

# The uncertainties of life...

Living through Waters of Dejection



A study by National Dalit Watch, NCDHR, 2010

## **Acknowledgements**

This report is dedicated to the survivors of the Yamuna floods for their cooperation and sharing of information and heartfelt observations on the entire flood. We are thankful to the entire community, and most importantly, the women of the communities for confiding in us, deposing their agonies, talking their heart to us.

We are grateful to the volunteers of the survey, namely Pushpa, Suman, Sonu, Kunti, Lakshmi and Amarjeet, of organisation 'Saksham', based in Jahangirpuri, Delhi, for coming forward for the survey, and helping in data entry.

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### **About National Dalit Watch**

The National Dalit Watch (NDW) is an initiative of the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights (NCDHR), which has emerged from an informed recognition of the rampant discrimination and exclusion faced by Dalit communities during disaster response and mitigation. Building on the experiential base of NCDHR in exposing and countering exclusion in some of the major disasters of our times (Tsunami in 2004, Bihar Floods in 2007 and 2008), NDW has been working towards developing tools and methods to identify, expose and document this form of discrimination. NDW enables Dalit rights organizations, local activists and the community leadership in various parts of the country to effectively monitor discrimination and exclusion during disasters. Through advocacy and mobilization the NDW works towards instituting a policy environment that recognizes such discrimination and defining entitlements of survivors in a manner that makes the state accountable. At present, NDW has its operation in Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Assam, and prior to the study commissioned during Yamuna floods in 2010, studies were conducted in AP, Karnataka and Assam, following the floods in 2009.

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# *F*oreword

Delhi received heavy monsoon rains this year in August and September (2010). The incessant rainfall had undoubtedly disturbed the normal lives of the people and more so, gave hiccups to the national government, with the Common Wealth Games just round the corner. Threat of severe floods loomed large then. The river had also already hit the danger level of 204.83 metres on August 20, inundating all the low lying areas. Alongside, there was continuous release of large quantities of water from the Hathinikund barrage, in Haryana, which caused the river to swell, as per the chief engineer, irrigation and flood control department (IANS). For a period of 24 hours, on August 25, 9.3 mm of rains were recorded by the Met department, which had warned continuous downpour on the following day. The water level in Yamuna had crossed the 207-metre mark for first time in 32 years, inundating several low lying areas in North Delhi and trans Yamuna. The bureau sources revealed that Delhi had witnessed massive floods last in 1978 when water level in Yamuna had touched 207.49 metre. The city was just a little over three weeks behind from hosting of the Common Wealth Games (CWG) and speculations regarding the Games Village safety were already at peak in the media and government, as that also could not be protected from being inundated.

Rainfall and the constant release of huge quantity of water from the Hathinikund barrage upstream in Haryana state made the river to rise, further submerging the areas of Delhi and devastating the lives of the people residing in low lying areas, predominated by dalits followed by other marginalised sections. Thus, rainfall with floods together wreaked havoc on the city, and even more on those families situated on the embankments, which were and always are the first ones to see their houses and belongings get washed away. The families had already started losing their livestock and property by this time, before being evacuated.

Some even analysed the flood zoning pattern in Delhi and inferred that a direct cause for the flooding of Yamuna was the capital's network of drains. This adversely impacts the population living in the Yamuna River-bed and on the banks of the river and drains. Local flash floods and water logging increased surface run-off due to high ratio of hard surfaces leading to flash floods. Resultantly, this badly affects the low lying areas, particularly the unplanned colonies which get water logged. Creation of embankments has simply deceived the poor. It spawns a false sense of security. Flood after flood in India, the breach of embankments has claimed toll on life and property. Yet, the very façade of embankments being a protection gives way to development in the shadow of these embankments. When these embankments fail, the effect is shocking because the pressure of the entire embanked stretch is released at one point, and it takes the people by awe.

Perhaps, it was the nature's litmus test to evaluate the efficiency of the city's government to tackle the dual challenge of beautifying the capital for the CWG 2010, and at the same time controlling the flood situations, protecting vulnerable population. While all were on their toes constructing and protecting the Games village for the visiting athletes and officials, least efforts were made to provide quality relief services to the victims of flood. The low lying areas

in Delhi along the Yamuna are mostly inhabited by the natives from neighbouring states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, living here for decades, which were totally inundated in the deluge.

## *Executive Summary*

The water levels rising by the hour bewildered the people who were settled along the river banks. The victims tracked the level of rising water every minute, and monitored the errant river. Their predictions on the subsequent course of the river and the effect could not be matched by any other source of forecast. They had been living through the waters for years now. Water had surged into the houses, breaking man made barriers, flowing into the colonies situated on the river sides. Water rose above knee length. Those living in these colonies, having concrete houses, had the option of getting onto the rooftop, with all their belongings, while those living in hutments almost disappeared, just as their houses had, with no traces left. Some had fled to their villages or sent their children away to their hometown, some stayed by themselves under the bridges, on the bunds and pavements, while the rest found their way to the relief camps.

This Inclusion Monitoring survey of the NDW was a week long survey, commissioned from 19<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> October, stretching over three locations, covering 409 families in the jhuggi-jhonpri (JJ) clusters. Amongst the worse affected households in these JJ clusters, 79% belonged to the Dalits, followed by the second highest prevalence of Other Backward Castes (OBC) at 14%. The Yamuna floods had decimated every shack on its plain. Dalits constitute the major chunk of migrated lot from Uttar Pradesh (42%) and Bihar (18%), migrated to Delhi in search of settled existence and promised livelihood opportunities, with and many living in Delhi for over half a century now.

