

Addressing caste discrimination in Humanitarian Response

‘CASE STUDY- INDIA’



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List of Abbreviations

DR-DRR- Disaster Response and Disaster Risk Reduction

CBDRR-Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction

CMDRR-Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction

UNDP - United Nations Development Programme

MGNREGA – Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act

DDMP - District Disaster Management Plan

DM - Disaster Management

NDMA - National Disaster Management Authority

SDMA - State Disaster Management Authority

SDMP - State disaster management plans

SEC- State Executive Committee

PRI - Panchayati Raj Institutions

NDRF - National Disaster Response Force

NCMC- National Crisis Management Committee

CMG - Crisis Management Groups

NDMF- National Disaster Response Fund

SDMF- State Disaster Response Fund

GO –Government Organisations

NGO- Non government Organisations

CBO- Community Based Organisations

HAP- Humanitarian Accountability Principles

WASH- Water Sanitation Hygiene

UNICEF- United Nations Children's Fund

UDHR- Universal Declaration of Human Rights

TISS- Tata Institute for Social Sciences

VDCs -Village Development Committees

CCHC - Community Complaints Handling Committee

CfW - Cash for Work

CRF- Calamity Relief Fund

NCCF- National Calamity Contingency Fund

ALPS- Accountability, Learning and Planning system

ECHO- European Commission for Humanitarian Assistance

JNNURM - Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission

GoI- Government of India

Executive Summary

This research document delves into the analysis of the caste induced vulnerabilities causing discrimination and exclusion of Dalits in Disaster Response and Risk Reduction. Supported by philosophical elements, the caste system constructs the moral, social and legal foundations of Hindu society. Dalits, former ‘untouchables’ as per the law, are the outcasts who fall outside the four-fold caste system consisting of the Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vysya and Sudra. Dalits are also referred to as Panchamas or people of the fifth order, while the literal meaning of the term Dalit means down trodden, the trampled one. Even though practice of untouchability is outlawed in India, it breeds in full swing and brings out both the good and the bad to the fore, at the very stage of evacuation and relief, advancing itself to long term rehabilitation phases, both at the hands of the dominant caste community and the systemic failures to address it.

Disasters are not bound by regional or national boundaries, nor are they caste prejudiced. It is the neglect in understanding these caste structures and how it works in disaster situations that result in invariable discrimination and exclusion of Dalits in disaster response of the government and humanitarian organisations. While discrimination is meted out to Dalits by both direct (dominant community and political structures) and indirect (systemic failures to identify their exclusion) means, the fact humanitarian standards do not currently require providers of humanitarian assistance in caste-affected countries to respond to caste discrimination with specific considerations and measures is the area of concern.

Discrimination by default (unintended discrimination) is as much an issue as discrimination by norm and intent and is prevalent both within civil society and administration. Even in cases where there is no intentional bias against Dalit communities, the lack of knowledge about their vulnerabilities, not mapping these communities in the context of the disaster and prevalent norms of operations result in the administration not taking the cause of Dalit and other marginalised communities in times of disaster. The local political structures have conditioned even the humanitarian agencies besides the government who are the primary responder to disasters, from seeing through the caste specific vulnerabilities of a particular community and helping them out.

The qualitative findings of several studies commissioned by civil society organisations have articulated eye opening instances of discrimination and exclusion of Dalits from disaster management interventions of the government and humanitarian organisations. It is clear that vulnerability is not just economical but social in nature. The social positioning plays a crucial role in determining the chances of survival and recuperation of victims during and post disaster. Their pre-existing vulnerabilities make them easy targets and first ones to be hit by disasters.

The situation, however, is hopeful of affirmative changes with the present legislation and guidelines in India, namely, the Disaster Management Act, 2005, Disaster Management Policy of 2009 together with thematic guidelines on different types of disasters, which carry considerable possibility of being understood through the human rights perspective, particularly for countering and weeding out caste based discrimination and exclusion in disasters. These legal mechanisms are indeed positive in spirit towards the vulnerable and

marginalised, and equality and non discrimination form the backbone for an inclusive approach to relief and rehabilitation services to the most vulnerable. The provisions in the Act and Policy reiterate special care to protect and provide for all affected groups in a non-discriminatory manner and according to their specific needs, but actual accountability will come only when the issue itself will find recognition in law and policies of Disaster Management in India.

For the purpose of the report, the situation of Dalits in the backdrop of some of the recent massive disasters in India over the last 15 years is taken into record. However, good practices of the humanitarian agencies and the encouraging models of collaboration between the CSOs and the government and bilateral partnerships in DR-DRR cover the time period of 2001-2010. The report limits itself to four types of natural disasters, namely, *floods, cyclones, earthquakes and severe drought*.

Followed by good practices are the recommendations to the Government and the Humanitarian agencies for the realisation of Inclusion of Dalits in DR-DRR. A rights-based approach is recommended for understanding disaster management, upholding the common principles of the right to life with dignity; the right to protection and security; and the right to receive humanitarian assistance.

In the final sections of the report, the readers will learn about the tools formed by CSOs to assess the existing vulnerabilities of Dalits communities and social audit tool that strives to make civil society programmes inclusive to the Dalits and marginalised communities.

This report is addressed principally to the concerned public authorities at different tiers (national, state, district, local level governance), the policy makers, the humanitarian actors comprising the donor agencies aiding humanitarian work in India; and the multidimensional civil society organisations that work with different mandates. Other beneficiaries of the report are anticipated to be the academic, researchers, anthropologists, students and lawyers, research institutions working on disaster management and etcetera, to be acquainted with the issue, beyond all technicalities involved in disaster management.

Need for the study

Guidelines and principles for humanitarian relief and disaster aid have a distinct history going as far back as the Convention establishing an International Relief Union in 1927. Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions refers to the need for humanity, impartiality and “absence of adverse distinction” in assisting civilian populations in armed conflicts. Over time, these humanitarian ideals were expanded to apply to agencies providing assistance after natural disasters and wars. In 1991, while setting up the department for humanitarian affairs, the United Nations laid down certain broad principles to guide humanitarian assistance. This was soon followed by the 1994 Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief. The code was later improved upon by the Sphere Project, an initiative of a number of NGOs and the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement in 1997. The aim of the project was to bring out an “operational framework for accountability in disaster assistance efforts”. This was done through the Sphere Handbook first published in 2000, and revised thereafter in 2003 and again in 2009–2010, which adopted Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response sets out for the first time what people affected by disasters have a right to expect from humanitarian assistance².

In its eleventh year, the Sphere Handbook (2011 edition) has recognised marginalisation of people by their society due to their ethnicity, age, sex, disability, class or caste, political affiliations or religion under the term ‘vulnerable’. The very mention of caste in this version of Sphere Handbook is a welcome step, but this still needs to percolate down to and integrate with the regional legal mechanisms in India.

The instances of caste bias in disaster situations predate the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, which triggered the unprecedented response from humanitarian agencies and government in terms of relief assistance to over a million of people who were affected. While the general sense of loss and human sufferings brought all organisations forth for saving lives, claiming to adhere to an agreement on minimum standards, or key principles, there were reports of caste-based discrimination in access to aid, restrictions on movement of people in camps, and forcible resettlement of people who were chased away from the camps, and exploitation and harassment of women at relief camps.

The lack of internationally accepted rights-based guidelines or standards for operations, evaluation, monitoring and accountability during the Relief and Rehabilitation phase often leads to what one disaster expert calls “programmes (that) inevitably become paternalistic in nature or end up serving the needs of the donors and the agencies rather than the needs of the victims” (World Disasters Report, 2002).

Several studies in the backdrop of recent disasters have shown the lack of right based approach in humanitarian intervention and government response. Hazards turning into disasters are now common annual occurrences across the globe. Those with least to lose in terms of material possessions turn out to be the worst and primary victims of any disaster for having lost everything little they possess due to abysmal coping capacity. Their vulnerability is both social and locational. Poverty compounded with social positioning or rather vice versa, have always played inhuman role in any disaster situation in South Asian countries, including, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka besides India.

² <http://infochangeindia.org/agenda/migration-displacement/beyond-the-sphere-standards.html>

The need is to clearly acknowledge caste induced vulnerabilities as a cause of multiple marginalisation of a particular community, thereby, aligning to the human rights principles of India's laws and international treaties.

The need to work out an equitable and just policy to adequately compensate the Dalit community, looking at the turn of events and testimonies of discrimination in disaster response is the need of the hour when several pro-active measures are being taken to upgrade and establish effective mechanisms in the form of policies and guidelines. As long as the agencies will keep justifying the act of omission and treat caste as a way of life and Indian history, a matter of accident, disguised by the 'neutral' and 'one size fits all' approach, resilience building of Dalit and marginalised communities of the Indian society will keep drifting farther.

With this backdrop, the documentation, eventually, is prepared to generate an advocacy tool which could be used in many different contexts and institutional settings by the actors to overcome caste elements in humanitarian interventions and disaster management. Hopes for 'building better' after the disaster cannot afford to neglect the issues of marginalised communities in the response programme. Meeting the needs of the most vulnerable and putting in place mechanisms for resilience building demands challenging the norms of caste. Recognition of the issue will be the first step towards inclusion of Dalits in Disaster Response and Risk Reduction.

Pre-existing vulnerabilities of Dalits

Not all poor are vulnerable

"³People's vulnerability to disasters depends on the social, cultural, economic and political environment. The economic factor is most apparent as many poor people are forced to live on marginal lands, such as floodplains, coastal towns and unstable hillsides. A study by CRED, 2001 concluded that in the past decade, on an average, every disaster in low human development countries claimed about 1,062 lives, and each disaster in the middle human development countries claimed 145 lives. These figures stand in stark contrast to the average of 22.5 people killed per disaster in high human development countries (WR, 2001)."

However, it is important to note that not all poor people are vulnerable to disasters and nor are the poor all vulnerable in the same way, as some people who are not poor are also vulnerable⁴. *Marginalisation of lower castes gets magnified in disasters, and the socially excluded groups turn out to be at greatest risk. Vulnerabilities that weaken the coping capacities of the people are thus ought to be looked at with clarity, in order to be able to devise real time humanitarian assistance and country response strategies, and not just reduce the entire concept of humanitarian action to mere relief.*

Outcast position of Dalits

Historically and even today, Dalits live in secluded habitations outside the main village thus limiting their access to the mainstream society which is apt to have better access to information and infrastructure. The main villages also becomes the hub of administrative and political activities being the location of the more influential and powerful communities. By the very location of their habitation, they have lower access to information, public education, disaster resilient infrastructure or communication for immediate action. The glass ceiling of caste makes it look as if Dalit communities are within the system of disaster response, while in reality they are cut off by the caste exclusions and discriminations.

Their precarious dwelling conditions expose them more severely to disasters. Their habitations are usually located in positions where the water and drainage may collect, with poor quality of housing, lack of drinking water sources or drainage facilities. There are very few infrastructure provisions or community facilities in these habitations and protection in times of disaster is a serious problem.

With the poverty situation, the nutrition and health conditions of Dalits are poorer and their resistance to illnesses low. Anaemia, malnutrition and other diseases also make them weaker to recovery. Combined with the unhealthy conditions of their living, they are most prone to suffer the outbreak of diseases in times of disaster.

Economic vulnerability

The livelihood situation of Dalits, dependent on wage labour and on dominant castes, without assets are particularly vulnerable to hazards when their ability to access daily employment is affected. Dalits mostly are landless people without any developmental assets in possession, and this makes them work as share croppers and take to cheap manual labour for meeting

³ Disaster Management in Southeast Asia, an Overview, accessed at <http://www.adpc.net/pdr-sea/publications/11-DMSEA.pdf>

⁴ Bankoff, G. et al. Mapping vulnerability: disasters, development, and people. UK: Creative Print and Design (Wales), 2004

their immediate survival needs. This also pushes them to the option of interstate migration. The fragile socio-economic condition of Dalits often determines their coping capacities. This can be backed with the findings of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report on Kosi flood which reveals that among SC households, three in four were landless or near-landless. Landlessness or lack of assets combined with a serious disaster situation exposes them to the vicious cycle of bonded labour; pushes their children into the hands of the predators that wait to prey on these unfortunate beings for trafficking them for various anti social means.

The non implementation of minimum wage standards, lack of social security measures, and lack of access to quality health care and opportunities for quality education force Dalits to earn their livelihood on a day to day basis with no back up mechanism. Any protracted lack of employment exposes them to the danger of hunger, starvation and ill health. Conflicts with the interests or norms of those who employ them hurt their opportunities for employment. In such a situation they cannot recuperate without the much needed assistance from the humanitarian agencies and the government, which doesn't reach them often due to large scale corruption involved at the local levels in the administration and 'one size fits all' and high handed approach of the bureaucrats.

The fear of violence makes them vulnerable

The norms of untouchability place many limitations on how Dalits can access safety, security or relief during disaster. Continuing societal norms of pollution in using common water sources, common dining and common place for accommodation are prevalent in the minds of non Dalits. Fear of caste conflicts and internalisation of their own age old caste status hold them back from demanding their rights. Reports of the temporary breaking down of these barriers are found in the immediate aftermath of a large disaster, but soon fall into routine ways by day three or four.

Violence and fear of violence is also very real. Dalits have internalised their lower position in society and do not demand their entitlements and rights. When they do demand, non Dalits find it difficult to accept the new paradigm of equality and human rights. Conflicts arise. Sexual violence on women and even violence on children when they access common spaces are reported from disaster response programmes.

Addressing 'discrimination by default'⁵ becomes important as thousands of years of the caste system plays out during disaster situations and the thousands of years of non-confrontation of the caste norms lead to both civil society and administration operating on existing norms of exclusion and discrimination than equity and inclusion. Hence conscious steps and choices have to be adopted by the administration to address exclusion of Dalits and other marginalised communities in times of disaster. This document aims to reach out to the government and humanitarian organisations to take all this into consideration to make sure they don't leave out any segment of population during their interventions.

⁵ Making Things Worse, Tim McGill (Study on Tsunami), funded by Cordaid, the Netherlands and commissioned by Dalit Network Netherlands (DNN)

**I. Caste based discrimination in disasters
in South Asia –A cursory look**

Some statistics

South Asia is extremely vulnerable to natural disasters, with more than 900 events reported since 1970 alone. Between 1990 and 2008, more than 750 million people—50 percent of the population in the region—were affected by at least one natural disaster, leaving almost 230,000 deaths and about US\$45 billion in damages⁶.

The areas and populations that face the highest risk from natural disasters are located in Bangladesh and Nepal. However, number of events in 1990 – 2011 in India alone are recorded to be 320, killing 5538.4 and affecting 91,53,10,733 per year⁷.

Caste a culture

Amidst all this, in South Asia, forms of caste discrimination in disasters situations have successively unfolded the different and yet uniform patterns of discrimination and exclusion across these countries. The deadliest combination of caste (equivalent to manmade disaster and something similar to racism) and natural disasters has revealed grey shades of humanity and helplessness and failure of the agencies, both government and non-government to adequately address the issue.

