide insight into various courses of action; and panchayat members can present these issues to the panchayat and elicit the appropriate government response.

While NGOs and CBOs can institutionalize disaster risk reduction within their own mandates and with vulnerable communities, unless these groups connect their work to the work of local governments, responsible for the well-being of citizens, these actions will remain partial, haphazard, and unsustainable.

While the *Working With Panchayats* practitioners convinced the panchayats to adopt this working group, it is not mandatory that village panchayats promote such committees. As such the *Working With Panchayats* team is planning to advocate the government to mandate such committees in all panchayats. Practitioners are hoping to scale it up to five panchayats in the upcoming year, 25 panchayats in future years, and eventually to lobby the state government that all panchayats should be designed this way.

Finally *Working With Panchayats* has produced a toolkit from this pilot project in which they outline their steps, and enable other groups to recreate them.

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Resource Centre

The DHAN People Academy (DPA) at the DHAN Foundation believes that sustainable development can be achieved only through community-based organizations and the competence of their leaders and practitioners.

Since 2003, DPA has offered a range of training, certificates and diploma programmes for the leaders and practitioners of CBOs on themes like microfinance, natural resource management, livelihood promotion, strengthening local governance and gender mainstreaming.

DPA undertook a pilot project that would compile the findings from all of the other pilot and research projects that ACEDRR



Here People Federation leaders participate in a training with DHAN People Academy practitioners. Their training material, on the topic of disaster risk reduction, was created from the Vulnerability Mapping Study conducted by the People Academy.

has conducted in its first phase of implementation. The goal was to use this material to establish a resource pool in Nagapattinam—a flood prone area in the south of Tamil Nadu where DHAN has worked since the tsunami. The resource pool would include reports and other materials printed in the local language, as well as audio-visual resources and trained practitioners.

First, DPA developed the findings and products from a myriad of research and pilot projects into a disaster risk reduction curriculum and training manual. DPA used the material to create training programs, mock drills and workshops for community members on disaster risk reduction.

After compiling findings and creating resources, DPA created a resource centre in Nagapattinam to house these reports and training manuals. The resource centre is led by DHAN's microfinance federation's regional coordinator. Other practitioners, who work as disaster risk reduction trainers for community members, are also from the DHAN's people institutions.

DPA has already used these resources to conduct a training of these trainers on the process of risk mapping. Thirty-four trainers completed the program. The DPA has also created a video on the subject.

The Tata-Dhan Academy, ACEDRR, and the resource centre will share of knowledge and an exchange of materials.

A Few Potential Conclusions: Looking Forward

Disaster risk reduction planning should include a deep analysis of the roles and responsibilities at every level of a disaster

response. These pilots take on ways to do that, starting with empowering the very poor to protect themselves. While many very poor people might consider disaster risk reduction action a luxury, the pilot project presented here shows that people can be prepared to undertake disaster risk reduction. Once they realize its importance, they will make important decisions and take decisive action to reduce their risks.

Disaster insurance can go a long way to protecting people's lives and assets in a disaster and needs a greater investment in product development and pilot testing. There is a strong need for investment in institutional development in microfinance so that established groups, like self-help groups and microfinance institutions, can offer disaster insurance and other disaster mitigation products

All disaster risk reduction committees, actions and plans will be more effective when coupled with the local government's own disaster risk reduction plans, facilitating a unified response.

Finally, all these lessons have been institutionalized into a curriculum, training manual and resource centre, ensuring that lessons learned in these pilots will continue to be learned—not only by vulnerable people in Nagapattinam, or federation members, but also by students of development—informing the judgments of the next generation of development workers or humanitarian responders.

Project Summaries

Preparing Communities through People Institutions: A Pilot Project in Neithal Vattara Kalanjiam

Objectives

- To analyze risk and vulnerabilities of people in the Kadaladi block of Ramnad district to disasters.
- To develop a wider understanding of the disaster risk reduction practices people currently undertake and to enhance their effectiveness.
- To integrate disaster preparedness with microfinance programme of the people institution.
- To build the effectiveness and efficiency of the Neithal Federation to respond to disasters.