During the survey, the inconsistencies and flaws in the relief operation came to light apart from the deep sense of loss faced by the survivors. The compensation and entitlements of the survivors are yet to be known from the Delhi government, for as of now, there has been no such announcement.

**75%** of total families predominantly pursue leased farming on the river bed (areas surveyed) and have suffered to the hilt. They have lost their harvest of seasonal vegetables, lost their lease amount advanced to the landlord and they will continue to pay the interest on the principal amount borrowed. They could not reap what they had sown. Those with livestock had tough time too. **24%** households faced acute shortage for fodder of 38% respondents that had livestock. This pushed women to fend for fodder and collect it from wherever possible. **20%** respondents disclosed they purchased fodder at prices ranging from Rs.150-250 per sack, while some testified having bribed the gate keepers of public gardens to procure grass.

**23%** of the victims denied receipt of adequate and quality food supply. Water tanks from the Delhi Jal Board would also go missing on certain days, which propelled them to drink water from the flooded river, leading to sickness all around, particularly among children. **43%** refused access to health care facilities by any agency, including the government, simply because there were either no visiting paramedics or medical camps, or these excluded victims were distantly located away from relief tents, on bunds (those who couldn't procure relief tents for their families). Children were the silent and innocent victims of the flood. **51%**

of the total respondents reported loss of school items of their wards, without which their schooling post flood could not be resumed.

The basic amenities were not up to the expected norms set out by the government. **68%** respondents denied access to toilets and **89%** denied bathing facilities. These along with basic and the most needed supplementary food supply for pregnant women and lactating mothers, clothes for infants, baby food and other items, sanitary items for the women and especially for adolescent girls went grossly missing from the relief kit. Their security and dignity was simply unthought-of. Women withstood the miseries added to their already arduous lives. There was mental distress on witnessing the loss of their houses and other possessions, for children it was not just loss of their school kits, but for many, a possible loss of education, especially for the girl children. The enquiry pertaining to damage assessment by the government officials sought a unanimous reply 'No' from 98% of the respondents.

The impact of floods on the survivors cannot be sufficiently contained in the words used herein to document their agonies in the report. They have lost everything and they don't know and would not dare to question any authority about their entitlements and compensation. The study will thread facts descriptively to elaborately describe with precision the wide range of problems of the communities that have witnessed the unprecedented Yamuna Floods this year. Even though the scale of this flood is not so vast, yet the impact on the victims is phenomenal. Critical evaluation of facts will then find out how successful were the mechanism and steps taken by the Delhi government in making the lives and property of the victims secure.



## 1. *Rationale*

NDW's experiences of the earlier flood monitoring studies in Bihar (2008), Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Assam (2009), and the regular inflow of media information on Yamuna Floods were reasons enough to go ahead with fact finding visits to some of the affected areas. The findings of these visits brought forth the plight of victims who had lost their meagre livelihood and crops to the floods. The loss of entire cultivation on huge tracts of the river bed could be estimated to run into lakhs of rupees as per the Dalit families working on leased lands. However, there have been no official figures about any kind of damage done due to the floods till now in the public. The preliminary interaction with victims made it imperative to conceive a week-long survey to gather detailed information from them about their encounter with floods and government initiatives so far.

Being the capital of country, it is difficult for anyone to acknowledge the concealed truth of caste based discrimination. Even the victims were unable to talk comfortably about this aspect. Yet, it remains a fact. 'Discrimination by default' was in full swing not just during the Yamuna floods, but even before floods, and the victims were not aware of this subtle execution of exclusionary practices. Nevertheless, their responses with passing days drew the study close to the inference that Dalits and marginalised were again on the receiving end. The fact that these people have never had any benefit of the government schemes reinforces the fact of default discrimination. They were perceivably in a powerless situation. They never had an anganwadi, no school in the vicinity, no ASHA worker and no access to development or educational schemes like 'Ladli' scheme of Delhi for supporting girl child education.

The three locations were identified, namely Shastri Park, Chilla Khadar village and Puntoon Pull road of Mayur Vihar Phase I and Vijay Ghat. The victims of Yamuna floods were mostly these people who have been living along and across the Yamuna river and pursuing farming. They have lived in continuous threat of eviction from the Yamuna land and hence, this made them keep shut to prevent being dispossessed and uprooted.

The study seeks to further delve on some already well established and explained phenomenon of discrimination and exclusion of Dalits in Disaster Risk Reduction interventions. It is a systematic study to understand the overwhelming impact of the Yamuna floods on the lives of thousands of people living along the river. The study looks at the pre existing vulnerabilities of these victims making them susceptible to the impact of hazards, and here, the Yamuna flood, their socio-economic background, the topography, perils and troubles they have been landed into, as an additional predicament to their already vulnerable positioning. The survey strives to review the whole range of services right from evacuation to relief provision from the Dalit perspective in conjunction with the women and children lenses to assess the quality and quantity of services provided, and if that were dispensed with dignity. Moreover, the survey will broadly assess the damage suffered, simultaneously finding out if there was any scientific assessment of their damage by the officials following the floods, and what have been the views of the victims on the approach and aid from the government.