In August 2008, more than 35,000 villagers were displaced by a massive flood along the Kosi River in Nepal. In December 2010, the Nepalese government was at the final stage of accomplishing its billion rupee relief and rehabilitation programmes for the Kosi deluge victims. The Chief District Officer's High Level Task Force team, created to assist with flood-related matters, which included representatives of a local volunteer body of villagers blatantly, lacked representation from the Chamar (Dalit sub-caste) community. There was no safe drinking water available for 80 households in just one ward. The community lavished in agony for want of basic amenities until after two years, UNDP provided pipes and hand pumps for the villagers⁸. This flood had pushed the Dalits to the fringes by hard hitting their livelihood for they previously worked as agricultural labourers along with fishing. The flooding therefore exacerbated their pre-existing social situation by taking away from them their source of livelihood, which the government action failed to see through and comprehend.

The situation of Dalits in Pakistan is highly deplorable. According to Pakistan Dalit Solidarity Network (PDSN), hundreds of thousands of Dalits were affected by the floods in Pakistan in mid August 2010, and many of them were denied access to relief camps by Muslims while they also experienced other forms of discrimination when seeking assistance and this made them huddle under the open sky. Thousands of Dalit families faced caste discrimination in relief efforts, hampering their access to necessary help. There is only limited disaggregated data available on the affected population. Moreover the federal government's ban on non-governmental organisations and international donors to work in these areas for "security reasons", added to their agony, while the government itself was still to commence with their relief operation.

⁶ South Asia: Shared Views on Development and Climate Change, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/THE WORLD BANK, 2009

⁷ Corporate Disaster Resource Network (CDRN). Accessed at <http://www.cdrn.org.in/>

⁸ Caste Discrimination Affects Disaster Relief Efforts for Dalits in Nepal, May 9, 2011, By Asian Human Rights Commission

In Bangladesh, 40 per cent of its inhabitants live below poverty line and are frequently susceptible to natural disasters. In terms of accessing relief and rehabilitation at the time of disasters, both Muslim and Hindu Dalits face discrimination to some extent. They are not given due help or co-operation because of their identity. In the villages, the local authority tries to oblige the non-Dalits, even though they might not need any help/co-operation for disaster mitigation. Again, in the selection of items during relief etc, Dalits do not have any voice or choice; whereas the non-Dalits are allowed to select items at their own choice⁹.

In Sri Lanka, caste discrimination is most prevalent among the Tamil speaking part of the population, especially in the tea plantation areas, but also practiced in the Sinhala community and within the realm of Buddhist culture. Tsunami struck Sri Lanka with devastating force killing over 31,000 people and destroying an estimated 65,000 houses. Over 3,000 died along the coast of Batticaloa province, which is largely populated by Tamils. Many were vulnerable to the Tsunami because they had been displaced by ethnic tension and forced to move to low-lying land. They were then denied dry food rations in the refugee shelter - apparently because they came from a lower caste. International NGOs raised over \$800 million for Sri Lanka and are working extensively in communities, but it is reported that NGO assistance widened the gap between rich and poor by replacing boats that belonged to the rich owners.¹⁰

Several challenges hinder the implementation of equity monitoring in a disaster response. These include: differences in stakeholder mandates; common perceptions of threat that monitoring creates; the perceived reluctance of Government and civil society to collaborate; general perceptions of relief as charity; people's perceptions of vulnerability; a limited understanding of specific needs of different vulnerable groups; and lack of proper methods to facilitate monitoring in a non-threatening and non-offensive manner¹¹.

Dalits have been systematically excluded from relief and rehabilitation efforts. The fact that the deep seated caste system very conveniently finds its way into the different phases of disaster management and humanitarian response has been discovered and rediscovered from various studies and media reports, following every disaster. Yet humanitarian standards do not currently require providers of humanitarian assistance in caste-affected countries to respond to caste discrimination with specific considerations and measures.

This glimpse of caste based discrimination in South Asia in disaster now takes the report to focus precisely with the caste issue in the humanitarian response and disaster management by the government in Indian in the next section.

⁹ Chowdhury, I.U. Caste-based Discrimination in South Asia: A Study of Bangladesh, IIDS

¹⁰ Sri Lanka Discrimination, displacement and determination mark Sri Lanka's tsunami relief effort

¹¹ Real-time Equity Monitoring in Disaster Response, Lessons Learnt from Indian Experiences, UNICEF India, 2009

II. Caste Discrimination in Disaster Response and Disaster Risk Reduction–India

This section illustrates the situation of Dalits in Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation phases in a series of frequent disasters that have hit India. The hidden forms of discrimination and even scattered approach of humanitarian response have further mocked the Dalits and the very concept of 'humanitarian' assistance. These different forms of discrimination culminate in harassment of Dalits for their rights and entitlements. This is in India, which ¹² is ranked second in the world for natural disasters after China, with about 373 natural disasters killed over 296,800 people in 2010 alone.

¹² India ranks second in world for natural disasters: UN, Jan 24 2011, Indian Express.com

About 60% of India's landmass is prone to earthquakes, 40 million hectares affected by recurrent floods, 8% of the total area prone to cyclones and 68% affected by droughts, making disasters recurrent and critical in the progress and development of the country. Disasters at the global level have been brought into focus by the UN declaration of 1990 to 2000 as the 'International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction'. Some of the defining disasters have taken place in India, which include the Orissa Super cyclone, 1999, 2001 Gujarat earthquake, Tsunami 2004, Kosi flood 2008 and many more of varying intensity and magnitude.

These disasters have formed the premise for the statutory arrangement of Government of India for disaster management. The enactment of Disaster Management (DM) Act, 2005 and development of the national disaster management response framework came in after the tsunami, wherein the physical vulnerabilities were addressed and targeted in the central Act. The National Disaster Management Authority was established under the Act to spearhead the creation of a culture of disaster resilience, with institution in states, called the State Disaster Management Authority. National Institute of Disaster Management with nodal national responsibilities for human resource development, capacity building, training, research, documentation and policy advocacy in the field of disaster management is also instituted under the Act.

India, until recently, responded to disasters with distribution of immediate life saving rescue and relief measures to the victims. In the recent times, a paradigm shift is claimed in her approach to disaster management, with exceeding emphasis on disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness. With the promising Disaster Management Act there still is ample scope for the law to become inclusive, vigilant and active to counter the aspects of caste based discrimination in disasters. Nevertheless, the clauses and provisions that possibly can be understood in the light of inclusion of Dalits are also prevalent in the existing institutional and legal arrangements, which will be discussed in the following section.

Disasters are not bound by regional or national boundaries, nor are they caste prejudiced. Yet, the bitter fact is that the Dalits and Tribes, with their women, children, disabled and aged were the most vulnerable of the vulnerable. The ailing condition of Dalits has been unveiled with every successive disaster. Their pre-existing vulnerabilities make them easy targets and first ones to be hit by disasters.

The qualitative findings of several studies commissioned by civil society organisations have articulated eye opening instances of discrimination and exclusion of Dalits from disaster management interventions of the government and humanitarian organisations. One can always debate and zero in on how this has been the case, but it can be said that it is done both deliberately and unknowingly, as mentioned before.

'Discrimination by default' is as much an issue as discrimination by norm and intent and is prevalent both within civil society and administration. Even in cases where there is no intentional bias against Dalit communities, the lack of knowledge about their vulnerabilities, not mapping these communities in the context of the disaster and prevalent norms of operations result in the administration not taking the cause of Dalit and other marginalised communities in times of disaster. Often this is also co-existent and accentuated with the overt and covert dominant community bias and pressures.

On January 26, 2001, a devastating *earthquake rattled the northwest Indian state of Gujarat*.¹³ This natural disaster was the worst in recent history and claimed at least 30,000 lives and over one million rendered homeless. Discrimination surfaced early in relief efforts. Because of the lack of information, not all affected people had access to available rehabilitation programmes. The compensation disbursement process was marked by protests from people who complained of getting too little money, ad hoc fixing of compensation packages, and a general lack of understanding about a complex process. In several instances, the money survivors received was not enough to build adequate shelters and ensure a basic standard of living.

Tsunami surfaced the entrenched social divisions in the rural India. Dalits and their losses being small in nature, such as small, unregistered log-boats (kattamurams), small quantities of nets, bicycles, containers, painting equipment or stored shells destined for limestone production – were less visible. The undernourishment of the Dalits reliant on rice – went almost entirely unnoticed, while everyone including the media was concerned over the plight of obvious victims, the caste fishermen, for their losses and damages also naturally amounted more¹⁴. The landless Dalits who took the initiative of bettering the lives and took the land on lease to grow crops to profit little, had to die for the inability of paying back the lease money borrowed.

The Government also showed caste bias in its handling of the clean-up operations, which relied on Dalit ‘Safai Karamcharis’ (also known as ‘manual scavengers’ or ‘Municipal workers’), who were treated in an inhumane manner while being ordered to do the most revolting work: removal of rotting corpses. One of the top officials reported in the media that professionals from a Corporation would be brought in to help with the removal of the dead. While some of them did come, even on the first evening, it was the scavengers who were doing this work while the experts were standing at a distance. One has no quarrel with the bringing in of professional municipal workers to help at this calamity, but to look at only the scavenging community to do this and treating them the way when they are clearly doing something others are unable to do is an indication of the greater stench of an undying caste system of hierarchy, untouchability, discrimination and purity-pollution ideas, still buried under the sands of our Constitution¹⁵.

¹³ Price. G, and Bhatt. M., *The role of the affected state in humanitarian action: A case study on Indi, Arpil 2009*

¹⁴ Gill, T., *Making things worse: How Caste-Blindness in an Indian Post Tsunami recovery has exacerbated vulnerability and exclusion*(2007)

¹⁵ How Right is it to review discrimination in crisis and even death? Fact Finding report (unpublished) 2nd January 2005

Case study 1

The Story of the Safai Karamcharis

450 Dalits Municipal Workers were brought from this particular 'manual scavenger' to Nagapattinam, Nagore, Vellankani, Tarangambadi, Sirkali and Nellikuppam from 27th December to 31st evening. These people are known as Safai Karamcharis, and are the Dalits who have traditionally done the work of clearing drains, bodies, faeces and other manual, dirty occupations. As government employees, their normal work is cleaning drains, sweeping or spraying mosquito repellent. Safai Karamcharis were also brought from other municipalities in their hundreds.

They were woken early in the morning by their supervisors and told to come immediately to do post-tsunami cleanup work for one or two days, and that all their needs would be taken care of by the administration. They found a very bad situation, and immediately engaged in shifting debris, animal carcasses and taking human bodies to ambulances or directly to mass graves. 'We did the dirty work', they said 'and we didn't even have enough money to buy a cup of tea.'

They were ready and willing to do the work out of compassion for the dignity and health of the victims and their families, but their own dignity and health was sacrificed needlessly in the process because the managers did next to nothing to provide them with even the most basic facilities. They had nowhere to bathe, no soap or water or disinfectant, nowhere to sleep and had 2 uniforms for 5 days' grisly work. They worked 12 hours a day removing decomposing bodies without proper equipment or any nourishment, and then had to beg for food from the relief centres set up for the tsunami victims to eat. They received vaccinations on the 2nd or 3rd day. They were only given gloves and masks after the first 4 days, despite the fact that all other volunteers, health workers and government staff were provided with these from the beginning.

Caste fishermen often threatened them, pounding on the vehicles with sticks to force them to clean and remove the bodies. Safai Karamcharis were supposed to do this because they are Dalits. Removal of bodies is not their job as municipal workers, just as it is not the job of caste fishermen, but because they are untouchables they are the ones supposed to do the untouchable work.

After 5 days work like this they received just Rs125 [US\$2.80], working around 12 hours a day, sleeping 7 hours a night. 10 days later, they received a grand sum of Rs188 in compensation. After a month – with the treatment of the scavengers a public scandal – they finally received a decent Rs2500 in compensation. They weren't able to eat properly after they returned; they were not given any counselling. Nobody thanked them, but their incompetent supervisors received Certificates of Appreciation for their 'heroic work' in the tsunami.

****Making things worse: How Caste-Blindness in an Indian Post Tsunami recovery has exacerbated vulnerability and exclusion (2007)***

In the Rajasthan floods in 2006, Dalits were asked to leave relief camps for fear of 'polluting others'¹⁶. During the relief phase, segregation in relief camps or debarment from entering the camps where dominant castes were located was discovered during the 2008 Kosi flood in Bihar as well. Dalit families were not registered in the relief camps. The fear of caste conflict compelled Dalits to fend for themselves. This time it was not just exclusion and discrimination in receiving relief, but Kosi floods also saw violence among Dalits and caste group.

¹⁶ *Rethinking disasters*, Oxfam International, 2008

* 'Making things Worse: How Caste-Blindness in an Indian Post Tsunami recovery has exacerbated vulnerability and exclusion(2007)'

Glimpses of violence and discrimination

In Kusaiya village in Samastipur district, Rekka Devi, a Dalit woman and Panchayat ward member was beaten up with chappals and her son implicated in a false case for theft of 200 kgs of wheat when she asked the Mukhiya for relief.

In East Champaran Dalits were drinking flood water as they were beaten up by the dominant castes when they went to fetch water there when their hand pump was under flood water.

Shiv Kumar in Tamoria village, Madhubani district lost his eyesight for demanding relief materials for his hungry children.

Status Report on Bihar Floods, 2007

Besides the testimonies of struggle in getting registered in relief camps, the relief materials given to Dalits also were testified of being poorer quality and less in quantity compared to what was given to the dominant castes. In some cases dominant castes refused to eat food because Dalits were served before they were served. The UNDP report on Kosi floods also backs this finding that more villagers shared instances of being discriminated against as well as being cheated by Government relief authorities¹⁷. They were denied access to drinking water for the hand pumps were installed in the upper caste localities. This compelled Dalits to drink flood water and suffer health risks, with no or limited access to doctors also.

¹⁷ Kosi Flood, 2008, UNDP 2009

Case study 2

“Food earned from begging would have had better quality”!



Food earned from begging would have had better quality, says Jwala Raut, a 28 years old labourer belonging to the dalit community of Halkhors and a resident of Basantpur block of Supaul. “I had no premonition of the floods or about the possibility of the breach of the embankment. Water entered our village at around 8 in the night on the 18th of August. Panic broke out all over the place. I, along with my wife and children, struggled to get out of the water and somehow managed to take shelter inside the premises of Birpur telephone exchange. This was a three-storied building and nearly 1000 - 1500 people had taken refuge here.”

“I could not save anything. All my utensils, livestock and food-grains were washed away in the flood, and so was my hut. I could not even trace my relatives. I stayed at the telephone exchange building with my family for about 25 days and managed to survive by eating puffed or beaten rice. We used to wait for air droppings. On the 7th of September we were evacuated and taken to Kataiya in the Birpur Subdivision. We stayed there with our relatives for five days, under testing conditions. Deciding not to burden our relatives any more, we moved to a relief camp set up at the middle school of Pipra on the 13th of September.”

“First of all, we had to struggle for registration at the camp site. Also, there was no hygiene and cleanliness in the camp and an unmanageable number of people had been accommodated in the same hall. Initially the quality of food given in the camp was very bad, so much so that we used to think that begging would be a better option! But we had to compromise thinking of our children. Medical facilities here are equally bad and there is no arrangement for children. There is also no sanitation facility. In the name of toilet an isolated place has been cordoned off with plastic.”

