

Community-to-Community Learning



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What makes ideas Sustainable?

Community-to-Community Learning

Though community-to-community learning is the most common way for a community learn, we know little, and invest even less in this lateral process. An effort was made by All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI) to address this gap.

The relationship between disasters and development is a very close one. Disaster offers the opportunity to rebuild an area better and safer and in addition, each community development effort should implement a Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) component. It is time consuming process, but a very necessary one and must be done with a high focus on community capacity building. The need to build leadership in DRR at grassroots level is greater and more immediate than ever before, especially in vulnerable areas.

For the last two decades, agencies dealing with disaster-affected communities have emphasised the need for a community-managed approach to disaster risk reduction, as it is the key to sustainable community development. All of these efforts have focused on community capacity building, which is vital for successful implementation. Agency to community and/or community to agency learning was carried out during these efforts. Such learning is important, however it is not enough. Community-to-community learning, while rare, is also a very important part of DRR. We commend the efforts made by the communities and community-based organisations

“ A lack of knowledge and resources are often the major constraints to **development**. These kinds of programmes provide a chance to overcome from these obstacles.”

– *Shobha Devi, Nirmala village*



People affected by disasters are active actors in reducing their vulnerabilities, in emergency response and rebuilding their lives and livelihood.

(CBO) that learned a great deal and shared their experiences of successful disaster recovery. This process is lateral and very exciting.

Post-disaster initiatives across South Asia have taken a long time moving from recovery to development but are of late focusing on DRR. Initiatives and responses from grassroots communities have reached a new level whereby policy makers, government institutions, and experts are recognising the efforts and skills of the community. However, investment in such processes has been slow and small.

In this context, AIDMI facilitated a learning exchange between grassroots communities. Community leaders from Bihar were taken to learn from the recovery efforts in villages in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu. The exchange took place in various areas that have been affected by disaster and successfully recovered including Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR) in their efforts. These visits gave an opportunity for grassroots communities to share their training, initiatives and best practices for

rebuilding resilience among communities. This exchange comes as a result of continuous efforts to rebuild flood-affected communities in Bihar. The exchange was designed in a way that linked disaster to development, highlighting the importance of adequate preparation and the understanding of future risks. It provided a platform for community groups to share the initiatives that they have implemented in their own villages.

AIDMI has been involved in designing and supporting various initiatives related to community capacity building for the last fifteen years. AIDMI emphasises the importance of capacity building in disaster reduction and recovery. It is vital that it is implemented by CBOs through a community-based approach at local and national level.

I would like to suggest that lateral learning makes ideas even more sustainable, rather than a top-down - or even bottom up - approach. However, more research is needed on this topic and we invite interested groups and organisations to take part. ■

– *Hasmukh Sadhu*

Community Capacity Building in Flood-affected Areas

In the process of CMDRR communities learn from the successful work others who have gone through a similar experience. It encourages a community to develop the initiative in their own way and this in turn ensures long-term sustainability. AIDMI is working continuously to set up these programmes to help different communities and is happy to share the findings with other humanitarian practitioners.

With the support of CordAid, AIDMI is attempting to set up long-term community development efforts in ten of Bihar's flood-affected villages. In this course of action, forcing is more in community capacity building for preparedness at local level. The prime target group is the CMDRR committee. Recently, the committee participated in exposure visits as part of a community-to-community learning programme. They visited communities in Gujarat and Tamil Nadu that had successfully recovered from disasters. The main aim of these visits was to teach the flood-affected communities of Bihar about the processes involved in successful disaster recovery.

We found that if a community leads the recovery process, they will gain the necessary skills and knowledge to make it far more successful in the long term. For example, after receiving basic education on shelter construction, a community will now be able to build safer, more resilient houses in the future. They will also be able to build their house in way that suits their livelihood and personal needs. Similar experiences and case studies were shared during exposure visit at Gujarat. The experience sharing discussion was led by the local community group, which comprised of the community leader, PRI members and educators. The visit not only includes NGOs work with communities. The Raisan village (the

first Gokul Gram in Gujarat) visit revealed the important development partnership of PRIs and communities. Participants also visited the flood-affected areas of Kheda to learn from the community's volunteer work and cash for work programme.