## 2. *Methodology*

### **2.1. *Fact finding visits, 9<sup>th</sup> -15<sup>th</sup> September 2010***

Prior to the survey, fact finding visits were made to relief camps situated on at Dhobighat in Batla House, Yamuna Bazaar, Nigambodh Ghat, Shastri Park, DND toll bridge of Noida, Laxmi Nagar, Iron Bridge (Thokar no. 21), Mayur Vihar Phase-1, Usmanpur Teesra Pusta and Wazirabad bridge. The visits were made from 9<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> September 2010. A brief interaction was held with the flood survivors in these camps. It was during the fact finding visits that the hesitation of survivors in revealing their Dalit identities was perceived. In some cases they refrained from telling their full names, so as to prevent the disclosure of their identities by their last names. People were panic stricken and there was anger in some of the wavering voices for having lost their houses and crops, everything, in just a spur of the moment.

### **2.2. *Application under the Right to Information Act 2005***

Concurrently, an application under the Right to Information Act 2005 was filed soon after the fact finding visits, on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2010. The application was made to the Office of the Principal Secretary (Revenue)-cum- Divisional Commissioner, Delhi, which sought information about the preparedness levels and effectiveness of disaster response of the Delhi Government, particularly to the needs of the vulnerable citizens in the affected area. Application was made for precise and detailed information regarding various aspects of flood control and disaster response work, which the authorities concerned were expected to undertake as per the “Flood Control Order, 2009” of the Government of Delhi.

### **2.3. *Collection of Government Orders***

Subsequently, in the absence of any urgently required information under the RTI, successive visits were made to the offices of the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM), Additional Divisional Magistrate, Govt. of NCT of Delhi and the Superintending Engineer: Flood Circle I Government of Delhi. Prior to this, office of the Delhi Disaster Management Authority was also visited. However, since the officials were not in their offices due to out station work for the CWG, only the Ex-SDM was accessible, who anyway refused to provide any information or government order on the relief and compensation to the flood victims. This would have helped in comparing the losses with announced compensation which could have furthermore aided in eliciting accurate details on damage incurred by victims. However, it would not have been opportune to hold back the survey in the absence of information and hence the survey was kick-started shortly.

### **2.4. *Selection of areas for survey***

Even though fact finding visits covered all the affected areas that were submerged, the locations which had heavy concentration of hutments on the flood plain were short listed for the survey, which without any second thought, were worst hit. These were Mayur Vihar Phase 1 (Chilla village and Puntoon pull road), Vijay Ghat and Shastri Park. The intention was to find out about the initiatives and steps taken by the Delhi government and Disaster

Management Authorities with all their infrastructure and systems in place, to manage the Yamuna floods and provide relief services to the victims.

### **2.5. Questionnaires**

Semi structured questionnaire were designed drawing from the information and observations of the fact finding visits. Semi structured questionnaires helped in seeking information that needed some detailed explanations from the respondents, which could not have been gathered effectively with mere options given to choose one from. It inquired into the availability of basic amenities, sanitation and health care facilities in the relief camps, presence/absence of adequate facilities for women and inclusion/exclusion/discrimination during dispensation of relief; the survey also enquired about any instances of violence against women in the camps. The frequency of visits by government officials to Dalit habitations was also explored, and the reasons as perceived by the survivors for them not having visited.

### **2.6. Selection of investigators & Entry into the community**

Following the location identification, six volunteers having experience of surveys in Dalit localities were selected. These volunteers have been working in the slums with massive concentration of dalit and marginalised groups in Jahangirpuri area in Delhi. Special emphasis was laid on having more number of female volunteers, so that women's account of their difficulties in the relief phase and other concerns could be well recorded. Hence, of the six volunteers, four were female.

These volunteers were then taken to the identified locations to observe the immediate living conditions of the flood hit Dalit and marginalised victims. They had migrated to Delhi years back, but were still living a life of anonymity in the sight and records of the government. The communities and volunteers were introduced to each other and cooperation was sought from the people in helping the volunteers reach out to all affected households. The victims were also oriented about the purpose of the survey so that both sides felt at ease while interacting and sharing their concerns accurately and confidently.

### **2.6. Pilot testing & training of investigators**

The relevance of the questions devised for the survey had to be checked, so that required modifications could be incorporated. Since the situation in Delhi was different from that of rural settings in other states and being a central political hub, it was essential to pilot test the questionnaire on some families. Two volunteers were taken to Vijay Ghat, and the questionnaire was administered on four families. This helped in making necessary alterations encompassing the emergent concerns of the victims. Volunteers also gained confidence and insight on how they'd interview the families that has just lived through a disaster, respecting their sensitivities and privacy.

Apart from the field exposure to the volunteers, they were separately oriented on the finalised questionnaire and informed about the power dynamic and other probable conditions, oppositions from the landlords or the dominant caste that could apparently crop up during the survey. Objectives behind the inclusion monitoring studies of the National Dalit Watch were shared with them, together with some synthesised findings of all the

former monitoring studies. This orientation meeting was held a day before the survey, on October 18.