***For a Morsel of Life, Kosi floods, Bihar, 2008**

Discrimination and corruption meet at the very stage of evacuation and rescue. According to villagers from Purnia and Madhepura districts, they perceived that Government boatmen charged higher prices (as much as Rs.500) from people belonging to marginalized groups to ply them to safer places. They also reportedly forced villagers belonging to poorer groups to wait for up to 10 days, in flood affected villages, before coming to rescue them.

Large scale corruption was perceived by Dalits flood victims of the 2009 Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka flood¹⁸, when many of them complained that the officials sat in panchayat offices or temples and fixed the compensation arbitrarily. Unsurprisingly thus, Dalits got compensation as paltry as Rs 500 to Rs 1500 in most cases, whereas many upper caste victims were given up to Rs 37,000 maximum compensation fixed by the government for

* For a Morsel of Life! ...Bihar Relief Camps report, 2008 (By Dalit Watch Bihar and NDW)

¹⁸(a) [Exclusion of Dalits in Flood Rehabilitation, Bijapur district, Karnataka, 2009](#) (By HRFDL-K and NDW)

(b) [The Excluded in Relief and Rehabilitation, 2009-10 floods, Andhra Pradesh](#) (By Dalit Watch-AP and NDW)

house damages. For having lost standing crops in four-fives acres of land, the victims got a pittance. At last, death, the most serious loss of all, was also treated with equal indifference. The main reasons behind this dissatisfaction was reportedly the lack of proper survey of Dalit colonies, lack of scientific and professional assessment of the damage caused by the floods, and of course, large-scale corruption at the local level.

Case study 3

'I lost two children'

The floods encircled her village when she was in the last few days of her second pregnancy. Even as her husband was struggling to shift her to a safer place, the couple saw their little daughter being washed away by the floods. A couple of days later, Dyamavva saw the girl's body floating in the stagnant water some miles away from her village. A few days later, she delivered a baby boy only to see the newborn succumb to an undiagnosed illness a few days later.



“The floods washed away my eight-year-old daughter and I lost my second child too. Both my children have left me in pain. I don't know what to live for.”

Ask her about how she managed to stay hungry, pat comes a reply: “Don't ask me anything about food. My stomach burns thinking about it even now. I have suffered a lot mentally and physically. I cannot explain in words what it means to lose two children, a house, and everything we had saved for the future. Nobody cared for me. No doctors visited me. I was not given any medicines either.”

Dyamavva cannot stop thinking that had she got enough food and proper medical attention in time, her second baby would have probably survived. As if this was not enough, the local officials are yet to heed her repeated pleas to allot compensation for two deaths in her family. “I have requested them many times to give me the compensation. But I have got nothing so far. I doubt if I ever will.”

“They gave everything to the upper caste people. We did not get anything. Had this happened to an upper caste woman, things would have been different,” she says. According to her, the local officials were reluctant to visit the Dalit colony to assess the damage caused by the floods. When they did visit, they just glanced around casually and scribbled something carelessly on the ledger. “They visited our colony only because we forced them to do so. It was as if they were doing a favour to us. What kind of justice can you expect from all this? We are aware that the entire village has suffered enough for a lifetime. Still, we can clearly see how we have been discriminated.”

Karnataka floods, October 2010

The Yamuna river floods of Delhi in 2010¹⁹ bear testimony to the similar negligence and lack of political will among the authorities to conduct damage assessment to announce compensation to the Dalit victims, who long settled in Delhi for sustained livelihood from neighbouring states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Despite repeated actions and approach of the survivors to the authorities, the authorities have dismissed their right to any entitlement on the ground of them being ‘illegal residents’ of Delhi. But it was clear with testimonies of people that they were no more than voting banks for the local politicians in the region. Should it be inferred that only legal tenure within the boundaries of a State determines the citizenship rights of the Dalits?

Such is the helplessness of the Dalit gram panchayat president that when disasters strike, s/he cannot take any action to protect and fight for the rights and entitlements of his people. During the 2009 Karnataka floods, the Dalits lamented that each time they approached him for facilities; they sensed his hesitation and fear in action on their behalf and performing his functions. They perceived it as some pressure on him from someone else.

Case study 4

“Something has to be done now for our living, for our children...we can’t just sit with one hand on another”.



Manju Devi w/o Gauri Shankar had been living in Chilla village of Mayur Vihar Phase 1 for years now. Both together tilled their six bighas of lease land and cultivated seasonal vegetables until the year 2010 when their fields were levelled by the Yamuna floods. They had borrowed huge sum for paying off the landowner. They paid Rs. 4000/- per bigha. This year they had borrowed money on interest from the whole sale vegetable vendor.

She is torn with the thoughts of having lost drowned in debt neck deep. She doesn't know how to support her daughters' education,

nor does she know how the loan will be repaid with Rs. 120/- as the pittance for her husband's daily labour.

Manju states that after the Yamuna floods hit them, the supply of ration was stopped to them, and many families living in the area hit with floods. The floods have only compounded their daily life struggles and drudgery for making both ends meet. There was no damage assessment from the officials. And she knew that even if there had been any damage assessment it wouldn't have fetched any major relief to the families because they tilled the leased land and had no authority over the land where their shack once stood. She thinks some government programme for providing them livelihood support would have helped them considerably to be free from the clutches of landlords and money lenders.

In this case, the state has failed to assess the level of damage for the Dalits and left the victims to fend for themselves, while flood water had still not receded enough for them to restart farming activity. Being share croppers, immediate livelihood would have been a major source of support, which too was ignored. This case talks about the systemic inefficiency to identify its citizens beyond local state borders and after relief distribution to support their recovery process.

¹⁹ [The uncertainties of life...living through waters of dejection \(Yamuna floods, Delhi, 2010\)](#)

Monitoring studies have showed that Dalit colonies have generally not been surveyed by the officials or visited by some irrelevant persons for the 'sake of a visit'. The non enumeration of their names in the compensation lists of the authorities deprives them from their claim to entitlements. Because they do not mostly possess documentary evidences for their assets, be it small livestock or boats etc., they are made to run from pillar to post on getting the losses registered in the required formats of the government. The paper work and formalities make them give up after some time, because for them, their daily survival become a priority instead of running around and losing out on daily wage work.

After floods, these Dalit families have found it hard to receive subsidised rations from the dealer, because they had lost their ration cards. In Andhra Pradesh, a year after the 2009 floods, the Dalit women articulated the hardship they face for want of subsidised rations. The dealers don't accept the temporary ration cards issued to the victims by the authority, despite being instructed by the concerned officials. Here, the Dalits speculated the possibility of illegal selling of the ration which came for them.

The issue of employment generation during disaster management is of paramount importance as it alone could restore normalcy to the lives of the affected communities. However, it is true that the achievements of the MGNREGA have been uneven. The findings of Andhra Pradesh (AP) flood monitoring survey revealed that most of the Dalit men were not issued job cards. Having a Job Card is the first step to demand employment and claim wages or unemployment allowance if job is not provided within the stipulated time frame. However, the trend is such that the scheduled caste dominated states have relatively low number of job cards for the SC families. In Assam (after 2009 floods) also it was found out that the family members who did hold Job cards had not received any promised work. The failure to generate work for these people leads to the increase of migration. This causes the Dalit women and children also to take up whatever little home based work available to them for supplementing the family income. The tasks include hazardous work like bidi making for wages as low as Rs. 2/- a day²⁰. Those who even managed to get some work under MGNREGA, of clearing the slush, struggled for the wages.

Six year after the tsunami, two years after the 2009 floods in Andhra Pradesh (AP) and Karnataka, Dalits either live in temporary shelters or in hutments located in areas that suffer annual flooding. So is the suffering and oversight of authorities that Dalit continue to live in difficult climatic conditions. Discrimination has persisted in the provision of housing and assistance for rebuilding livelihoods as well, pushing Dalits to the dead end of deep entrenched caste biases right from evacuation to relief and rehabilitation

Floods in the north-east, particularly Assam, are a recurrent phenomenon, although the nature of floods has changed qualitatively, and for the worse. However, particularly in 2009, Assam was faced with a serious flood situation²¹. A study by National Dalit Watch of NCDHR in one of the worst affected blocks Lakhimpur district unveils the shocking ignorance of the state administration authorities on national provisions for Calamity Relief Fund (CRF), which lays down the entitlements of the victims against each nature of damage and loss. The same levels of lack of information was found during the very recent Orissa floods of 2011 in one of the worst hit districts of Kendrapara. This throws light on the

²⁰ Ibid, 18(b)

²¹ Status of implementation of the Calamity Relief Fund in SC villages of Dhakuakhana block of Lakhimpur district (Assam) during flood and Post flood-2008/09 (By Rural Volunteer Centre & National Dalit Watch)

complete breakdown of any state/central government machinery to help the survivors of flood regain the normalcy. It was only after the mass protest by Dalit families at the district official's office that the supply of relief materials was released immediately.

In June 2011, Sphere India organised a District Stakeholders' Consultation on District Disaster Management Plan (DDMP) pilot for Madhubani district of Bihar. The minutes²² of this consultation reflect poorly on the understanding of the term 'participation' by Dalits and marginalised sections in the process. It would not be wrong to say that it was an act of tokenism, simply because some Dalit organisations had prior to the consultation, clearly pressed upon the need to have Dalit community members in the meeting. There is no record of the discussions pertaining to Dalits that may have been discussed in the consultation other than the mention of two or three Dalit organisation members in the list of attendees. This process could have been made an inclusive model of DDMP formulation the very outset for during the Kosi floods Madhubani was one of the worst hit districts with significant cases of Dalit discrimination. There may be two reasons for not giving importance to the Dalit agenda. First, the idea of 'unnecessarily' displeasing the state authorities that were present at the event and Second, the issue was not of importance to the wider gathering where concerns relating to technicalities involved in disaster management gained much ground.

These instances just offer a glimpse into the worse situation of Dalits in disasters. Disaster management and humanitarian agencies have often shown content with the mere numbers of victims they have assisted with immediate relief and goods. The work being done on Dalit inclusion and challenges encountered in the field are perhaps not sufficiently documented, or not adequately publicised to have learnings from them. Even organisations known to be working on Dalit inclusion in DR-DRR have not generated such documentation which can be accessed easily. The local political structures have conditioned even the humanitarian agencies besides the government who are the primary responder in disasters, from seeing through the caste specific vulnerabilities of a particular community. The present law, policy and guidelines in India are indeed positive in spirit, but strong implementation will come only when the issue find recognition in law and policies of Disaster Management.

²² annexed

III. Institutional and Legal arrangements for Disaster Management in India: An Overview

This section presents an overview of institutional and legal mechanisms that have been instituted in India over the years of facing different types and intensities of disasters. These mechanism aim to deal with different emergency situations in an organised and systematic manner, backed up with pecuniary arrangements made at the centre at the state levels, shifting from the ‘calamity relief’ approach making communities resilient through preparedness and mitigation efforts, streamlined with the ongoing developmental activities.

The Disaster Management Act (DM), 2005 lays down institutional, legal, financial and coordination mechanisms at the national, state, district and local levels. These institutions are not parallel structures and will work in close harmony. The primary responsibility for disaster management rests with the States. The institutional mechanism places at the Centre, State and District levels are to help States to manage disasters in an effective manner. The *National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)* has been instituted under the national Act. The NDMA, as the apex body for disaster management, is headed by the Prime Minister and has the responsibility for laying down policies, plans and guidelines for DM (and coordinating their enforcement and implementation for ensuring timely and effective response to disasters). The NDMA is mandated to deal with all types of disasters, natural or man-made. *The National Executive Committee (NEC)* comprising the Union Home Secretary as the Chairperson and the Secretaries to the GOI in the Ministries/Departments are established to assist the NDMA in carrying out its work.

Similarly, the *State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA)* has been established under the Act to ensure effective coordination and implementation of national and state guidelines and the Act at the districts level. The State governments are mandated to prepare their respective *state disaster management plans (SDMP)*, which are formed by the aggregation of the *DDMPs* at the district levels. The accumulation of SDMPs draws up the National Disaster Management Plan. The *State Executive Committee* is also provisioned by the Act to assist the SDMA. The District Administration is responsible for planning, coordination and implementation of guidelines laid down by the NDMA and SDMA, also formulating the DDMPs.

The Act mandates the NDMA and SDMAs to integrate measures for prevention of disasters or mitigation into development plans, allocation of funds, establishment of early warning systems etc. in the Disaster Management Plans. The NDMA approves the National Disaster Management plans of the Central Ministries/Departments and oversee the provision and application of funds for mitigation and preparedness measures recommended by the states. SDMA has to review the developmental plans of the different departments of the respective states to ensure integration of prevention, preparedness and mitigation measures.

The Disaster Management Policy provides for the *local authorities*, viz. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI), Municipalities, District and Cantonment Boards and Town Planning Authorities which control and manage civic services to ensure capacity building of their officers and employees for managing disasters, carry out relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities in the affected areas and prepare Disaster Management Plans in consonance with guidelines of the NDMA, SDMAs and DDMPs.

Under the DM Act, *National Institute of Disaster Management* has been established, which in partnership with other research institutions will develop capacities of trainers, DM officials and other stakeholders along with training, research, documentation and development of a national level information base.

For the purpose of specialised response to a threatening disaster situation or disasters/emergencies both natural and man-made such as those of Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear origin, the Act has mandated the constitution of a *National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)*. The general superintendence, direction and control of NDRF are vested in and will be exercised by the NDMA. The *National Crisis Management Committee*

(NCCM) comprising high level officials of the Government of India (GoI) headed by the Cabinet Secretary is provided in the Act to deal with major crises which have serious or national ramifications. It will be supported by the *Crisis Management Groups (CMG)* of the Central nodal Ministries and assisted by NEC as may be necessary.

The *Armed Forces, Central Para Military, Civil Defence* and Home Guards are called upon to assist the civil administration only when the situation is beyond their coping capability. Besides contributing to the NDRF, they are deployed for community preparedness and public awareness. They are also supposed to include women members for looking after the needs of women and children. Youth based organisations are also aimed at in the NDRF to support all community based initiatives and DM training to the community.

The Act has made financial arrangements at the Central level and state levels, in the form of *National / State Disaster Response Fund and Mitigation Funds (NDRFs) and National Disaster Mitigation Fund (NDMF)*. However, the NDMA is entrusted with the responsibility of mainstreaming the *disaster risk reduction* in developmental agenda. It also is obligated to ensure that all existing and new developmental programmes and projects incorporate disaster resilient specifications in the design and construction. The Planning Commission is called upon to make allocations in light of these factors.

The dimensions of response at the level of the Central Government are determined in accordance with the existing policy of financing relief expenditure and keeping in view the factors like (i) the gravity of a natural disaster; (ii) the scale of the relief operation necessary; and (iii) the requirements of Central assistance for augmenting financial resources and logistic support at the disposal of the State Government.