The Gujarat exposure visit revealed the following key points related to DRR and community development:

- A community driven initiative takes a long time. However, it results in development that is far more sustainable. It requires active follow up and timely inputs with local context.
- In terms of investment, community-managed activities are similar to investment in preparedness. This increases safety and minimises future loss from disaster.
- The recognition of the important role women play in the recovery process appears to have led to some changes in gender relations. There has, for example, led to more active participation from women in community groups.
- Community-managed disaster recovery efforts show a good example of a powerful community, as they are aware of the full recovery picture, which has led to transparency and effective implementation.
- Successful development work is not only important for the local economy, but also for enhancing social capital in the community.

“We had many useful learning by visiting tsunami-affected areas of Tamil Nadu, especially livelihood generation and women empowerment. Local communities and CBOs had rich action learning to share with outside communities who deal with long term disaster recovery activities.”

– Suresh Mukhiya, Kashiyam village

Another exposure visit was organised to the tsunami-affected areas of Tamil Nadu, where several communities had achieved successful recovery without constant dependency on outside agencies. Discussion with these communities revealed that, for them to reach this stage took decades of continuous work in which there were many successes and failures. Another interesting part of visit was to see the work implemented by Kalvi Kendra. The efforts of Kalvi Kendra involving risk reduction and village development are very important for any CBO interested in incorporating a DRR component into their recovery work.

The Tamil Nadu exposure visit revealed the following key points related to DRR and community development:

- Participants found several common mitigation measures due to water-related disasters - flood and tsunami.
- Recovery should not merely restore the previous level of development. It should promote activities that make the infrastructure more resistant future disasters.
- Recovery should be community managed but should also stay in line with state and national development policies.
- Issues related to capacity building should be given priority in the recovery phase. It should become part of a standard procedure for interventions.

Both community-to-community learning events were fruitful and helped to motivate the CMDRR committee to work and lead the DRR efforts in their own village. It also increased the speed of work, as there was enthusiasm about teamwork new leadership ideas. ■

– Vishal Pathak

Panel Discussion: Communities Learning from Each Other

Maithili to Tamil and Tamil to Maithili

This community-to-community learning event provided an opportunity for participants to learn from each other's experiences. It also can be used by involved agencies as a guideline for the way ahead. The following is documentation of a panel discussion between CMDRR committee members from Bihar and Tamil Nadu. Though both committees were from different geographical areas, and had different backgrounds and culture, they both had same goal. They wanted to further community development work in disaster-affected areas.