### 3. *Data Collection*

The data collected and analysed in the study are drawn from the field through the survey; this forms the primary data. These data are further backed by the findings of the existing inclusion monitoring studies of the NDW, e-news items and journals. Altogether, these secondary sources of information helps form a link between the impact of floods and the earlier events of eviction from Yamuna regions to comprehensively view the pre-existing vulnerabilities of flood victims. Without considering the past episodes of evictions and demolitions occurring for over past 10 years now, the finding of the study would not have been able to justifiably project the real vulnerabilities and plight of the survivors.

Before starting with the survey, the locations were visited and the communities were directly approached. The investigators met with some families' heads and appraised them about the objective of this particular study to gain their trust, against the reality that they had recently survived a flood. This facilitated a reliable sharing from the respondents, for whom it was the first time that someone had visited them to hear of their miseries and agonies. However, precautions were taken to not lead them into any false and heightened promises.

#### ***a. Quantitative study***

The 207 households across Puntoon Pull and Chilla Khadar in Mayur Vihar Phase I, 86 households in Shastri Park and 115 households in Vijay Ghat were surveyed in a week. Of these, Dalits emerged as the single largest community residing in those areas.

The pattern of land holdings and livelihoods pursued by the survivors in these areas was studied along with the nature of damage suffered. Emergency relief services in the form of availability of mobile toilets, their usefulness particularly to the women and People with Disabilities, no. of days the schooling that the children lost, facilities and provisions available for children below 5 years age and for pregnant and lactating women are covered in the quantitative data.

#### ***b. Qualitative study***

The qualitative aspect of the study strived to understand the subtle aspects of the survivors' lives. Also, having found that the majority of households in the surveyed areas are those of distressed Dalits, with a small proportion of OBCs and Muslims, it helped to see through this particular disaster situation in the context of their pre existing vulnerabilities and location of habitation. Descriptive accounts of the difficulties faced by the Dalit children in accessing education leave alone quality education, even before the Yamuna floods and during the floods, the social practices and conditions, and the women's plight were voiced by the flood affected communities. Many questions were probed much deeper, which helped in enriching the data, finding answers to critical questions, and sometimes even in identifying further questions.

### **c. Case studies**

Case studies were another medium for gathering information on different forms of discrimination encountered by Dalits in the face of this disaster. Case studies were conducted to bring out the varying degrees of sufferings of the Dalit and marginalised communities at the hands of the administration and the dominant caste communities even in the wake of such calamities, which should have actually united various factions of society for the sake of humanity.

## **4. *Data analysis & Reporting***

### **Editing and Coding**

The filled questionnaires were reviewed and the gaps and errors in information gathered were identified and rectified. The responses were classified and coded. While the close ended responses were coded when the survey was on, the open ended responses were coded only after the data collection was over. A Codebook was produced which was then cross checked to sight any coding error, which may have crept in during data collection phase, during the manual coding of responses or during the data entry phase. Finally, once the data entry was complete and scrutinised evenly to the extent possible, the data were converted to statistical representations through inbuilt excel formulae and depicted through the pie diagrams, an easily understandable and presentable form.

The co-relation between two or more variables has been brought out through cross tabulation of the findings throughout the report to establish a cause-and –effect relationship between the variables. Through cross tabulation the variables covered are: pre-existing vulnerability vs. the floods; proximity to the river vs. damage incurred; pre-warning vs. damages incurred; lack of labour room facility vs. precarious child birth situations; lack of anganwadis vs. less enrolment of children in school and lease amount and loss to crops vs. indebtedness. It is imperative to look at the causal factors which play a significant role in bringing out a complex social situation. Hence, an explanatory analysis of the survey findings will paint an accurate picture of the consequences laid down by the floods.

### **Report writing**

The report of survey details out the entire survey design, execution and findings of the survey. This will help the readers to get an insight into the entire procedure and methods used to come up with the discoveries of this study. This has been a baseline inclusion monitoring survey of the Yamuna flood so far in Delhi, perhaps the first of its kind. The findings of the study will certainly help chalk out subsequent strategies and advocacy agenda for ensuring inclusive policies and statutes in disaster management. This baseline estimate would also be helpful in situational analysis of facts that are gathered against later findings. In a nutshell, it would serve as a document which could be referred to for reviewing such similar situation in future as well.

## 5. *P*re-existing vulnerabilities

Delhi is a shark city, cosmopolitan in nature. It lures the rustic to come here and settle for work. Delhi is a house to lakhs of migrants who enter into this metropolitan city in search of employment opportunities. They settle in most uninhabitable corners of the city, which is what they can afford of their petty wages. They take to rickshaw pulling, casual labour, and farming along the Yamuna river bed. Since many big industries are founded in metropolitan cities, people migrate to these cities to also meet the demand generated by these industries for cheap labour on construction sites. Almost all get into the unorganised sector to sustain their families back in the remotest of villages who subsist on the meagre wages remitted home.