Management of natural disasters is essentially a state subject, where the state governments are mandated to carry out functions that are provided in the law and guidelines of the NDMA. The role of the Central Government is supportive in terms of supplementation of physical and financial resources, while the district administration is the focal point for implementation of all governmental plans and activities. The actual day-to-day function of administering relief is the responsibility of the Collector/District Magistrate/Deputy Commissioner who exercises coordinating and supervising powers over all departments at the district level.

The Chief Secretary of the State heads a state level committee which is in overall charge of the relief operations in the State and the Relief Commissioners who are in charge of the relief and rehabilitation measures in the wake of natural disasters in their States function under the overall direction and control of the state level committee. In many states, Secretary, Department of Revenue, is also in-charge of relief. State Governments usually have relief manuals and the districts have their contingency plan that is updated from time to time.

The NDRF is drawn towards meeting the expenses for emergency response, relief and rehabilitation, in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Central Government in consultation with the NDMA, and NDMF may be created for projects exclusively for the purpose of mitigation, applied by the NDMA and as recommended by the Finance Commission from time to time.

Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) scheme, introduced by the Ninth Commission (Second Report), is designed to enable the States to manage and provide for calamity relief on their own by drawing upon the resources available with a fund constituted for that purpose separately for

each State. The prescribed annual contributions to each State CRF are required to be made by the Centre and the concerned State in the proportion of 75:25. The scheme further provides for an accumulating balance with the proviso that if there is any unutilised amount left at the end of five years, it would be available for augmenting the plan resources of that State. A National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF) has been constituted by the Govt. of India for the purpose of dealing with severe calamities like cyclone, drought, earthquake, fire, flood and hailstorm, to cover natural requiring expenditure by the State Government in excess of the balances available in its own Calamity Relief Fund. The assistance from NCCF is available only for immediate relief and rehabilitation.

Considering that the assistance provided by the Government for rescue, relief and rehabilitation and reconstruction needs, the DM Policy vouches for the promotion of new financial tools such as catastrophic risk financing, risk insurance, catastrophe bonds, micro-finance and insurance etc with innovative fiscal incentives to cover such losses of individuals, communities and the corporate sector under the *techno-legal regime*.

Various guidelines²³ have been evolved in the past decade, focussing on different types of disasters, spirited to put in place the mechanisms for effective disaster management. It is to be acknowledged India has progressively established and developed disaster management system, policy and guidelines, under the overarching National Disaster Management Act, many of which bear existence to mutual consultation between the government and the with civil society organisations.

Human rights form the premise for the emergence of the disaster management law and subsequent policy and guidelines. Article 21 of *Right to Life with Dignity* of the Constitution of India guarantees human life and dignity, together becoming a subject of *rights*. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights²⁴ (UDHR) to which GoI is a signatory also celebrates human equality, liberty and dignity. These cardinal principles form the back bone of humanitarian interventions, which should automatically be mindful of factors that cause discrimination and exclusion of some section of population owing to the outlawed caste consideration.

The existing legislation and guidelines carry considerable possibility of being interpreted through the human rights perspective, particularly for countering and weeding out caste based discrimination and exclusion of Dalits in disasters. Even though this kind of reading and understanding of these is not sufficiently practiced by humanitarian agencies and almost never accepted by the authorities concerned, here we will briefly highlight the *key provision of non-discrimination and equality* in existing legislation and guidelines for the purpose of inclusive humanitarian response.

²³ For the list of guidelines go to <http://ndma.gov.in/ndma/guidelines.html>

²⁴ Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."

IV. Elements of Inclusion in Disaster Management Law, Policy and Guidelines

This section highlights the provisions in the existing Disaster Management Act, Policy and Guidelines (selected ones) that carry the potential of being understood from the human rights angle, reinforcing the principle of inclusion, reaching out to the most vulnerable and socially disenfranchised communities. These are broad provisions which may be viewed and acted upon to ensure Inclusion and Equity in the humanitarian assistance, and offer a good enough start to bring the Dalits into DR-DRR fold if political will and human rights approach is adopted.

Identifying the most vulnerable

The Disaster Management Act (DM Act) mandates the authorities to examine the vulnerability of different parts of the State to consequently come up with measures to be taken for prevention or mitigation of disasters. Vulnerability to disasters read with the National Disaster Management Policy 2009, states the *economically* and *socially* weaker segments of the population, acknowledging that they are the worst hits. These provisions strengthen the authorities to take such actions that focus on these socio-economic vulnerabilities which are pre-existing in nature, and get exacerbated when hit with a calamity.

It is clear that vulnerability is not just economical but social in nature. Even though the vulnerable groups rightly cover the elderly persons, women, children (especially women rendered destitute and children orphaned on account of disasters) and the differently abled persons, the social aspect could be extended to communities vulnerable on account of their caste. The social positioning plays a crucial role in determining the chances of survival and recuperation of victims during and post disaster. The definition of vulnerabilities could ideally accommodate the socially excluded Dalit communities.

It is important to note here that the in the National Disaster Management Guidelines on Role of NGOs in Disaster Management, though still draft form, have acknowledged vulnerability by reason of ethnic origin, religious or political affiliation, and how these adversely affect the people's capacity to recover from the ruins of disaster. The relief guidelines on Water, Sanitation and Hygiene(WASH), Medical aid, Drinking Water and Food have included the vulnerable groups as cross cutting issues, incorporated at relevant places in different sections of the Guidelines. These guidelines should encourage the authorities and humanitarian agencies to stress on holistic assessments keeping the socio-economic and political dynamics in view, while undertaking base lines in pre-disaster situations, to map vulnerabilities and capacities, and report in disaggregated fashion.

It is this knowledge of vulnerability mapping and capacity mapping, including local level assessment covering geographical location, structures, occupations, living pattern, cultural practices based on which the District Disaster Management Plans (DDMPs) are supposed to be formed (which has not yet happened in all disaster prone states till now). In the micro level planning for DDMPs specific vulnerabilities and capacities of Dalits should also find place which the Act empowers the state to do.

It is encouraging to see the recognition and inclusion of caste induced vulnerabilities in the Sphere Humanitarian Charter/ Minimum Standards Handbook in its latest 2011 edition, and this of course, is the fruit of persistent advocacy and lobby of the reputed civil society organisations. It provides for analysing the interplay of personal and contextual factors that heighten risk and designing programmes to address and mitigate those risks and target the needs of vulnerable people. Since the NDMA is a core member of Sphere project, and are expected to work in tandem with Sphere humanitarian principles, the authorities are empowered to consider getting same recognition into the existing legal mechanisms, and orient the bureaucracy and relevant personnel on these.

The Techno-Legal and Techno- Financial Regimes of the NGO guidelines, provides for assisting the most vulnerable people with weak coping capacities whose access to financial services are also limited due to their inability to provide any collateral for availing the financial services. Currently, there is no provision of compensation for share croppers where

majority of Dalits find a permanent place. This provision of financial support in the form of guidelines, for instance, for easy loans from public financial institutions and other compensatory schemes recognising the category of share croppers and other small entrepreneurs would help Dalits in resuming their livelihood.

The NGOs and government are at power to proactively address vulnerabilities, even if it is at a cost of displeasing the dominant caste mindsets. With all these provisions and emphasis on identifying the most vulnerable, both the NGOs and the government authorities are empowered and guided by the Act, Policy and guidelines to pay special attention to the needs of vulnerable groups. This is possible only when these groups have an interface with the representatives and officials where they can share their concerns and issues. Difficulty in consulting any group should be clearly stated in the assessment report and addressed as quickly as possible, as mentioned in the WASH guidelines, so that need based response can be designed which are accessible to Dalits.

Principle of Non discrimination

Equality and non discrimination are overriding principles stressing on inclusive approach to relief and rehabilitation services to the most vulnerable. The provisions in the Act and Policy reiterate special care to protect and provide for all affected groups in a non-discriminatory manner and according to their specific needs. The 'Inclusive Approach' through humanitarian imperative and principle of impartiality is reinforced in the Act and Policy by making need based aid available to all the victims of disasters. This can be ensured if pre-disaster hazard, risk, vulnerability and capacity assessment is done as a subject of human rights of the vulnerable masses. The rights-based approach is provided for understanding disaster management, upholding the common principles of the right to life with dignity; the right to protection and security; and the right to receive humanitarian assistance.

The SEC is mandated to ensure that non-governmental organisations carry out their activities in an equitable and non-discriminatory manner. This could also be expanded to officials and authorities that do not carry out consultative process with the communities at risk. It is the acceptance and recognition of the existence of discrimination on various grounds that the provisions for non-discrimination are slated in the Act and policy on disaster management. The SEC is authorized to take a step ahead and ensure the same is carried out by government authorities, which end up excluding and making the compensation distribution procedure invariably cumbersome and unfriendly to Dalits and other marginalised sections.

Though placed in the inappropriate section in the Act, which trivialises the issue, yet the clause of *Prohibition against Discrimination* states that there should be no discrimination on the ground of sex, caste, community, descent or religion while providing compensation and relief to the victims of disaster. This general aspirational clause could be best implemented only when there are penal actions set for those violating this clause. Accountability has to be set by corrective actions. This clause empowers the state authorities to set up grievance redressal mechanisms at the district levels to facilitate the process of transparency and grievance sharing, so that the communities feel confident and involved in the process, while the corrective actions can be planned to look into the matters of discrimination and exclusion in a timely and effective manner.

The principle of *Equitable Access* emphasised in the minimum relief guidelines for water, reads *water points should be located in areas that are accessible to all regardless of e.g. sex, age or ethnicity*. This clause uphold the spirit of equality but also that the topography of the rural India is such that one can clearly see the Dalit settlement away from the upper caste colonies, divided by a road. Through this provision, considering the reality of caste conflicts, the administration should sanction the installation of water facilities like hand pump in areas where majority of Dalits reside, since the Dalits would face problems in fetching water from the source installed in dominant caste locality. Instead of viewing such initiatives as partial or special to the Dalit community, the authorities would help in creating social infrastructure in Dalit locality where they will be able to easily access water without the fear of conflict. Besides, they can hold dialogue together with NGOs with the community to bridge the caste divide.

Since both government and non-profit agencies manage disasters and intervene with the primary aim of protecting the lives of the people hit with disasters, the NDMA can develop punitive actions against those responsible for perpetrating any act which protects the rights and entitlements of one section and resultantly endangers or infringe upon the rights and entitlements of another. This can be done when there are checks and balances and *Rules* supporting the spirit of the Act, seeing through the implementation of the norms and rectifying the lacunae with penal measures.

Community Based Disaster Risk Reduction (CBDRR)

The Act and Policy lays down certain functions of the state authorities which are to be carried out in pre-disaster, during disaster and post disaster period with adequate emphasis on community based and led approach. The activities over the three phases cannot be clearly divorced from one another. It is a continuum where disasters are responded to with short term and long term programmes, aiming to prepare communities in the gradual process to become resilient, and prevent or mitigate the hazard. Disaster response paves way for disaster risk reduction measures by way of bilaterally collaborative programmes in regions susceptible to disasters.

The Disaster Management Act has signified a paradigm shift in the way we respond to disaster and manage them. It has taken a holistic view that includes prevention, mitigation, response, capacity building and management. Community participation forms significant theme of community based and managed disaster risk reduction in these guidelines where it provides for making special effort to ensure the participation of women and other vulnerable groups within the assistance programme.

The NDMA guidelines also provides for the participation of disaster-affected people in assessment, planning, decision-making and implementation, which helps to ensure that programmes are equitable, effective and reinforce people's sense of dignity. Special effort are called for ensuring the involvement of women and other vulnerable groups, while also facilitating discussion at local governance bodies, e.g., panchayat or traditional self-governance bodies like tribal/village councils etc. on relevance and exigencies of DRR. Under these clauses the authorities together with NGOs are empowered to conceptualise and implement programmes in regions where Dalits and other marginalised sections reside, and impart training on the concept of CBDRR and DRR in all practical terms.

Since it is generally difficult for them to mix with the dominant caste groups, and are insulated from the main community, focussed interventions to make them resilient will see to it that they are protected. Such collaborative project between the GoI and UNDP-India are already underway for Rural Risk Reduction and Urban Risk Reduction for 2008-2012, whose one out of many objectives is building resilience of the poor Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribes considering their specific vulnerabilities. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is responsible for mitigation and prevention aspects of disaster management in India.

Obligations of the authorities at different stages

In pre-disaster period the Act and Policy provides for the risk assessment and action planning, with the understanding of the context, which can be done after examining the vulnerability of different parts of the State to different forms of disasters for working out measures of prevention and mitigation. The state governments are duty bound to establish adequate warning systems that will reach the vulnerable communities. In a given situation where the habitations of Dalits are away from the administrative centre of the village and they are often away from any source of information, adhering to the legal provisions, the authorities can assess the need and set up mechanisms of direct warning signals or messages in these localities. This will help ensure that casualties on account of lack of warning for the coming of a calamity.

Partnerships for Mitigation and Preparedness is also emphasised in the policy wherein the partnership of women and youth is encouraged in decision making committees and action groups for management of disasters. This will take care of the needs of the elderly, women, children and differently abled persons requiring special attention. In such partnerships, the authorities at the district focal level, the district, could organise drives to mobilise the women and youth from the Dalit communities also, so that while special needs of the said sections are being looked at, it is also understood and ensured that milestones for Dalits in being a part of the mitigation and preparedness programmes are overcome.

During the relief phase it is provided by the relief standard that the vulnerable groups and excluded and marginalised groups be identified in the camps for additional supplementary food to meet their special requirements. This provision is acceptance of the need and fact of acute hunger and malnutrition prevailing among the excluded communities due to which there are high cases of diseases like anaemia in women and children, attracting several kinds of serious health problems, which are also fatalistic in nature.

It is at the post disaster phase where the entire course of disaster risk reduction (DRR) comes in, from the restoration of community infrastructure and lost belonging to long term stability of the survivors. Development and DRR are parallel themes, because the ill conceived developmental projects can augment disaster like situations and cause much havoc to human life. The policy stresses on the role of the state to facilitate community training and awareness programmes for prevention of disaster or mitigation with the support of local authorities, governmental and non-governmental organisations. The primary responsibility of rehabilitation is fixed at the state governments. This rehabilitation comes with assurance of livelihood restoration of the meek and marginalised. For this, the policy lays down that the state governments must pay attention to the restoration of permanent livelihood of those affected by disasters and special attention to the needs of women headed households, artisans, farmers and people belonging to marginalised and vulnerable sections. This provision clearly

focuses on the vulnerable and marginalised, where special employment generation activities can be planned and implemented in areas where majority of Dalits have no access to work, for they either worked as share croppers or ran some petty business devastated by the emergency.

The NGO guidelines of the NDMA acknowledge the critical importance of livelihoods restoration as key to sustaining the capacity building measures in a community. It calls for the specific actions under livelihood vulnerability reduction by mapping the livelihood patterns in the areas prone to hazards /disasters. For reducing these livelihood related vulnerabilities options involving insurance and micro finance, policy measures, preventive measures against specific risks associated with vulnerabilities, research and knowledge sharing on best practices, linkages with livelihood programmes of Government – (Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and other employment schemes, and cash for work or food for work components in other development programmes are encouraged and brought to prominence.