Subject	CMDRR Committee Tamil Nadu	CMDRR Committee Bihar
Geography and hazard	Coastline areas prone to tsunamis, floods, cyclones and fire. Each village has an average population of around 2500.	Prone to floods, heavy wind, earthquakes and fire. Each village has an average population of around 1500.
Objective	Though disasters cannot be avoided, risk can be reduced. There needs to be a focus on stopping hazards becoming disasters.	Reducing disaster impact, building DRR awareness, reducing death toll and loss of assets is the main goal.
Approach	Activities carried out in a group, as there is a trained and experienced task force.	Activities carried out individually due to lack of basic facility and awareness in the community.
Risk Assessment • Vulnerability • Capacity	The vulnerability of women needed special focus. Coastal areas capable of SHGs, tsunami recovery experience, trained task force.	Recurring floods, neglected by the government, high poverty, lack of basic facilities. Experience of flood response activities; Recent efforts in CMDRR.
By whom	The committee consisted of 10 members from different local institutes or task forces. These included DRR volunteers, SHGs, rescue team, farmers group and PRIs.	The committee consisted of 6 members from local youth groups, PRIs, community leaders and SHGs.
With whom	Active technical support provided by Kalvi Kendra - a local humanitarian agency.	AIDMI and a local partner agency provided technical inputs on DRR and community development.
Origin	It is an initiative from SHGs working in villages for a long time with an integrated DRR component.	It is an outcome based on flood relief operations handled by the local community and CBOs.
Experience	The committee has been active in all ten villages for the last 2.5 years. During this time, committee members were trained in different subjects and expanded its services based on local needs. The committees are strengthened by active technical inputs from Kalvi Kendra. During its time active, the committee has responded to several tragic incidents in the villages, such as floods, fire and storms.	The committee was established in last six months as a result of relief operation experiences with local youth communities. With village community participation, the committee is currently planning to increase the villages flood prevention capacity. It has also managed different capacity building activities and implemented awareness programmes at village level.
Achievements	Over the last 2.5 years, committee members have achieved several key milestones and process wise improved its services. Several committees have managed obtain resources from the government to use to increase village level development. The biggest achievement is the continuation of its service in schools, disaster response, SHGs, and climate change efforts at local level.	The committees are currently focused on building up a rapport in the villages and creating understanding in PRIs. In this short time, committees have effectively handled several relief operations after flood and fire incidents.
Challenges	They are struggling to organise larger communities. Households have become susceptible to risks due to rapid changes.	Recurring floods, the ability to reach communities during and post disaster, operations are running without basic public facilities.
Way ahead	Active links need to be forged with Government schemes and dependency on outside agencies needs to be reduced.	Develop a trained task force who are actively involved and carry out different flood prevention measures to increase sustainability, community partnerships and the involvement of PRIs .

– **Sathiya**, CMDRR Committee, Tamil Nadu and **Mohammad Luchi**, Bihar

Converting Learning into Actions by Community Leaders

Promoting action based capacity building activities with active follow up and timely inputs is one of key factors in any successful DRR work. AIDMI's experience of different disaster responses in the region is helping the Bihar flood recovery programme. The following table presents one example of how community learning can lead to actions at grassroots level. The exercise was carried out recently with community leaders after we conducted different capacity building activities and exercises in the field. These included CMDRR training, need and damage assessment, risk analysis exercises in villages and exposure visits to learn from the disaster recovery experiences of other communities. Currently, some of those planned actions have been established, some of them are under progress, and some of them are to be implemented in near future.

What	How	Partnership
Safer Education		
Disaster Risk Reduction in school	Spread DRR knowledge among school students and teachers by breaking down the different aspects related to basic DRR. These could include like do's and don'ts; hazard identification, vulnerability and capacity; basic scientific knowledge of disaster occurrence etc.	School and CMDRR committee
Child health education in school	Build awareness among teachers and students on child health education. Also conduct basic health awareness camps in schools to promote child health awareness.	
Safe roads towards school	Remove the water blockages that surround the schools to avoid injuries, and increase student's presence in school.	
Micro-Infrastructure		
Hand pump	Build a hand pump on higher ground with several feet of concrete around it so that it can be used all year round, even when there are floods.	CMDRR committee with local communities and PRIs
Focal point center	Construct a center which can be use as a focal point for CMDRR committee and village community meetings.	CMDRR committee
Toilet construction	Construct a toilet that can be moved so it can be used when there is a flood.	CMDRR committee with local Government authority
Flood Mitigation		
Emergency fund	Create an emergency fund with contribution from the village community to be used to organise a relief operation if there is an emergency in the village.	CMDRR committee and village community
Awareness on flood mitigation	Organise awareness programmes for the village community to spread information on flood safety before and during monsoon season.	
Tree plantation and brought up	Plant trees in school grounds with students and active monitoring for brought up by students and CMDRR committee.	CMDRR committee and school stakeholders
Organic farming	The CMDRR committee visited several places during the exposure visit and discussed the process and benefits of organic farming. Committee members are now interested in encouraging farmers from their own villages to promote organic farming.	CMDRR committee and village farmers
Wall drawing	To make the community aware about flood prevention and encourage them to practice safe health habits and promote education.	CMDRR committee
Strengthening CMDRR Committees		
Task force	Create different task forces to respond to any emergency situation effectively and apply preparedness measures at village level.	CMDRR committee, interested village community and agencies
Safety equipment	After the formation of the task force, the CMDRR committee wanted to equip the communities with safety tools like boats, first aid kits and rope so that they could face future flood incidents more effectively.	
Documentation and build understanding	Document each capacity building activity so that it can be used as a tool in moving forward. Also build DRR understanding among committee members.	CMDRR committee