Methods

- Collected data, undertook risk and vulnerability assessments and a diagnostic study of the Neithal Federation and conducted interviews in order to understand the context of the target group.
- Facilitated focus group discussions, brainstorming exercises, a leaders' convention, meetings, workshops, and helped federation members prepare a sensitization skit in order to create awareness on disaster risk reduction

Outcomes

- Increased awareness on DRR among members of the federation.
- New initiatives by the federation, including new bylaw for disaster risk reduction, new institutional arrangements and mechanisms for disaster risk reduction, a disaster risk reduction plan for the federation, the formation of a disaster risk reduction committee at federation level and fund allocation for disaster risk reduction at federation level.
- A skit for sensitizing community on the need for disaster risk reduction.
- Toolkit for "Preparing Communities on

Disaster Preparedness through People Institution".

Lesson Learned

- Disasters have many and varied negative impacts on households and the federations, ranging from death, injury and illness to market disruptions and loan defaults that could bankrupt the federation.
- Disaster risks were neglected by the microfinance programmes of the self-help groups and federations
- Need for disaster risk reduction through the self-help group federations remains the felt needs of the community

What is next?

This pilot has impacted the future plans and goals of the federation. The federation will now initiate the programmes and activities decided upon during this pilot project in order to reduce disaster risks and vulnerabilities faced by people in the Kadaladi block. The lessons and outcomes from this pilot will be shared with other stakeholders in the INFOS Network and more broadly through newsletters and websites, and a national conference. The rest of DHAN's member federations and other people institutions could get good insights from this pilot on how to initiate disaster risk reduction programmes in the future.

Integration of Insurance Linked Disaster Risk Reduction into Development Programs of Marine Fishing Community

Objectives

- To reduce the disaster risk of people in selected villages by helping them share or transfer risk through savings, contingency funds and insurance.
- To minimize the cost of disaster risk reduction by integrating these approaches into ongoing development programs.
- To improve to the long-term

sustainability of development programs by integrating disaster risk reduction approaches.

Methodology

- Counseled fisherfolk on the benefits of micro insurance.
- Made micro insurance for disaster risk reduction available via DFYWA's ongoing development programs.
- Signed up 720 fisherpeople for micro insurance during pilot period.

Outcomes

- Communities may face reduced impact of disasters due contingency planning and collective action.
- 720 people in selected villages are guaranteed dignified recovery from disasters through insurance.
- The government and other agencies in the district have replicated the model.
- Rapport between government officials and DFYWA has increased.
- DFYWA capacity has increased, since they have developed a deeper understanding of micro insurance.

Lesson Learned

- Microinsurance is very important for the security of fisherfolk.
- Insurance companies were resistant to settle claims even for genuine cases.
- Community-based insurance would solve the problem of claim settlements and is preferred by the community.

What is next?

After this pilot project, DFYWA strongly feels that the government should implement this initiative in all coastal districts and mandals by linking it to all other welfare schemes, demonstrated by this pilot. DFYWA also believes that schools in the coastal areas should include disaster risk reduction in their regular curriculum. DFYWA will work toward these objectives.

Institutionalizing the

Disaster Preparedness and Risk Reduction with Village Panchayat Governance

Objectives

- To integrate the people institutions with panchayat governance.
- To build the capacity of the representatives of the people, of functional group members and of the community.
- To create micro-plans for on disaster risk reduction and emergency response.
- To develop mechanisms by which an organization can monitor and evaluate the success of this project, for example by generating baseline data on disaster responses.