Under this guideline, if both the government and the NGOs conduct a real scientific assessment of the livelihood patterns of the vulnerable area, it is assured that they will come across and discover for themselves the peculiar nature of vulnerabilities among the Dalit households and other marginalised sections, including the single women headed households and minorities for the lack of any developmental asset such as land. Such mapping will definitely help in devising need based employment generation schemes and even alternate means of livelihood for the beneficiaries.

It is provided that the Self-help groups are organised and covered under Swarn Jayanti Swarojgar Yojana for developing livelihoods and the youth groups are trained in preparedness, response, mitigation, etc. The authorities can facilitate the formation of Self Help Groups among poor Dalits and ensure active involvement of Dalit youth who would then spread the word on government schemes and generate awareness, while themselves being educated on the same in the process. This can be done by the government alone by engaging personnel like Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers, government school teacher and so on or even jointly with Community Based organisations working in these regions.

With the NGO Guidelines, NGOs are empowered to facilitate discussion at local governance bodies, e.g., panchayat or traditional self-governance bodies like tribal/village councils etc. on relevance and exigencies of DRR and the process of its integration into various sectors while also seeing to it that the concerns and perspectives of the vulnerable community are heard in local governance institutions so that decisions help build the community resilience in totality.

The NGOs are empowered to do the capacity building of vulnerable communities to integrate the DRR in shelter and infrastructure building activities. For this, the guidelines say that the affected people, including the most vulnerable, are aware of their land and housing rights. The guidelines uphold the rights approach by dissemination of public information on entitlements and stimulation to families to prepare household disaster preparedness plans. Now, under these household level disaster preparedness plans, organisations are seen to be promoting the families to prepare and maintain their emergency survival kits, which include some dry ration and articles required during a flood (in situation of floods and cyclones).This

clause should not be limited to this alone. Under this provision of the NGO guidelines, the NGOs are strengthened to facilitate the claims of rightful rehabilitation of the most vulnerable and excluded victims from the government, who cannot recuperate in the absence of government support. Since the government has provided all these progressive clauses, it is also understood that the government itself is strong enough to implement these measures in its disaster interventions.

Last but not the least, a very pertinent clause that the guideline contains is that of *quality monitoring* by the community itself. The NGOs are vested with the responsibility of training the community in quality monitoring, at the local governance institution level. Here the NGOs can promote models of social auditing and capacitate women and youth even from the Dalit communities. They will enable them to participate in the review of services and programmes being implemented for them and bring up concerns pertaining to equity and inclusion to the agency. In turn, the NGOs and government will be able to cement the gaps and address the lacunae along with the community itself. The NGOs in this process are also empowered to impart information on their rights and entitlements in disaster situations, so that they know what all they need to monitor, other than relief. This will also fix accountability on the government and humanitarian agencies that service the marginalised and vulnerable communities.

So, based on the above furnished legal premise, significant work is done by the civil society organisations (INGOs and NGOs) in India in the direction of providing immediate life saving relief services to the most needy and vulnerable, and making the vulnerable communities resilient to calamities. In this journey, post relief phase from recovery to long term rehabilitation, some civil society organisations have set motivating examples of inclusion by their socially engineered programmes in such regions exposed to disasters, both natural and caste induced. Some such illustrations of good practices are elucidated in the next section, which uphold the principles of human dignity and human rights of the Dalits along with the general population.

V. Good practices in DR-DRR:

This section illustrates some case studies on promising practices conducted by the organisations and the government to facilitate socio-economic inclusion of Dalits in disaster rehabilitation responses. These case studies are an insight into the work being done to make disaster response and rehabilitation efforts inclusive. This report seeks to acknowledge that there is a lot more being done by organisations on this front, but this is just a few cases picked up from the organisations contacted and through web based literature review. These good practices can be replicated and the same can also be up scaled and used by government agencies, possibly and preferably in collaboration with NGOs.

Effective civil society monitoring for ensuring inclusion

National Dalit Watch-NCDHR, 2010

The National Dalit Watch formed at the recognition of caste discrimination in disasters, started commissioning monitoring studies after major flood events in the states of operation, namely, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Assam and Bihar. Having gathered primary evidence to prove social exclusion during disasters response, NDW embarked on a strategic engagement with the humanitarian organisation, UN agencies and the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). The objective was to make them aware of the ongoing caste discrimination in relief and recovery phases for effective civil society monitoring, enabling policy regime and well defined state entitlements to counter exclusion.

Case study 1

Influencing the state guidelines for inclusion



Towards this objective, NDW organised a national consultation (NC) on, “Exclusion of Dalits in Disaster Risk Reduction Interventions- effective civil society monitoring”, in collaboration with Sphere India, Cordaid and Oxfam. This marked the evolution of a strategic partnership with Sphere India. This event brought aboard the Member of NDMA, representatives from NGOs, International NGOs, associate professor from TISS, and officers from the UN bodies, viz. the UNDP. The Consultation reviewed the existing evidence and experiences of

exclusion, developed guidelines for building tools for the civil society to monitor Dalit exclusion and map caste-induced vulnerability for strengthening the advocacy agenda and making the issue and advocacy around it a widely owned subject.

The declarations mutually formulated by the representatives for CSOs and Government at the end of two days of consultation were endorsed widely by humanitarian organisations. The same was submitted by a delegation to the Member of NDMA. These statements have become the premise of further advocacy at the national and international levels.

It was soon after this national consultation that the NDMA and Sphere India called for a deliberation with civil society organisations over the NDMA Guidelines on the Role of NGOs in Disaster Management. It was observed that the declarations of the NC were stressed upon by the participating humanitarian organisations to be reflected in the guidelines, which were evolved through expert participation a few months ago.

It can be said that it was the effect of these declarations that caste discrimination has been recognised in a significant manner in the final guidelines of the NDMA on Role of NGOs in Disaster Management (September 2010). This speaks about the collective civil society articulation of the issue and the attention that it demands, and of course, the pro-active attitude of the member of NDMA to incorporate the essence of declarations that were submitted to him in these guidelines. The guidelines alone quite extensively acknowledge the issue and empower the humanitarian agencies to take proactive measures to ensure equity and non-discrimination in their interventions, towards the socially excluded and vulnerable Dalit population, besides other marginalised sections. NDW together with the constituency of on-board organisations and experts did succeed in influencing the then under making NDMA guidelines on the role of NGOs in disaster management.

Making them the catalysts of change

Unnati, Drought in Rajasthan, 2009

For the desert communities, natural hardship is not new phenomenon. Drought indeed is a recurrent phenomenon in the desert districts of Rajasthan. But, in year 2009 drought was unparalleled because of five lean years in succession. In this context, Unnati's monitoring system focused on developing local capacities to engender a community-driven monitoring and grievance resolution mechanism, through the Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR) approach in Rajasthan, in which Unnati was aided by Cordaid, the Netherlands.

Case study 2

CMDRR approach in Rajasthan: Strengthening community capacity on Disaster Risk Reduction

Empowering dalit community to monitor and access the basic services, rights and entitlements during the drought in Rajasthan

Drought Relief Services, initiated by Government of Rajasthan, focused on employment generation (through NREGA), ensuring drinking water, fodder and direct food / cash support to the most vulnerable. However, the programme was not inclusive in nature and often Dalit and women were left out from accessing the services.

The Rajasthan Relief Code only includes drought-time fodder provisions for big animals such as cows, but not for smaller animals such as goats. As a result, Dalits, a majority of who own goats, are forced to sell them at distressed prices, feed them from their own money, or simply set them free. In this context, a process was initiated to facilitate community based monitoring of drought relief services and enabling the Dalits in access the relief services. A total of 85 villages from 9 blocks in Jodhpur, Barmer and Jaisalmer districts of Rajasthan were selected, where the Dalit houses were targeted and their access to relief monitored. Other most marginalised communities were also assisted, along with Dalit households.



The presence of strong and active Dalit leadership amongst community members, civil society organizations and Government officials largely facilitated the monitoring process. In several villages, the monitoring system operated based on capacities of Dalit task force members, who were able to collect monthly data on government services' reach, quality and regularity. The data analysed at village and block levels was shared with the government officials, and media, which helped in advocacy to enhance quality and frequency of the services in the affected villages. The task force members facilitated discussions, made home visits, and relayed grievances to Government administrators to ensure that vulnerable groups who could not attend the meetings were getting relief. The monitoring by Dalits ensured that exclusion and discrimination didn't occur in the relief and services distribution. It also helped in sensitizing the government department to ensure Dalits and women were not excluded from any programme.

The approach of the community monitoring was to enhance community capacity to access the government social security schemes, basic services like water, health, education, public distribution system etc. The important aspect of the monitoring process was the process of social mapping and wealth ranking, wherein majority of the villagers identified the most vulnerable people in the village. Government programmes and schemes for drought relief were shared with the people and checklists were developed in consultation with local partners and community facilitators.

Five innovative practices for community based DRR carried out were:

- (i) Land based fodder plots development for the most vulnerable dalits who kept goats for their survival
- (ii) Water distribution points were set up mainly in the Dalit hamlets (Dhanies).
- (iii) Capacitated masons and artisans on appropriate and disaster safe housing technologies
- (iv) Developed understanding on government health services and systems developed to monitor government health services
- (v) Disaster Risk Transfer through promoting micro Insurance and linkage with government sponsored insurance schemes.

Unnati pursued an integrationist and collaborative approach to real-time equity monitoring. The model produced community monitoring based on the conscientization of various stakeholders towards equity issues in disaster response, and aimed at building the awareness of communities and linking them to Government relief provisions. A noteworthy feature was that Government officials too not only liked the process and data generated but also put the same in use and put this process in other affected areas where this project was not being implemented.

Enabling the claims to ‘Right to life with Dignity’

Dalit Watch, Kosi floods, Bihar 2008

In the wake of the severe flooding of the Kosi river in 2008, the constituents of Dalit Watch in Bihar came together to monitor relief camps set up in the aftermath of the severe floods of 2008²⁵. Backed by Cordaid, the Netherlands, Dalit Watch with its interventions in 2007 and 2008 floods inspired the formation of a national entity called National Dalit Watch to sustain the vigil on caste discrimination in disasters in India.

Case study 3

Monitoring Disaster Response and Preparedness for Inclusion and Equity

Based on the findings of the appraisal visits, Dalit Watch embarked on an intensive equity monitoring programme in 204 relief camps in Supaul, Saharsa, Madhepura, Purnea and Araria, with the support of 104 Dalit Watch volunteers, to assess the accessibility of the relief measures by Dalit communities in particular and administration of relief camps in general, across five worst affected districts.

Outcomes of the monitoring process indicated an alarming level of shortfall in the arrangements towards delivery of critical relief aid across most of the 205 monitored sites. The collective made recommendations to improve the overall quality

of the relief processes to ensure greater accessibility for Dalit communities in particular. While Dalit Watch performed an independent monitoring programme within the relief camps, the Government of Bihar had established monitoring systems throughout the administrative machinery, particularly at the Panchayat, block, and district and sub-division level.

District and Block Level officials of the Government of Bihar also collaborated with Dalit Watch. The District Magistrate of Madhepura at the time, sent district level officers to work with officials at the block level, to ensure that needs of the vulnerable were being met. Inter-Agency collaboration via the Inter-Agency Group (IAG) in Bihar ensured collaboration and coordination between all the civil society organizations working in Bihar, and the various levels of the Government.

Moreover, computerized lists of relief items distributed by the army were shared at these meetings, and injected transparency into the system. Information was also relayed to the affected communities in the relief camps about the CRF guidelines. This was done effectively by Dalit Watch, who not only distributed pamphlets and posters on the details of the entitlements, but also verbally communicated this information to the flood survivors. This information exchange enabled affected communities to demand their rights. It also brought to light instances of corruption at various levels such as corruption in beneficiary list-making



²⁵ Dalit Watch report, *For a Morsel of Life*, 2008

Volunteership of Dalits in Community kitchens

EFICOR, Kosi Floods, 2008

EFICOR (Evangelical Fellowship of India Commission on Relief) works with the Mahadalits in the northern Indian state of Bihar. Mahadalits (also known as rat-eaters), is a sub caste created within within the general Dalit caste category. During the Kosi floods, EFICOR provided food relief to the Dalits through the community kitchens where the Dalit volunteers prepared fresh meals together with non dalit staff and volunteers of the organisation²⁶.

Case study 4

Community Kitchen give food to Dalits



During the Kosi floods, EFICOR set up community kitchens cum relief camps at Saharsa and Madhepura districts, to provide food relief to Dalits. Most victims had received only a meal a day for over 18 days till EFICOR came in.

The food cooked by a group of identified community volunteers at the community kitchen saved his family and other Dalits from dying of hunger. The volunteers were both Dalits and non-Dalits from the adjoining districts, and staff volunteers of EFICOR. Participation of Dalit volunteers was ensured deliberately to ensure

equality and access to food prepared to Dalits. The Collector and the civil surgeon personally visited the relief camps where EFICOR was serving. Doctors provided medicines and treated the people.

Considering the community composition, which had strong presence and dominance of the caste Hindus against the backdrop of a political premise, the organisation without revealing the identity of the community volunteers made the programme run successfully for roughly a month and planned and launched disaster risk reduction programmes subsequently.

As per the relief manual of EFICOR, the Sphere standards and Red Cross International Code of Conduct followed by EFICOR, the beneficiary selection of emergency response prioritized inclusion of socially excluded families, disabled, woman headed families and elderly headed families.

²⁶ Briefing Kit for India + Evangelical Fellowship of India Commission on Relief, Compiled on 28 Sep 2011

Integrating disaster preparedness in recovery entails that the marginalised are particularly targeted to receive aid and their capacity enhanced for greater resilience against future disasters. Being mindful of the caste factor in disaster response, Churches Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA) supported by Dan Church Aid constructed 515 transit shelters using locally available resources during Kosi floods.

Case study 5

Humanitarian Assistance for Early Recovery to flood affected communities

The project was implemented in Tekuna Panchayat of Supaul district. The meetings held had had elected representatives and Block Development Officer while cluster level meetings ensured inclusion and participation of Dalits, minorities and women in the consultative process. In each ward there was a complaint box provided by CASA, backed with a complaints redressal mechanism as per the *Humanitarian Accountability Partnership* (HAP) principles. If any victim was left out or dissatisfied with the process, she or he could register a complaint. The areas of lodging complaints were confined to four areas. These were:

1. Beneficiary selection
2. Quality of aid received
3. Bribery/favouritism
4. Sexual harassment

All shelter and livelihood programmes made special efforts to ensure social inclusion. The selection was based on existing vulnerabilities within the communities. The beneficiary selection prioritised schedule castes, schedule tribes, physically challenged, single women/widow, persons below poverty line and families with houses completely destroyed or severely damaged in flood. The Village Development Committees (VDCs) were formed in each village, having representation from each section. The list of beneficiaries selected by VDCs was verified by CASA's field officer and necessary corrections were made on the benchmark set for supporting the beneficiary. The selection process ensured inclusion of the invisible people, and people living on the periphery in any community, making best use of the available resources.