The region called Yamuna Pushta (trans-Yamuna) includes all the localities that have burgeoned along the river sides, mostly inhabited by the migrant population, settled for years subsisting on one or the other vocation. Yamuna Pushta includes the Vijay Ghat, Shastri Park, DND toll bridge, Noida, Laxmi Nagar, Iron Bridge, Mayur Vihar, Usmanpur, Seelampur and Wazirabad bridge areas where fact finding visits were made prior to this monitoring survey following unprecedented Yamuna flood in Delhi. According to the Delhi Master Plan 2001, the Yamuna Pushta region is “floodable” and therefore not a place to build infrastructures. This has been the reason advanced for justifying the gruesome act of displacement and relocation of the migrants to far flung locations on the outskirts of Delhi, which failed to provide avenues to make a living. Conversely, some famous structures namely the grand Akshardham temple, the Games Village and Delhi’s lifelines, metro railway, stand on the very same Yamuna river bed. In order to seek approval for the construction of the Akshardham Temple and Games Village, the Delhi High Court was told that after having built an embankment along the Yamuna River in 1955 to prevent flooding of east Delhi, the land ceased to be in the flood plain. However, this ideology of building embankments and making unsafe zones safe has time and again met with severe blows.

Many illegal constructions have mushroomed around the Yamuna river. But it is only these poor migrant people who are considered “encroachers”. The government has termed these areas inhabited by long settled migrant workers as unauthorised localities/ settlements and ‘illegal’ residents. This sets the tone for this report to first shed light on some facts that lay bare some grotesque realities underpinning this gigantic metropolitan city, Delhi. The finding of the study would make complete sense only if they are viewed in conjunction with the past events of eviction and annihilation of slums in the region, which continue to have a bearing on the victims even now, living along the river and cultivating the river bed. The imprints of these incidents are still embedded in the deep memories of the flood victims.

March 2003, Delhi High Court pronounced one of its most ruthless judgements for demolishing the slums and jhuggis (shacks/makeshift huts) for being illegal structures. While the Delhi metro lines were being planned in the area and the grand Akshardham temple got constructed in the vicinity, which also falls on the Yamuna river bed, the authorities conveniently demolished only the jhuggis of the people living here. Since they live of the cultivation on this land, the authorities term them “encroachers”, “polluting” the

“sacred” river. Over 100,000 people were rendered homeless, education of thousands of children was violently disrupted, and the homeless people lost their livelihood because the places of relocation did not offer viable solutions and avenues for livelihood. There were arbitrary arrests and illegal detentions following this court order which had unduly empowered the authorities. Many innocent were incarcerated, implicated in false cases and houses were set ablaze. These oustees were relocated on the outskirts of Delhi to far flung villages like Bawana and Hollambi Kala etc, without proper rehabilitation. All the ration cards were then cancelled in one go for those living along the river engaged in farming.

These oustees possessed ration cards and voter identity cards issued to them at the time of the VP Singh government. These documents were the basis for their eligibility to relocation. However, in 2002, these earlier ration cards were cancelled and BPL cards were issued. In Vijay Ghat, the flood survivors made a passing reference to precisely this history when they were asked if they possessed ration cards to avail PDS or not. Ration cards for all the respondents in the area were cancelled during 2002-2003. Those people continue to reside in these areas who could not be relocated due to inadequate no. of constructed plots and those who eventually had to come back to Delhi for work.

In Shastri Park, the respondents stated that they could not send their children to school because there is no school in the vicinity. The police don't allow them to assemble their jhuggis due to which many families were forced to rent places in Seelampur and Usmanpur slums and colonies. Continued police harassment has made them easy prey to hazards and disasters. Some of those who could somehow manage to shift to rented places proceeded while the remaining lived back in most unhygienic and precarious conditions, and continue to exist like this. These social and geographical vulnerabilities and marginalisation have made them convenient targets for police, the Delhi Development Authority (for living on their land), Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and the natural disasters, floods.

It is thus, very important to view the following facts of the Yamuna flood monitoring study in the light of these disturbing facts. The 409 families across the three location surveyed have witnessed this chapter in Delhi's history of displacement and relocation, and this has rendered them weak on several counts. They have at some point in time undergone state subjugation. Now also, they have to bribe some petty policemen to seek approval to assemble their jhuggis. The Yamuna flood have simply compounded their misery and exposed the flip side of the capital government in dealing with their citizens.

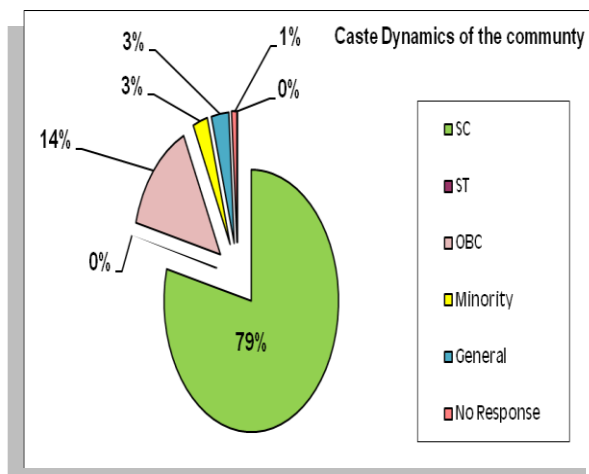
### **The contention about the identity of the victims**

It is pertinent to note that 37% of total respondents in Shastri Park and 56% in Mayur Vihar possess ration cards, while in Vijay Ghat they were cancelled in 2002-03 for the entire population. Yet, at all surveyed locations, majority of victims had voter identity cards. Nevertheless, these people feel hesitant in claiming their rights and identity. The damages and losses suffered, hardships faced and the life they continue to live will be known as the findings of this inclusion monitoring report are unveiled.