– Dukha Chaupal, SSVK, Bihar

Is this Social Learning?

Community-to-community learning could also be called social learning as all social learning is spread in this way.

Community Development has significantly advanced in the ways that it builds sustainability amongst disaster-affected communities. Some of the most effective approaches to DRR are community-based, community led, and community centered. One of the new methods used is community-to-community learning; where knowledge is shared from an experienced community to a learner community. However, this in itself is not a new idea. Communities have learned from one another for centuries.

Community-to-community learning can be defined as direct involvement and interaction between people who have a concern or a passion for what they do and want to learn, during the process, ways of doing it better. The participation of communities in teaching/learning strategies enables the community to share their learning, knowledge and development skills, while also individual advancing personal development. This process is lateral and also social. It enables capacity building for the community as a whole, and for the individuals.

Looking from Social Work perspectives, community-to-community learning can be defined as the promotion of social change in the community. This occurs through problem solving, empowerment and the enhancement people's well being. Involvement and participation by the people is the crux of this process. Lateral learning cannot be top-down, or expert driven, or event focused. Social Work intervention ranges from personal psychosocial processes, to involvement in policy making. Social Work intervention will help the teaching community become more

accessible to the learner communities, based on the strengths of the communities, and will ensure leadership development as a result of the communities desire to change the situation around them.

Social work knowledge influences theory and practice in identifying the problem, analyse the problem, select methods, design and then plan for intervention of community to community learning in Disaster Risk

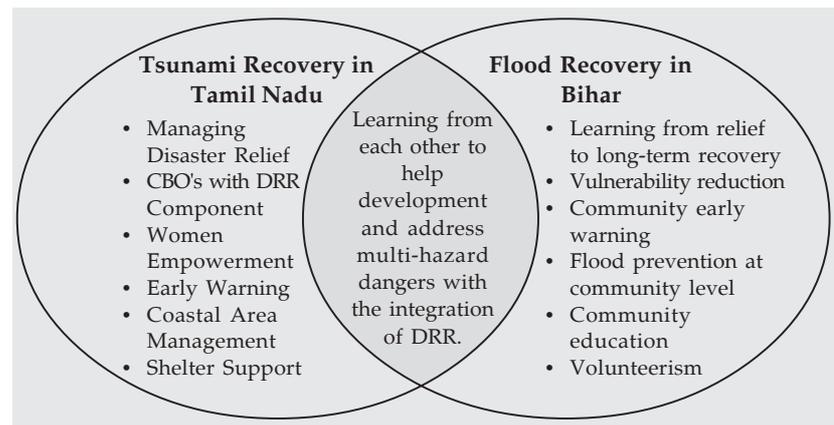
Reduction in the vulnerable areas in four phases: Community Participation in planning, Plan for action, Planning for implementation, and Dissemination of the Programme. However, this lateral, direct learning is social learning process of disaster risk reduction. We know little about social learning in DRR and more research and action are needed. ■

– **Sadhana Adhikary and Dr. Bigi Thomas,**

Sardar Patel University, Gujarat

EXPERIENCE SHARING

Bihar to Tamil Nadu: Direct Learning



It is not clear why all local learning must be analysed in Delhi before it can be imparted to local communities. Why can one community not learn directly from another community? Why can't the 2007 Bihar flood victims learn directly from 2004 tsunami victims from Tamil Nadu?