These complaints were recorded and addressed adequately. As a result, households that were left out during the selection process were later included in the list of beneficiaries. The complainant's right to confidentiality was adequately addressed through Community Complaints Handling Committee (CCHC). All community level complaints were addressed by the CCHC, while project office level complaints were handled by the Project Coordinator of CASA and Project Coordinator, DCA.

²⁷ Transparent Recovery, Churches Auxiliary for Social Action

Livelihood Restoration Support

AIDMI, Kosi floods, Bihar, 2008

Livelihood restoration assistance was provided to the Kosi flood affected Dalits and other most marginalized sections through the existing Livelihood Relief Fund (LRF) of AIDMI. The main focus of LRF is to secure food, water, habitat, and livelihood options for the vulnerable groups during disasters by protecting and reviving the means to work and earn an income.

Case study 6

Building Economic Security of the Floods Affected Dalits of Bihar

The aim of the initiative was to provide consistent income generation to achieve long term community recovery with self-reliance. The livelihood restoration support was provided through a local partner organization, Samajik Shaikshanik Vikas Kendra. The beneficiaries included Dalits and mahadalits (sub caste) and among the dalits also, preference was given to the most needy, single women headed households, widows/widowers, and casual labourers were targeted the landless labourers, petty businessmen, small vendors, and home-based workers.

The local partner's team members and the village committee members, along with AIDMI team members, carried out the assessment of the communities whose livelihoods were affected. During the assessment, the team kept in mind the livelihood loss incurred, how and when they started earning livelihood after regaining normalcy, and how would livelihood support help them regain their economic sufficiency. The beneficiaries were involved in the process of selection of supplier of tools and implements, and purchase of the same to maintain transparency. An ongoing monitoring and evaluation was carried out by the village committee members to ensure that the items reached the correct hands and helped the beneficiaries.

Considering the nature of the jobs of most Dalit beneficiaries, which was mainly fishing, selling groceries and some small time vehicle repair work, their source of sustenance was first analysed and based on their need, they were provided with items that enabled them to restart their work. With this aid, they regained their financial independence and earning capacity. Most of them stocked their shops with more items and some initiated small-scale businesses for increasing their sales as per demand. Some beneficiaries extended their shops' dimensions for more storage of the goods/items; while some started getting more credit from the suppliers as they had become more secure than before in their domestic and business levels. The community also opted for savings by opening a savings bank account. Thus, the livelihood support ensured speedy and secured recovery of the communities and successfully assisted in reduction of their economic vulnerability.

This initiative provided long term recovery and disaster risk reduction for the community. Community-based approach was successful in providing long term rehabilitation to the disaster victims and to promote disaster risk reduction activities in the community. Involving the community and village panchayat members in the process of relief and rehabilitation activities ensured that the organisation remained transparent in providing support.

Global initiatives and frameworks such as Sphere Minimum Standards, Red Cross Code of Conduct and the key recommendations from the Hyogo Framework for Action, Delhi Declaration on Disaster Risk Reduction, and Bangkok Action Agenda were matched with the community needs for the better impact of the livelihood restoration support activity.

Gender and diversity in livelihood restoration/security

CSO-ECHO Partnership project, Kosi floods, Bihar 2008²⁸

Post Kosi floods, ECHO (European Commission for Humanitarian Assistance) had initiated a recovery assistance programme that was implemented through six project partners namely, Action Aid, Concern, German Agro Action, ADRA India CASA and Handicap International for reduction of vulnerability of population living in the areas most affected by flood. The strategy adopted by ECHO in the Kosi flood Early Recovery Assistance Programme was to provide support to the most vulnerable of flood affected households. Dalits, tribals, minorities, women, persons with disability, chronically ill persons and marginal farmers were the primary beneficiaries.

Case study 7

Enhancing employment income through farm/agro related activities



Gender and social inclusion were cross cutting issues across the entire programme. The community was encouraged to nominate women and socially excluded members in various committees formed for programme implementation, including beneficiary selection, to facilitate the active participation of women and Dalits in the decision making process. The committees were given suggestions/clues to enable them to make the selection of beneficiaries considering the gender and diversity lens.

Seed support was given mainly to Dalit marginal farmers and small farmers. Women farmers were not direct beneficiaries of the programme but they did get some recognition as farmers with the training for farmers programme conducted by ActionAid. Despite the tilt towards men, the presence and role of women vendors in the rural economy was realised and the programme targeted them to some extent.

With the support of local partners Cash for Work (CfW) programme was implemented in two blocks, namely Tribeniganj and Chhatapur blocks of Supaul district. In the road repairing projects ActionAid also generated 26,095 person days supporting 1873 families. The CfW programme ensured at least one member of the family 30 days employment with minimum wages per day fixed by the government. While the main idea was to create work opportunities in the villages, the future perspective of rehabilitating private and public infrastructure was also kept in mind. The programme was implemented keeping in view the NREGA programme implemented by the government to make the beneficiary aware of the rules, regulations and processes to get the benefit of NREGA.

While much of the CFW programme was around work on community infrastructure, some work also contributed to directly benefiting the most marginalised. For instance, CfW was used to support the reconstruction of housing and also to raise the plinth level of existing and new houses.

²⁸ *Building Back Better*, A Report on Good Practices and Lessons Learned from ECHO Supported Kosi Flood Response Programme

Women got more opportunity to participate in CFW because of the migration of men and non implementation of NREGA. Women appreciated this particular initiative the most as it gave them immediate cash and food security. Many women claim that their children survived just because of the wages they earned. In Harijan Tola (Dalit habitation), Vidyanagar in Gudiya Panchayat, from 60 households, 80–90 persons got employment for 30 days for fixed minimum wages. 80 per cent of all the beneficiaries were women. Old persons and disabled got employment as water providers and supervisors. Impact of the CfW program was also seen as awareness generation in women for the right to work with equal wages.

The beneficiaries also followed the same procedures as Labour registration, Job card, Muster roll, Payment register and the welfare component such as crèche for children and first aid box, etc. It was found that the beneficiaries who worked for our CfW programme also started pressurising the local Mukhiyas and Panchayat representatives for jobs. Their awareness regarding minimum wages also helped them to bargain with the local landlords wherein they are now able to get the improved wages. The landlords of the village were worried that their crop would get damaged in the field itself as no workers were willing to work for them. This was because the workers were not ready to take lesser than the minimum wages fixed by the government.

Minati Devi of Mahadalit tola in Bhelai village, Block Murliganj district Madhepura, physically and mentally challenged had two small children and her husband had deserted her but even she could work in the CfW programme helping to build the bamboo bridge to link the village to the main road. As there was no work in the fields, cash for work that provided immediate income was an attractive option. CfW programme is modelled along the MGNREGA programme of the government to make people aware of the process of getting enrolled with the scheme and benefitting from the same.

Rebuilding Lives amidst Social Divisions

SEEDS India, Barmer, Rajasthan floods, August 2006

Heavy monsoon rains that started on the 16th of August 2006 engulfed several villages of the 12 odd districts of Rajasthan. The usually drought prone Barmer district was hit by flash flood claimed several human lives. Forty seven thousand cattle died in the floods. Five thousand two hundred houses were damaged and crops worth 300 million rupees were destroyed. This was one of the worst floods in a hundred years experienced by the region. Ninety five percent of the villagers were rendered homeless. SEEDS (Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society) took the initiative of building intermediate shelters for the flood victims, offering shelters which were far better than the temporary shelters. The initiative was primarily aimed at marginalized and socially excluded families that had small land holdings and no resources to rebuild.

Case study 8

Barmer Aashray Yojna (Post Flood Shelter Restoration Programme): Cutting across Caste and Gender Lines

In Barmer, distinct social classes are visible. It is a common sight to see houses of the marginalised and lower castes built away from the main cluster in the village. Considering that rebuilding lives and livelihood is crucial for any disaster affected community, SEEDS addressed this issue by engaging local masons at all levels of the recovery process. Beneficiary family members were also involved in the on-site construction activities.

Over the course of Barmer Aashray Yojana, 300 shelters were built for the most socially, economically and physically marginalised individuals/ and or families cutting across these divisions. While this meant that the primary beneficiaries were the lower castes, the most affected communities from the upper castes too were considered during the selection process.

Special attention was also given to women headed households. This initiative of SEEDS was partnered by Christian Aid and ECHO (European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department), to meet the immediate housing need of the devastated villages.

The project involved constructing culturally and environmentally (earthquake-proof, as Barmer is also a seismic zone) compliant houses for those devastatingly affected by the floods. The success of the project was highly dependent on the pro-active participation of the beneficiaries and their families and communities at large. Adopting an 'inclusive' approach meant that constant counseling and interaction with the community was required to bring them on to the same page and begin making inroads into a rigid caste system.



With the given time span of just 6 months, the SEEDS social team devised a Village Development Committee system across 15 villages. Each VDC consisted of 6-10 members from across the stakeholder spectrum including a representative from the gram panchayat, a government school teacher, anganwadi worker, an auxiliary nurse/ mid wife, village level volunteer, a social worker, a representative from SEEDS and a representative from a local group. The committee ensured that women played a core role in the consultation process and that a variety of views were incorporated for planning and decision making. The VDCs helped identify the most marginalised, vulnerable and needy beneficiaries from among the District Government's list.

New Kotra: A model Village

New Kotra was a 'model' village set up on government allotted land in Kotra for those from Jalela. The 'model' tag emerged as this construction cut across social barriers. The whole process was socially engineered, with the communities agreeing to live together. This also ensured that all those who were most vulnerable – including among the upper castes – received assistance.

Through this active community participation, SEEDS was able to build 85% of the shelters for the most marginalised and vulnerable communities. The project benefitted socially excluded groups, widow headed households and households headed by persons with disabilities – thereby ensuring Inclusion in every aspect. The entire project was carried out in complete adherence to Red Cross code of conduct and the Sphere Humanitarian charter and minimum standards in disaster response.

Children back to schools

A UNICEF and Govt. of Tamil Nadu Intervention, Tsunami 2004²⁹

Joint initiative of the Govt. of Tamil Nadu and UNICEF enabled the tsunami hit children resume schooling and even those entered the gates of school who had never seen the thresholds of it.

Case study 9

Children's Schooling, a Year on Key findings



Within the first few months of the tsunami, children were back in school. Governments, UNICEF and other partners cleaned, constructed or made available existing buildings, temporary schools and tents, and provided learning materials, books, uniforms, school bags and school furniture to hundreds of thousands of children. (Photo-www.unicef.org)

Tsunami recovery offered an opportunity to work out ways to bring the children of Dalit communities to school, who had never been to school before.

The district administration in Nagapattinam (Tamil Nadu) took proactive steps in ensuring that Dalit children were in school. The administration instructed the schools to exempt tsunami affected students from fees for a year. District education officials, UNICEF and NGO partners began a post-tsunami campaign to identify children not in school and enrol them in a catch-up or bridging programme, with a view to channelling them into the formal school system.

As a result of bilateral initiative, many children had classes in new or renovated buildings, instead of in tents or makeshift shelters. Although many of these new buildings were called ‘temporary’ or ‘semi-permanent’ schools, the majority are solid structures, built to last at least a few years, if not more. All children had enough books and school supplies. The construction of new permanent schools had begun, although at a slow pace but in many locations, schools were being built better.

This initiative exemplifies what a multi stakeholder partnership can do, if the will is present. The Govt. of Tamil Nadu needs appreciation for this task and all the measures that were taken not just to prioritise restoration of schooling to children, but cover even those who had never been to school owing to their weak socio-economic conditions.

²⁹ *Children and the Tsunami, A Year On, A Draft UNICEF Summary of What Worked, November 2005*

Joy of Living Returns after Tsunami Disaster

The Lutheran World Federation/DWS India³⁰

The LWF went an extra mile to not just erect shelters for the Dalits and tribals who did not own land, but also secured land rights to them with their human rights centric approach.

Case study 10

New Home, New-Found Happiness

Yes, he is happy again, G. Raju said as he put his arms around his eight-year old daughter Mageswari and her ten-year old sister Rajeswari. The memory is still painful, but he has found new happiness. He has a new wife and a new house. He could never have afforded such a beautiful, solid house before, he added. His house is part of a new residential area which comprises 350 individual homes and shared facilities which the Lutheran World Service India (LWSI), a country program of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Department for World Service (DWS), with support from the worldwide network of churches and partner organizations such as Action by Churches Together (ACT)

International built on the outskirts of Thirumullaivasal.



Despite strong opposition at the outset, the families of ocean and inland fishermen and Dalits as well as members of other scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, now live side-by-side. LWSI placed great importance on avoiding any kind of discrimination, including the project's spatial design.

In addition to this project for building concrete and safe shelters for the tsunami ridden communities, in compliance with the Indian government directives, houses had to be built several hundred meters from the coastline, LWSI also built 180 new houses within the village. This was a response to a needs' plan drawn up by the Indian government, whose go-ahead was required before any new houses could be built. New houses could only be built for families who already had property rights.

The land rights' criteria was a particularly great challenge for LWSI, especially with regard to the Dalits and other scheduled tribes who had no land rights to assert. The LWSI housing project nonetheless succeeded in procuring houses for these groups and, consequently, land rights as well.

The architecture of the 880 houses built in 13 villages in the state of Tamil Nadu by the LWSI in collaboration with ACT is based on a core design provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) together with the regional government of Tamil Nadu. All houses are sturdily built with locally produced bricks. These houses offer better protection against cyclones, earthquakes and floods.

³⁰ Lutheran World Information, No. 12/2007

Alternate means of livelihood and capacitation making them resilient

Kalvi Kendra, Tamil Nadu, Post Tsunami

After Tsunami, Kalvi Kendra launched rehabilitation activities in six coastal villages affected by this disaster with Cordaid support. This programme was implemented along the Community Managed Disaster Risk Reduction (CMDRR) module of Cordaid, for long term preparedness of the Dalit community.

Case study 11

Inclusion of socially marginalized in CMDRR

It was indeed a big challenge to convince and change the mindset of the Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) members and even of some of the Community Based Organisation (CBO) members on the issue of Dalit inclusion. The situation was such that these members could not accommodate and accept the very presence of Dalits amidst them. The political pressure was a major stumbling block that almost sabotaged the process and efforts for inclusion. Political leaders were totally against providing any kind of support to the marginalized and Dalit community for they did not serve them as voters. So, to even move in this direction, Kalvi Kendra made relentless efforts to sensitize the Panchayat elected leaders and the general community on the issue of including Dalits and giving them their due share and equality in participation. To this end, Kalvi Kendra facilitated participation of the panchayat presidents in state level conference on “Dalits Right and Inclusion”.

60% of Dalits were provided housing and livelihood support, based on the Vulnerability and Risk assessment done under the CMDRR module. With the prime aim to empower Dalit women living below poverty line, they were encouraged to form themselves in SHGs to instigate a habit of weekly savings, to have access to credit from banks. SHGs’ members were also guided to advocate for their right to public services to seek assistance from the government schemes.