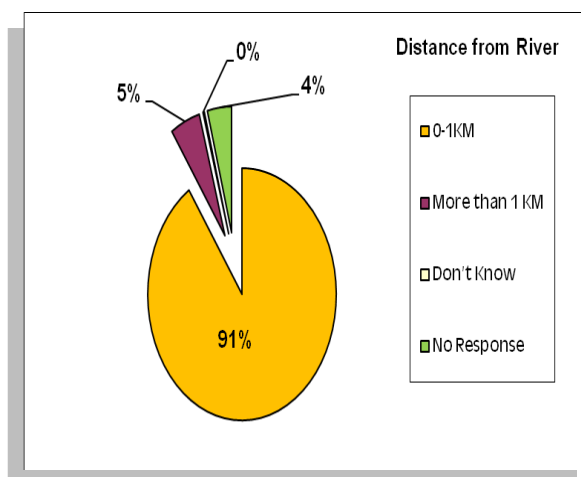
## 6. The Findings

### a. Social and Geographical positioning

According to the Central Groundwater Authority, Delhi has 97sq km of flood plain. Since 1884, the river has changed its course about five to six times because of which more areas have been added to its flood plain. The social and geographical positioning plays a significant role in determining the extent of loss and damage to the victims of any disasters. This becomes more prominent in the events of floods, whereby, Dalits and some marginalised communities are found to live along the rivers and embankments. This increases their vulnerability in flood situations. It would have been a relief had this instance been proven wrong in case of the Delhi Yamuna floods. Amongst the worst affected households in these jhuggi-jhonpri (JJ) clusters, **79%** belonged to the Dalits, followed by the **14%** OBCs.



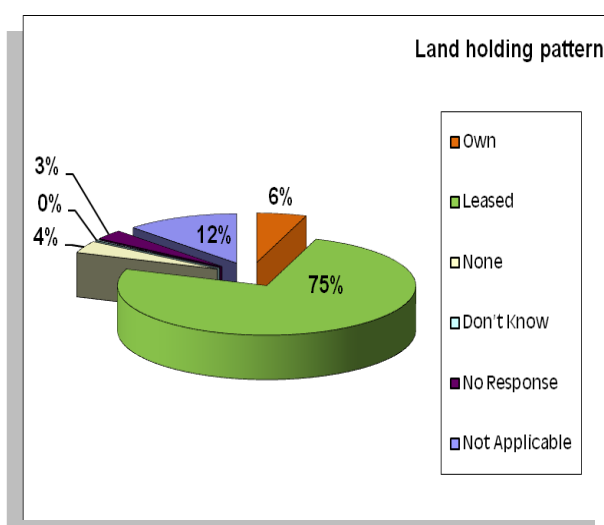
**91%** of the flood affected shacks situated on the Yamuna flood plain, fall within less than a kilometre radius of the river, because of which 89% of the houses were either severely damaged or washed away. Dalits constitute the major chunk of natives from Uttar Pradesh (42%) and Bihar (18%), settled in Delhi for want of regular livelihood opportunities, inhabiting these locations, excluded from the mainstream city population, engaged in small livelihood activities for subsistence. In Vijay Ghat, the respondents shared that they had been residing in the area for as many years as their memory could date back. Thus, of the 115 respondents, **92%** considered themselves no less than Delhi-ites, holding their voter identity cards. They continue to live amid threats of eviction from the government officials and harassment from police every now and then. With abysmal facilities and minimal livelihood options, Dalits and marginalised sections have stayed in the region to farm on the flood plain of Yamuna and have turned out to be the worst hit by floods.



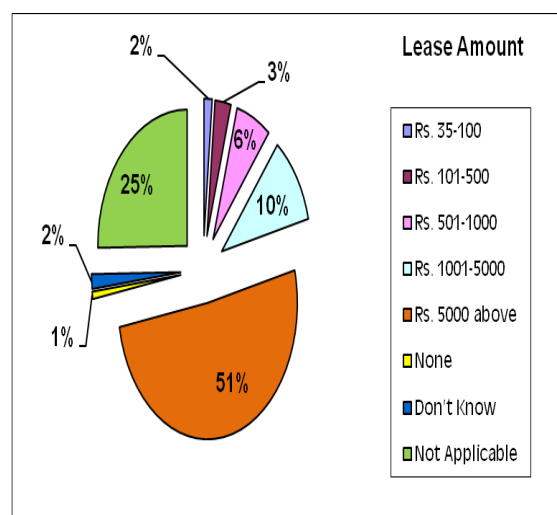


## b. Minimal livelihood options struck with disasters

The Yamuna river bed contains rich soil suitable for cultivation of seasonal vegetables, grains like wheat and cash crops like sugarcane. **75%** of the families primarily pursue leased farming, followed by **12%** engaged in daily wage labour. Sometimes even the farming households take to daily wage labour to supplement their incomes, while **6%** do share-cropping. The farmers here pay exorbitant amount of yearly and half-yearly rent to the landlords to obtain tracts of land to do farming. This money is borrowed on interest rate from their acquaintances to pay off the lease



amount and to meet other requirements for cultivation. This is the only viable option available to them, and they pump in huge amounts for buying hybrid seeds, pesticides, manure and fertilisers to boost their production. (The lease amount is calculated on the basis of per bigha of land and multiplies depending upon the number of bighas a household owns, which is atleast 5 bighas in most cases and even more than that).