Methods

- Conducted participatory disaster appraisal, using PRA tools, like a transect walk, a village map and wealth rankings.
- Facilitated community members to develop contingency plan and emergency response groups.
- Solicited support from local panchayat for a people institution for disaster risk reduction.
- Built a people institution made up of six representatives of these response groups, three panchayat members and one disaster specialist.
- Built the capacity of the people institution through trainings.
- Facilitated the people institution to develop a micro-plan for disaster risk reduction using focus group discussions

Outcomes

- One village panchayat empowered to work with community representatives for disaster risk reduction.
- An institutional model for up scaling such disaster risk reduction at the

panchayat level.

- A tool kit “Role of Panchayat Governance in Disaster Management.”

Lesson Learned

- The government machinery is weak in disaster preparedness initiatives.
- The potential of village panchayat to lead on disaster risk reduction has not been fully explored.
- Local people institutions are not being linked with local panchayats.
- The panchayat and the community share a vision and could share a planning processes for proactive initiatives on disaster risk reduction.
- Important community census data at the grassroots level does not exist, is not accurate or is not accessible during disasters.

What is next?

The panchayat-level disaster risk reduction committee, a working committee of the panchayat administration, will be oriented to disaster risk reduction needs by the hamlet level disaster risk reduction committees. The panchayat-level committee will execute the micro-plan for disaster risk reduction, created as part of this pilot. Further, they will build a link between hamlet level committees and local government and non-government development institutions.

Establishing the Regional Resource Centre for Disaster Risk Reduction

Objectives

- To create a resource pool (trained manpower, printed materials, audio/video tools, etc) on disaster risk reduction at the regional resource centre.
- To offer different types of capacity-building programmes (trainings, mock drills, exposures, workshops) for the community on disaster preparedness and mitigation.

- To carry out research studies on the impact of various measures taken by the people institutions on disaster risk reduction and mitigation.
- To promote interdisciplinary approach in disaster preparedness and mitigation through networking with people institutions and other development organisations (education, research, health, district administration, banks, private organizations, etc)

Methods

- Created a resource pool (trained manpower, printed materials, audio/video tools, etc) on disaster risk reduction at the regional resource centre.
- Offered trainings, mock drills, exposures, and workshops for community capacity building on disaster preparedness and mitigation.
- Carried out impact assessments of efforts by the people institutions on disaster risk reduction and mitigation.
- Networked with people institutions and other development organisations to promote interdisciplinary approach in disaster preparedness and mitigation

Outcomes

- A regional resource centre in Nagapattinam with trainers and training materials on disaster preparedness.
- Trainings for all the members of people institutions on preparedness and mitigation measures.
- A full report on the project.

What is next?

The training manual on disaster risk reduction, and the other resources at the resource centre, products of ACEDRR’s first phase pilot and research initiatives will be used at the People Academy and the Tata-Dhan Academy for training development professionals and will be available to other institutions.

Project Holders

Preparing Communities through People Institutions: A Pilot Project in Neithal Vattara Kalanjiam

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ACEDRR

The Advanced Centre for Enabling Disaster Risk Reduction (ACEDRR) is a specialized centre of Tata-Dhan Academy established to enhance the knowledge and practice on disaster risk reduction through research and pilot projects, training and education, networking, consultancy, and policy advocacy activities to ensure secured lives and livelihoods of vulnerable communities.

Tata-Dhan Academy

Tata-Dhan Academy is promoted by DHAN Foundation, a pioneering grassroots organization, and Sir Ratan Tata Trust, Mumbai, to identify, nurture, and groom young graduates into development professionals through its flagship two-year Programme in Development Management. The Academy offers a number of short-duration Development Management Programmes and undertakes research, documentation, and consultancy services.

DHAN Foundation

DHAN Foundation works with about 8,50,000 families in 12 states of India, striving to improve the lives and livelihoods of vulnerable communities by organizing them to reduce poverty and address their various development needs. The interventions are spread across urban, rural, coastal, and tribal contexts. DHAN works in different thematic areas including microfinance, tank-fed agriculture, information and communication technology for the poor, and local self-governance.

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