Kalvi Kendra also formed rescue teams with youth volunteers involving Dalit youth. Special evening coaching classes were run in all the Dalit habitations to orient the volunteers on the DRR measures. The organisation has been tapping government sources to strengthen the infrastructure facilities and support the livelihood activities of SHG members.

Dalits have been organised into People’s Collective for concerted actions. Federations are formed to support and monitor the CBOs, linking them with financial institutions, insurance agencies, government programmes and training institutions for access to financial support, transferring risk, availing benefits from the state run development programmes and capacity building, respectively.

As a result of continuous capacity building and various training, the community actors were able to do Hazard/Vulnerability/Capacity assessment on their own; implement the activities in a participatory manner; monitor the ongoing activities regularly and review the progress during Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council (DRRMC) meetings for creating a lasting impact and sustainability of the CMDRR process.

Accountability in the field

Action Aid India, Orissa flood, 2001³¹

Review and reflection is a key part of ActionAid's 'accountability, learning and planning' system (ALPS) which was instituted during the 2001 Orissa flood. It lays out a framework for involving communities and partner organisations in all aspects of our programme work, including planning, budgeting, monitoring and reviewing.

Case Study 12

Accountability in the field

During the Orissa floods of 2001, Action Aid with its partner agency BGVS and village reconstruction committees began a food-for-work programme having identified the most vulnerable groups comprising Dalits. Daily work charts in public places detailed the number of people working, the jobs they were doing, and the quantity of rice available for distribution and the schedule for cash payments. 'People's hearings' acted like vigilance committees. They enabled jobs to be clarified or questioned, and helped curb corruption. ActionAid India sought to work with government too. It successfully lobbied the government of Orissa to make the state Relief Code more responsive to the needs of poor people.

ActionAid India and BGVS commissioned a social audit to evaluate the food-for-work programme. In the short term, the audit process helped claimants to voice their complaints and seek redress, and participation by women in the social audit meetings also increased significantly their participation in food-for-work, as well as suggesting ideas and changes for future programmes.

Similarly, even during the 1999 Orissa cyclone, ActionAid's partner agency DISHA built shelters near the homes of the Dalit community. The 'Downward' accountability and the right to be heard were central to the initiative, and shelters became meeting places where they could articulate their concerns and their voices were heard.

The planning meetings with the community helped gain insight into the existing capacities of the villager; what they could do with help from NGOs and what they could access from government. Subsequently, information about programme scope, coverage, goals and funds would be posted on a notice board. The board also gave the name of the panchayat, the local government district to which the village belonged.

Each village held a monthly vigilance committee meeting which included participation of women members with a majority of them. The committee discussed their expectations from the project. Members had access to all programme bills and receipts and could take action against corruption. They could question decisions, revisit plans and change them. Every six months, DISHA in turn held a review meeting with its stakeholders: community groups, government officials, ActionAid staff and other organisations working in the area.

The organisation feels that accountability has strengthened the agency's credibility with officials at local, state and national level in India while having enhanced transparency in the system by making the community an agent of change.

³¹ Humanitarian Accountability Project (HAP), 20 March 2002

CSO-UNDP Partnerships, Gujarat earthquake, 2001³²

After the Gujarat earthquake, UNDP initiated a shelter reconstruction programme, as an entry point for long-term sustainable development in the affected regions. This programme was the practical application of the UNDP concept of transition recovery designed over the years, and called for a realignment of roles of CSOs according to their core competencies, and not merely in tune with donor priorities. UNDP selected organisations that had a proven track record of working with the most marginalised communities, including women and Dalits. The initiative aimed at social mobilization, capacity building of organizations, with a special focus on women and Dalits, and creating family and community-based assets.

Case Study 13

The earthquake-resistant house



Outside Kuchch, UNDP supported reconstruction efforts in Surendranagar and Patan districts with Navsarjan Trust, the largest organization in Gujarat addressing the rights of Dalits. Navsarjan took up development projects for the first time after the earthquake. Support from UNDP led to that a mutually rewarding partnership. It was also a unique social experiment, with potentially far-reaching consequences.

Beginning with the premise that Dalit communities in the villages would inevitably suffer the worst discrimination in matters of entitlements and compensation after the earthquake, Navsarjan mobilized engineers, masons and funds to build 3000 houses in villages in Surendranagar and Patan districts. A total of 175 engineers, some of them leaving government jobs in Rajkot and Baroda, took on the task, each being responsible for about eight villages. Their dedication and commitment ensured both speed and quality of construction, making these demonstration houses for other villages.

Soon Navsarjan engineers and masons began to be approached by non-Dalits, asking that they build them their houses – and in the process crossed strictly delineated social boundaries. Instead of focusing on entrenched attitudes of discrimination against Dalits, made worse in a disaster scenario, Navsarjan decided to seize the opportunity afforded by the earthquake to work proactively and force social change.

With UNDP support, SEWA (Self-Employed Women’s Association) had undertaken the reconstruction of a village in the Banaskantha region. SEWA trained masons, including women, and propagated seismic safety techniques among village communities. It also integrated livelihood risk mitigation measures, such as rainwater harvesting structures and village ponds, to secure drinking water and mitigate the impact of drought on cattle rearing activities. Women engineers and village-based SEWA members supervised the work.

³² From Relief to Recovery, the Gujarat Experience, October 2001

To coordinate its efforts, SEWA has started work on an information coordination centre (setu) for 14 villages in Dabhi. UNDP assigned a NUNV (National United Nations Volunteers) engineer the task of carrying out an assessment of houses being built by SEWA. A NUNV community specialist helped in spreading awareness about seismic safety and understanding the requirements of the villagers. In less than a year, the setus gained ground. They enjoyed a rapport with the villagers, provided them with immediate information on compensation packages and guided village councils in matters of rights and entitlements.

The setus worked closely with Sneh Samudaya (Caring Community), a collective of eight organizations set up by ActionAid to address the issues that concern the poorest and most vulnerable survivors: the marginalised communities of kolis, Muslims and Dalits in intervention villages. Active in 128 worst hit villages and 10 urban pockets spread over the four sub-districts of Anjar, Bhachau, Bhuj and Rapar, Sneh Samudaya had the village presence needed to strengthen the information network of the setus. The first priority is to provide shelter to the most vulnerable – widows, the elderly, the socially disenfranchised, and orphans. The Sneh Samudaya network supported these communities to provide access to food and security and to lead dignified lives. A group within the network catered specifically to the needs and rights of women who lost their husbands in the earthquake.

Sneh Samudaya served as community centre and meeting place in which villagers could exchange information on entitlements, compensation packages and other aspects of rehabilitation. As late as May 2005 a government order allowed large corporations to be given so-called waste or unused government land for corporate farming. It may have been more appropriate to put the needs of earthquake widows before those of corporate farmers. Campaigners played a lead litigation to challenge such discrimination, particularly against Dalits. This experience inspired similar interventions in tsunami-hit areas, with appropriate distribution of aid.

An analysis of the case studies

Inclusion by *Targeting*

A thread of commonality that runs through all cases on good practices is the conscious approach of these organisations to target Dalits and women (single women, widowed women and women headed households) in their interventions by identifying the most vulnerable from among them and other communities under the community based and managed DRR models. The case studies illustrate different and promising techniques of engaging the Dalits at each level of programme implementation.

Most have set up grievance redressal mechanisms for establishing transparency with significant involvement of the Dalits in decision making processes. This has been facilitated through the institution of village level committees, setus and sneh samudaya, where membership of women and Dalits had been made mandatory. Assistance in the form of seed support to the marginalised Dalit farmers, land based fodder plots, providing water access through community based water distribution mechanisms and emphasis on the communities to select the socially excluded members for representation in village level committees exemplify the deliberate move to reach out to the Dalits, for helping them recover from the after effects of disasters.

The practice of giving monitoring role to Dalits has given them the decision making and decision influencing power in the communities, and their needs have been addressed after consultations with them prior to the launching of programme. This has helped maintain quality and inclusion check in relief and services distribution.

A model of different caste communities co-residing under the shelter construction programme of SEEDS India exemplifies the effort of cutting across caste and social barriers. Organisations that have worked for mix communities have also endeavoured to bring together the different communities to participate in the programmes, ensuring Dalit and women participation. However, not much is shared on the challenges of operating in caste dominated rural settings and during the implementation of programmes. Sharing of these challenges would serve as points for consideration for agencies that work in those areas.

The model of partnership between the UN agencies and the government is very encouraging and most required for DRR related interventions. The Government of Tamil Nadu and the UNICEF decided upon identifying even those Dalit and Tribal children who had never been to school before tsunami. Here, the overwhelming disaster was converted into a sea of opportunity by the bi-lateral partnership. Additionally, the special measures taken by the government of Tamil Nadu in facilitating the initiative is appreciable, thus, recognising the need to bring Dalit and tribal children into the proper education system to prevent the new generation from being lost to the casteist folds.

It is also seen that organisations have catered the Dalit communities during the emergency relief phase through community kitchens. Even though this concept is not new, but involving Dalit members into the volunteers' team to cook meals is a challenging task in rural set up with anti dalit political scenario. While some have explicitly targeted the unreached Dalits in emergencies with immediate life saving relief and long term recovery and rehabilitation programmes, subsequently, some hesitation and fear of conflict in disclosing the Dalit identity of volunteers for community kitchens has also been observed in a case. Organisations

like Navsarjan, Dalit Watch and later on National Dalit Watch have asserted and retained their Dalit identity and made the choice to work despite the hostile interference of the dominant caste people and uncomfortable political setting.

Inclusion through *empowerment* and *Dalit leadership*

The organisations have in the process of DRR, generated awareness on government health services and relief packages and entitlements to the Dalit communities. This has helped in injecting transparency into the system and making the systems responsive to the concerns and queries of Dalits. It is motivating to see how the Dalit women specifically have been empowered through Cash for Work programme (CfW) programme that they questioned and refused the landlords to work for them against the low wages they were generally given as opposed to the amount set by the state under minimum wages. Besides labour rights, they became aware of women's rights. The CfW programme was designed so well that even disabled Dalit woman could find work under this. A similar initiative to augment the economic status of particularly the Dalit women has been the formation of Self Help Groups.

UNDP's initiative to identify and support Dalit organisations to rebuild Gujarat after the earthquake to meet out the specific vulnerabilities and needs of the Dalit caste people commands appreciation again. The manner in which People's collective is formed by Kalvi Kendra communicates aloud the importance of leadership from among the Dalit community. The use of campaigning and litigation against the discriminatory government order for protection of rights of Dalits exemplifies the need to resort to various different techniques to activate the justice systems, and to make these law institutions answerable to the plight of the marginalised, when other means of negotiations are exhausted with the government.

The idea of forming rescue teams with youth volunteers from Dalit communities and providing them special evening coaching classes on the concept of Disaster Risk Reduction, at their doorstep is another promising activity from Kalvi Kendra.

Inclusion by creating *transparency*

Through the data that has been generated by these organisations, they have engaged in advocacy by way of sharing this information with the authorities, thereby, sensitizing the government department to ensure inclusion of Dalits and women in their programmes. What is more appealing is that some of the organisations scrutinised the government schemes, such as the Rajasthan Relief Code and Calamity Relief Fund in different disasters situations and then intervened in the areas where attention was required.

In most case studies it is found that the organisations have tried to forge linkages with the government schemes for the beneficiaries, for eventually making the government responsible to the people, helping Dalits in claiming their share of relevant development schemes and compensation. No matter how big organisations intervene with assistance during emergencies, it is vital to understand that the primary responders to disaster situations in the state. Thus, it important in this context that for long term recovery, the organisations collaborate with government either for projects of recovery and rehabilitation of victims or sustain a vigil on their activities to ensure that transparency is maintained and assistance reached the socially excluded communities. This is also crucial from the sustainability point of view of efforts put in by civil society organisations. An example of GO-NGO joint

ventures have been the established monitoring systems throughout the administrative machinery by the Government of Bihar to collaborate with Dalit Watch while the later conducted independent monitoring during Kosi floods.

The civil society organisations are generally seen as noise makers over all human rights issues. As against this notion, Dalit Watch and National Dalit Watch have not only highlighted the issue of caste discrimination in disasters, but also submitted possible solutions in the form of recommendations to the competent authorities for addressing the problem. This is an expression of the CSOs to assist the government in tackling the serious problems of human rights in the country, provided the government understands and appreciates this move of the civil societies.

The task of sensitising the government is not just restricted to convincing and sensitising the state and national governments towards the issue, but it also demands continuous engagement with the local level governance bodies (Panchayats). Kalvi Kendra made relentless efforts to sensitize the Panchayat elected leaders and the general community on the issue and for this it even facilitated participation of the panchayat presidents in state level conference on “Dalits Right and Inclusion”. It becomes essential to rope in the local level governance bodies into the community initiative because it is through these panchayat representatives that relief work is done by officials and manipulation takes place.

The activities of ALPS and social audit have been successful in making CSOs inclusive in their approach, in their own work. The application of HAP is new and promising tool to build transparency in the way NGOs execute their programmes. Displaying of daily work charts in public places detailing out the number of people working, the jobs they were doing, and the quantity of rice available for distribution and the schedule for cash payments are some good practices on the part of CSOs. Public hearings are another most powerful medium of interface between the community and authorities, acting like vigilance committees. Here it helped in clarifying questions and curbing corruption both within the CSOs functioning and the government response.

Lastly, sharing of information media houses to highlight the issue is yet another important strategy to build consciousness and pressurise the authorities to take note of the problem. Even though the media is not very forthcoming on such minority rights issues, yet it is important in today's globalised and media driven era to sensitise media houses and keep sharing with them such information that helps in promoting inclusion and highlighting the lacunae from time to time.

V. Promising tool to ensure Inclusion

This section shares a promising tool which is designed to help the Dalit communities identify their vulnerabilities and also find out agents of exclusion following disasters. Subsequently, in the process, the community volunteers that are identified and trained on the tool receive basic knowledge of the legal mechanisms of disaster management in the India, at district, state and national levels, disseminating the same to their villages and empowering themselves and the community through knowledge.

Auditing for Equity

A Multi-agency initiative³³

Evolution of Social Equity Audit (SEA)

Social Equity Audits were initiated in the context of tsunami in South India in 2004 with widespread reports on discrimination and exclusion of Dalits and Tribals from relief and rehabilitation. Property centric rehabilitation measures against livelihood and need based measures excluded the almost marginalized from receiving needed rehabilitation measures in a systematic manner. Social Equity Audits emerged from the realization of the need for systematic enquiry into processes of exclusion, and evolving strategies for addressing the same in emergency relief/rehabilitation as well as development processes.

SEA helps identify excluded stakeholder groups and the barriers that keep them out. It helps organizations to track exclusion and take remedial steps both within its own organization and in its programme interventions.

It helps track and analyse equity in participation and benefit sharing in the intervention in terms of:

- Coverage
- Membership
- Per capita benefit
- Leadership opportunity

SEA –Areas for Audit

- Vision-mission-policies
- Programme strategies
- Programme implementation
- Monitoring and evaluation systems
- Budget allocation and utilization
- Organization structures including those of partners
- Organization systems and processes
- Beneficiary participation in the project cycle

SEA Tool –Areas of Data Gathering and Analysis

1. **Table 1** –analyses the **representation and benefits** of stakeholders from excluded/marginalized groups at the i) organization level, ii)CBO level, iii)society level
2. **Table 2** – analyses the level of access, control and ownership of marginalized stakeholders of the natural resources, public facilities and services, related to the particular disaster.