The lease sum easily ranges from about Rs. 4000 to 5000 per bigha. In Chilla Khadar and Puntoon pull village the land is owned by a few dominant caste landlords, having leased possession of land from the Delhi Peasants Co-Operative Multipurpose Society Ltd for over 4-5 decades. These dominant caste landlords have further sub-leased the land for cultivation to the Dalit farmers. In Vijay Ghat, majority farmers paid their rental to this Delhi Peasants Co-Operative Multipurpose Society Ltd.<sup>1</sup>, on a yearly and half yearly basis, which was mostly upto Rs. 100. Here too, it's mostly the Dalit landlords who have possession of the leased

land from the Society, and have sub-leased it to their counterpart.

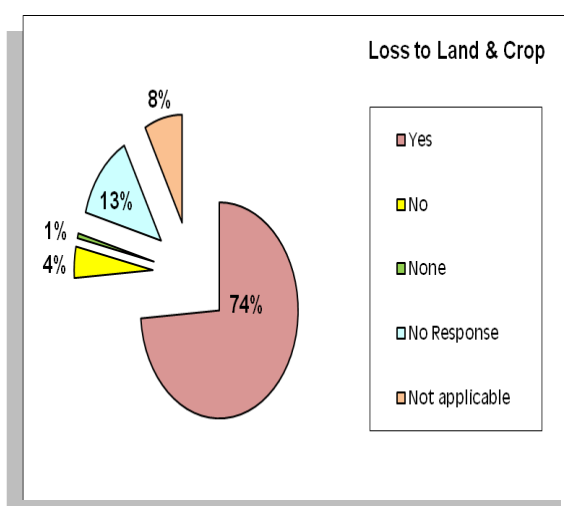
<sup>1</sup> In a, Writ Petition(C) No. 5060/2000, over the Dispossession from River Land, in the High Court of Delhi, it was explained that the Delhi Peasants Co-operative Multipurpose Society Ltd. Was allotted 13,343 bigha and 3 biswa of land by Delhi Improvement Trust on the Yamuna river bank. The society, in turn had parceled out the land to its members. Being members of the society, petitioners were put in possession of the land. The case is still pending in the Delhi High Court, being fought between the Irrigation deptt. of UP govt. and the Delhi Society

The DDA in its defence stated that the land was leased for five years initially to Jheel Kuranja Milk Producers Cooperative Society, which was subsequently extended upto 14.6. 1966. Petitioners being members of the Delhi Peasant Co-operative Multipurpose Society claimed their possession on the land and were hence considered trespassers, in lieu of which several demolitions occurred in the region forcefully and later in a lawful manner under (Eviction of Unauthorised Persons) Act 1971.

A woman respondent from Chilla village deposed that they had to borrow money on interest from a dealer in the vegetable whole sale market to pay off the lease amount. Besides having to pay the interest on principal amount, there was an unwritten contract between both parties for supplying the vegetables they grew to that dealer till the loan was settled. Her's was not a lone case; most small farmers managed their land holding this way. Being farmers, for them employment is limited largely to agriculture. They do seasonal farming and have to sustain their families, manage through all requirements for the entire year with that finite production. The Yamuna floods have just broken their backs and the survivors have no choice but to move on with the fate. They have lost their lease amount; continue to pay interest on borrowed money and the crops with which they would have lived the remaining season. A respondent originally from Bihar stated that he came to Delhi in pursuit of some regular work because in Bihar he could not farm due to annual flooding of his district, Katihar. Here also, however, he could not protect his fields and had to forego all his belongings with the thatched house.

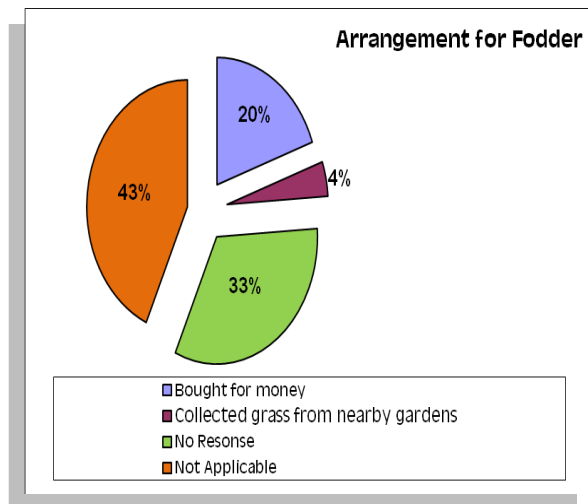
### c. Damage incurred

The damage incurred by these families is beyond estimation if their hard labour under the city's extreme climatic conditions is taken into account. Yamuna floods have razed the fields flourishing with the standing cultivation of seasonal vegetables and pulses of **74%** households. A rough estimation of the crop loss by the respondents insinuates a total crop loss running into lakhs. With this severe loss, the victims are now neck deep in debts. Borrowing money not just makes them divide their earnings to the money lender, but it costs them to compromise on their right to choose the manner in which they would like to manage their production, where to supply the produce, at what price and whether to sell it or not.



**95%** respondents reported the loss of clothing, accompanied by loss of utensils (**93%**) and loss of other assets and belongings, entailing loss of ration cards, voter identity cards and school certificates (**76%**) of children. Of the 148 respondents possessing livestock that comprised buffaloes, cows and goats, **17%** have had to face loss or injury of their animals. The nature of damage to livestock included cows and buffaloes being injured during evacuation and drowning of the goats and some cows also in flood.