Community-to-community learning creates a crucial platform for community leaders, CBO's and even involved agencies to advance community development with an effective risk reduction component. The discussions between communities provide a good opportunity to share experiences of sustainable recovery and preparedness on DRR for capacity building. Recently, AIDMI and Kalvi Kendra organised an exposure visit with CMDRR committee members, PRI members, educators, and village volunteers to promote community-to-community learning. We find that such learning leads to empowerment among communities, as it is more inclusive and democratic.

It is good that the humanitarian agencies are open to learning from one another; unfortunately, not many agencies are focusing on community-to-community learning. After all, all learning is for the development of local community. Communities that have recovered from disasters have a lot of important knowledge that must be shared directly with communities that are going through the disaster recovery process. We suggest more national government resources should be invested to support this lateral learning. ■

– **S. Chinnappan,** Kalvi Kendra, Tamil Nadu

Community Learning Circle

The activity of learning has undergone an enormous transformation. Swami Vivekananda, when saying that every individual is potentially divine, pointed towards the potential for manifestation lying within all of us. What can be more divine than learning? The significance of learning has increased since man has started making more knowing and unknowing mistakes,

Learning has turned into an activity achieved by undergoing various experiences. As Confucius says, "...seek self knowledge derived from everyday experience...by looking to the right and to the left". Now scientific studies also prove that the most stable and permanent form of learning is one that comes with active participation.

With a change in ecological balance, disasters are becoming more frequent. To take proactive as well as reactive measures, society needs to create a web of community-to-community learning models so it can impart the knowledge of disaster mitigation to the larger society. As humanity battles with an ever-increasing number of disasters, disaster mitigation also evolved and

started using innovative models of learning. Actively involving communities and all stakeholders into the learning process is essential. An innovative model is being practiced by the active partnership between the Academic Staff College, Saurashtra University and AIDMI. They train university teachers on disaster mitigation techniques who in turn train thousands of college and university students. The programme involves various types of interactive and involving learning methods. This has the power to spread the knowledge to the youth and the students, who then become a catalyst and propagate the knowledge into the society, thus creating a domino effect.

This model is in itself a classic example of community-to-community learning that AIDMI is

“ The project has **motivated** us to learn and take actions as different activities take place where we have chance to participate and most importantly we (community) are in the central.

– *Asharfi Ram, Khairi village*

now spreading from Bihar to Gujarat and Tamil Nadu. Educators and students need to be more directly involved in such lateral social learning processes so that each individual can reach their divine potential. ■

– **Prof. Dr. Bhadrayu Vachhrajani**

Director, UGC : Academic Staff College, Saurashtra University, Rajkot.

Through the exposure visit we were able to visit best practices in CMDRR field, where we had opportunity to see and discuss about the work which convert from **concept to action** in risk reduction activities.

– *Parmeshwar Yadav, Kashiyam village*



Lateral learning is in progress. Views of every stakeholder in community meetings is important.

COMMUNITY VOICE

Risk Reduction in Community Development Voices

Protection tool like **micro insurance** is very important for vulnerable community.

During exposure visit we came to know such protection tools and how community was made aware through different methods like picture, poster, awareness display etc. And most importantly these efforts are done by local committees.

– **Mohmad Luchi**,
Khairi Tol Mathi village



Basic **DRR education** at school level helps to disseminate crucial information before and after and even in normal time for the safety of community as children are able to play an important role in spreading awareness at grass root level.

– **Tiliya Devi**,
Khairi village

Effective **CMDRR process** provides a better opportunity to women to recover well with feeling of ownership, participation and contributor in the society. It was good lateral learning experience and good discussion with the women groups at Kalvi Kendra and PPI.

– **Srimati Devi**,
Soharai village



By working together we were able to share knowledge and ideas related to our culture, society, economy and all of these in relation with risk reduction in our villages. Our **DRR actions** are now more concrete and sustainable.

– **Dukha Chaupal**,
Gangapur village

– **Kalpesh Prajapati and Yunus Khatri**

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