³³ An introduction to Social Equity Audit

3. **Tables 3 & 4**—identifies and enumerates the marginalized population in the geographical area to be covered and the proportion covered/benefited and the nature of benefit. It analyses the match between the extent of damage and the proportion of relief/rehabilitation.
4. **Table 5 & 6**—analyses the budget sanction, allocation and utilization across different stakeholders, analyzing in particular the benefits to the marginalized
5. **Table 7 & 8** – organization profile with respect to representation and leadership positions of members of marginalized communities
6. **Table 9** – Profile of partners analyzing partnership with organizations of the marginalized.
7. **Table 10** –Partners coverage and budget allocation

Further to the disaster relief/rehabilitation audit in tsunami audit, a further audit has also been done on infrastructure access to marginalized groups.

Vulnerability Mapping and Inclusion monitoring framework

National Dalit Watch-NCDHR

Supported by Cordaid under its CMDRR initiative, NDW in consultation with CMDRR network organisations in India, evolved a **Vulnerability Mapping and Inclusion Monitoring (VM-IM)** tool to (i) develop a clear conceptual and practical understanding of exclusion of Dalit communities in disasters and learn methods to monitor and record such practices of exclusion; and (ii) to equip the state / organizational representatives to train their frontline staff in inclusion monitoring in disasters (floods, cyclones, earthquakes, drought).

This tool is currently at its initial stage and is subject to updation with inputs from the field, after the completion of its pilot applications. NDW envisaged the tool to be used at the community level for which the identified educated /literate Dalit youth from regions frequented with disasters should be oriented on its application. This tool has to be translated in local languages for community engagement.

The tool is designed to be simple and community friendly which can be used in different settings, to track the vulnerabilities, capacities and instances of discrimination and exclusion of the Dalit and other distressed communities across three emergency phases, (i) pre-disaster (ii) during disaster; and (iii) post disaster. The tool also helps in identifying the relevant authorities that are responsible for carrying out the particular tasks and facilitating the process from relief to rehabilitation. Through the information generated, the tool is equipped to create awareness on the same in the affected and vulnerable communities.

The working tool is as below:-

VULNERABLY MAPPING

Matrix 1: For mapping vulnerability

Past experience of work in disaster	Vulnerability	People affected	Difficulty faced	Our intervention (work,) activity	Remark
Flood,					
Earth Quake					
Cyclone					
drought					

Causes / Context making Dalits vulnerable

- Condition that affect Dalits
- Threats
- Response/Intervention (to eliminate exclusion or ensure inclusion)

Issues and Indicators of Social Exclusion

Indicators for Protection and Social Security

1. Nature of caste domination
2. Response to Rights assertion
3. Do the Dalits have confidence in law enforcement agencies and statutory bodies?

Special Groups

1. Women (widow, single women, women led households, pregnant women)
2. Children
3. Elderly
4. Disabled
5. Destitute

The Issues- Social, Cultural and Caste based Practices

1. Free labour and chakari (Dalits are used as messengers only for informing others about meetings etc)
2. Obligatory caste-linked works
3. Forced subservient behaviours (DEVDAISI)
4. Safai karamachari (sweepers and manual scavengers)
5. Assertion of their rights

The Issues in Development Policies

1. Lack of special polices
2. Non implementation of existing policies (ARF,CRF)
3. No policy to address inclusion
4. Mainstreaming disaster in development projects
5. Proper Land documents

The Issues in Service Delivery

1. lack o information of the schemes
2. Issues of Dalit are not in priority of Officials and Government
3. Availability of Service centre
4. Service centers influenced by dominant castes
5. Service Delivery infrastructure are disaster resilient

The Issues of geographical positioning- Locational vulnerability

1. Dalits are socially, political situated in most vulnerable positions

2. Non disaster resilient housing
3. No policy to rehabilitate Dalits

Indicators to determine community's coping mechanism

1. Contingency plans(materials, trained human resources)
2. Traditional coping mechanism(houses on raised plinth)
3. Presence of community level institutions

Indicator/s for identifying household level readiness

1. Household level preparedness and plans (important valuables for rapid recovery)

Indicator for identifying housing conditions

1. Number of homeless families
2. Number of safe/unsafe houses
3. Have their own land for house or not (its govt. land or private land)
4. Over crowded

Indicators for assessing availability of physical amenities

1. location, accessibility and functionality of roads, schools, Anganwadi, PHCs, Panchyat bhawan ,community hall , road network , drainage, drinking water

Indicators for determining Economic Sustainability among Dalits

1. Landholding patterns
2. Land under the illegal occupation of upper caste
3. Productivity and integration of land
4. Credit facilities available to them
5. Level of education and trades carried out
6. History of land in relation with disasters
7. Employees Private/Government
8. Migration
9. Child labour
10. Types of crops grown
11. Crop insurance
12. Small & Medium Enterprises
13. Livestock (types, products)
14. Storage of food grains and livestock
15. Sources of income
16. Sources of credits

Indicators for assessing political representation of Dalits

1. Political participation
2. Political discrimination
3. Political division within the community
4. Political annexation (6th schedule ,autonomous councils)

INCLUSION MONITORING

Learning objectives of the session on Inclusion Monitoring

1. Participants will be able to understand the overall need for monitoring and what techniques and methodologies they may employ to achieve the purpose of monitoring

Objective of Monitoring

1. Entitlements have to reach the community
2. Monitoring should lead to action
3. Communities should actively participate in it and lead it with facilitation provided

Matrix 2: for identifying exclusion for making inclusion possible

Phases in disasters	Issues/measures of exclusion (WHAT)	Nature of exclusion (HOW)	Agents of exclusion				
			Govt. admin	Community groups	Political parties	CSOs (NGOs, INGOs)	Local panchayat
Pre-disaster							
During							
Post							

Community Monitoring-Techniques, Methods, Processes

The community needs to be facilitated by the identified cadre of community volunteers in identifying its vulnerability by building awareness regarding their rights and entitlements, the existing practices of discrimination and exclusion. Also, the trainers will train the community volunteers with the basic knowledge on duty bearers and statutory institutions/ provisions of the Disaster management Act, which the task force member will further, carry and disseminate to the community.

Important indicators

1. The needs and demands of the community
2. The authorities that can help in getting the needs and demands fulfilled
3. Who can approach the duty bearers/authority?
 - During the pilot application of this tool, the facilitator who accompanies the participants (trained volunteer) to the field has to understand the existing techniques with the community for identifying and measuring their vulnerability (local methods and techniques)
 - Prioritise pre, during and post disaster vulnerability, threats, needs, agencies to be approached

Matrix 3: What the community monitors?

Areas to be monitored	What	How much they've accessed	Who's accountable
<p>1) Its own vulnerabilities & capacities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Location & Housing - Embankments, Facilities for rescue - Food security/ Water - fodder - Barriers to entitlements 	<p>Review awareness which leads to campaign for awareness</p>		
<p>2 a) Access to Relief & Entitlements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Food, water, shelter, sanitation - Compensation - Enumeration & Damage assessment - Rescue 			
<p>b) Services Special groups: Children, women, aged, disabled, Any other</p>			
<p>3) disaster related govt. bodies – governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - membership & representation - participation of Dalit communities - Barriers to above - Effectiveness? Functional? 			

CONTENT for training of task force members

The trainer must have knowledge of the following to educate the community volunteers on the basic legal information on Disaster Management.

1. Community monitoring- Why? What? How?
2. Vulnerability understanding
3. National Disaster Response Fund – Entitlements & Rights
4. DM Act /Authorities structure till district level-village- Administrative structure/key bodies
5. Exclusion-inclusion
6. Skills- Facilitation, PRA, etc
7. Materials- in local language (the Act, guidelines, policies etc)
8. Special focus group-women, children, aged, disability, any other etc
9. Rights based approach

The tool is currently being piloted in the selected flood prone areas of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Assam.

VI. Recommendations

Having analysed the problem, looked at the existing legal and institutional mechanisms to tackle the problem and having shared some case studies on Good Practices in humanitarian assistance, now is the section on Recommendations³⁴ to the government and to the humanitarian organisations. These recommendations comprise what still needs to be done to ensure Inclusion of Dalits in DR-DRR.

³⁴ Most recommendations flow from the National Consultation on 'Exclusion of Dalits-Disaster Risk Reduction-Effective civil society monitoring', held in New Delhi, India, 18-19 June 2010

Civil Society Recommendations to the Government of India for Dalit Inclusion in Disaster Risk Reduction

1. The DM policy guidelines and minimum standards for relief and rehabilitation should recognize caste based discrimination and exclusion of Dalits and consider it a cross cutting issue at par with gender.
2. Steps and procedures should be laid down so that complete inclusion of Dalits and other vulnerable groups is ensured as a non-negotiable entitlement
3. The officers of state agencies should recognize the societal processes of caste-based exclusion at work in communities and hence should directly reach out to the Dalits and vulnerable groups, avoiding any mediation of people from the powerful dominant communities in reaching out to them.
4. There should be specific circulars and GOs / GRs that instruct specifically and make it incumbent on the officers of the administration to visit and enumerate the affected people in the settlements of the Dalits and other vulnerable groups (children, people with disabilities, single women, the elderly etc.)
5. The NDMA/SDMA/DDMA volunteer task forces on search and rescue to have adequate representation of Dalit youth
6. The NDMA should establish grievance redressal mechanisms under each of its guidelines and policy
7. The NDMA/ SDMA/ DDMA should provide for capacity building trainings for the identified youth groups on DR-DRR which should have proportionate membership of Dalit youth and women; village level teachers and ASHA workers.
8. State agencies should collaborate with CSOs to develop tools based on participatory methods and principles of social equity audit, for monitoring / auditing the extent of social equity and inclusion of Dalits in disaster response and risk reduction programmes (the MNREGS Model could be looked at).
9. The nodal agencies implementing disaster response and DRR programmes should build up an internal MIS on the share of Dalits in the response programme. The MIS should provide disaggregated information on all the affected households of vulnerable communities and also give detailed data on women, pregnant / lactating women, infants, children, persons with disabilities, aged people and so on. They should institute mechanisms for mid-term corrective measures based on the information so received.
10. Focal persons should be appointed by the Government in order to monitor all aspects of inclusion of Dalits at all levels of the administration – planning, implementation and governance of Disaster management interventions.
11. Ombudspersons should be appointed by the state on a permanent basis, specifically to look at the issue of exclusion in disaster-prone areas, and in any area that has been

affected by any disaster. These ombudspersons should be vested with adequate powers to enforce inclusion of Dalits and other vulnerable groups by state agencies and function as per guidelines and procedures laid out to address grievances and cases of exclusion. They should not only be empowered to direct the administration to include and grant entitlements for all those excluded in disaster response and risk reduction interventions of the government; but also to initiate departmental inquiry or / and prosecution of public servants who may have through their acts of omission or commission led to exclusion of Dalits.

12. Dalit rights organisations with proven track record to be represented in all levels of GO-NGO coordination mechanisms in the context of Disaster Management. NDMA, SDMAs and DDMA should have task forces / committees representing the dalits and other vulnerable groups that deliberate on and decisively influence disaster management programmes.
13. Specific disaggregated database should be compiled on Dalit households and all other vulnerable groups, the mode of access to those households and the preparedness of the administration to reach out to them in the event of any disaster. This database should be made available in the public domain by all district disaster management authorities / nodal ministries.
14. The entitlements of Dalits and other vulnerable groups should be defined, communicated precisely through all relevant media and made accessible with minimum procedural hitches. The onus should be on the duty-bearer (the state) and not on the affected (the rights-holder) to ensure that all the affected Dalits and vulnerable groups receive their entitlements pertaining to Disaster response and risk reduction programmes.
15. The abhorrent practice of forcing or enticing Dalits to remove carcasses and corpses has to be ended with immediate effect. This work has to be done by specially trained and well-paid staff of the government and volunteers - equipped with full protective gear. All public health operations to remove the dead should be carefully monitored for any such abusive practice, and strict standards and norms for this function, with punitive provisions for violations should be laid down.
16. The National Disaster Management Authority, National Institute of Disaster Management and Ministry of Human Resource Development and their counterparts in the states are urged to introduce modules on inclusion of Dalits and vulnerable groups in disaster response, mitigation and DRR, as part of courses on human rights in schools, universities and training programmes for Government staff. Such courses instilling a culture of human rights should start from early years of schooling so that the mindset that promotes caste-based discrimination and exclusion could be transformed early in life.
17. The government should announce incentives and call for proposals from the Dalit organisations at the state levels and nationals to jointly devise need based resilience building programmes for specifically Dalit regions, exposed to frequent disasters.

18. Vulnerability mapping and capacity assessment exercises should be carried out in a participatory manner by district authorities with involvement of identified Dalit organisations (as in point 12), to look beyond mere technicalities of disasters.
19. The NDMA should make it mandatory for district administration to carry out the infrastructure and resource mapping exercise in a routine manner so that Dalits and other marginalised sections don't have to struggle to prove possession of the lost /damaged asset to seek compensation.
20. Rework on the principle of Building better by providing substantial alternate sources of livestock other than NREGA to disaster hit victims for addressing immediate employment need.
21. The government should announce and legislate compensatory measures for share-croppers who lose out their livelihood in event of flood and yet cannot claim any compensation.

Recommendation to the Civil Society organisations

22. Humanitarian organisations should explicitly state and recognize exclusion of Dalits and strategies for their inclusion in policy documents and intervention guidelines pertaining to humanitarian assistance.
23. Humanitarian organisations should ensure that Dalits and other excluded groups (children, people with disabilities, single women, the elderly etc.) are consciously and deliberately reached out to while assessing needs during humanitarian crisis and that we all agree on minimum guidelines and indicators on inclusive support for them.
24. Humanitarian organisations should collaborate to collectively develop common tools based on participatory methods and principles of social equity audit, for monitoring / auditing the extent of social equity and inclusion of Dalits in their disaster response and risk reduction programmes.
25. The humanitarian organisations should facilitate the realisation of rights and entitlements of the Dalit beneficiaries who are asset-less and without documentary evidences after a disaster, instead of phasing out after distributing relief. Human rights perspective should be in built in any DR-DRR programme of the agency.
26. Social auditing should be made mandatory for government, civil society organisations, corporate and religious institutions /bodies to ensure transparency and accountability over funds mobilised and utilised during disaster situations.
27. Humanitarian organisations should appoint committees (cells) (the equivalent of the Ombudsperson) to look into grievances related to exclusion in our disaster response and risk reduction programmes. Adequate guidelines and procedures should be laid down and administrative facilities provided for such committees to fulfil their functions effectively. Their recommendations should be binding for the executives of the CSOs and the Governing Boards should be liable to monitor the implementation of the recommendations for inclusive practices.

28. Accountability tool such as HAP should be made compulsory within humanitarian agencies engaging in post relief programme for rebuilding the communities