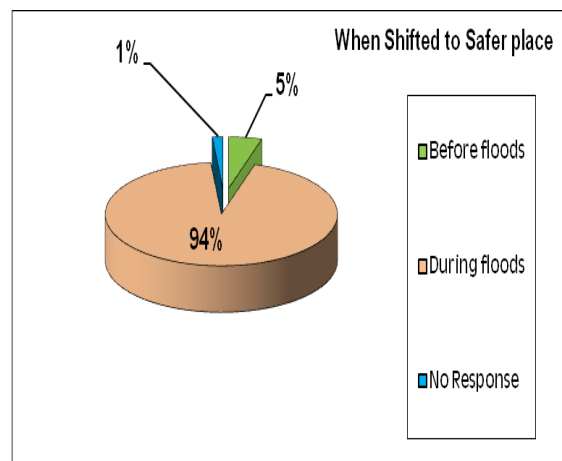
During floods, **24%** households faced acute shortage of fodder of the total 38% of respondents that reared livestock. The importance of livestock in the lives of these survivors can be realised on knowing that the women had to walk to far off places, parks, Old Fort and all possible locations to collect grass because the government's relief operation did not have any arrangements for fodder for the sustenance of livestock. **20%** respondents disclosed they purchased fodder on varying prices, ranging from Rs.150-250 per sack. Women respondents stated that procuring grass from parks was also priced and not free. They had to give Rs. 10-20 to the gate keepers at the public parks as bribe for it.



The facts above pour light on different cross cutting issues. On one hand, it is to be noticed that mostly women went out to fetch fodder. On the other hand, depositions from the women have also exposed the corrupt practices even at the level of a gatekeeper at the public parks, who did not allow the women to collect grass without having to bribe him. So, the victims- the Dalits and marginalised sections were ripped apart from all directions, wherever possible.

## 7. *Evacuation*

It was comforting to know that 86% of the terribly hit were aware of the early warning mechanisms of the government, possibly because of the earlier Yamuna flood experiences. **82%** respondents had reportedly received early warning from some officials, but nevertheless, **94%** families were shifted to safer locations by these officials only during the floods, when water level had already started rising to dangerous levels.



The respondents shared that they had managed to move to safe locations on their own, without any support from the government due to warning they received. In Shastri Park and Vijay Ghat low lying areas, **78%** and **81%**, respectively, stated that there were no rescue boats available to them. In that case they had to manage somehow on their own with their children, aged and people with disabilities. Only in Chilla Khadar, Mayur Vihar-I were maximum number of families given boat services, with which the people were able to protect their material possessions. Some respondents revealed that they were even asked to pay for securing rescue boat services. Since they did not have any money in the midst of the watery

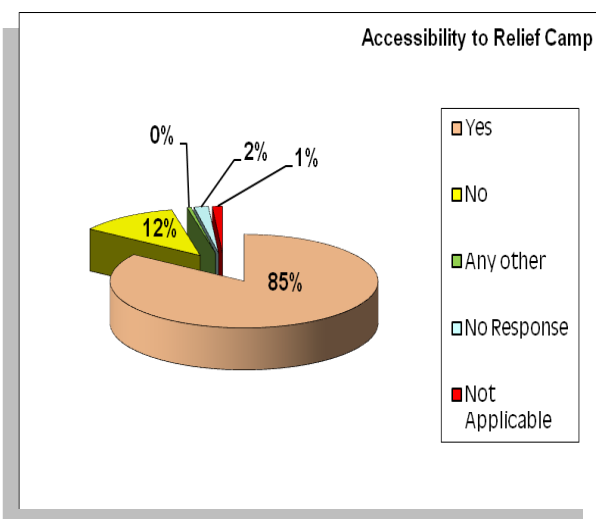
ordeal, they had to walk through the waters saving only their lives, giving up their household belongings. Had the rescue services been provided in a timely and efficient manner, it would have saved people all the damage they have underwent, for which no compensations have been announced by the Delhi government yet, nor is there any official disclosure of the estimated losses and damages to life and property, which presumably means that there has been no damage and loss assessment by the Delhi government.

It appears that the pre-flood warning mechanisms were at work, due to which people had started moving to safer points without really requiring government services in evacuation, but there were also those who could not move to safer zones in time for the rescue services went missing or were charged. Thus, here it would not be wrong to say that the authorities involved failed to live up to their statutory obligations and ruling for building confidence among the populace towards the protection of their belongings, while being away from their own houses, as in the NDMA Guidelines for the Management of Floods 2006.

## 8. *Relief services*

### a. Uneven distribution of relief material

The victims faced difficulties both on count of huge flood and unceasing downpour. While **85%** of total respondents assented on the question of accessibility to relief camps (tents), another **12%** denied accessibility to the same. The excluded families stated that the tents and food were not evenly distributed at all locations, and this left out those who were staying up on the embankment and those trapped in the interiors. The excluded sections held the Pradhans<sup>2</sup> responsible for not doing anything for them and carrying out biased distribution of supplies. The food was simply



supplied to people camped along the roadside/pavements. Those without tents huddled under the polythene sheets propped up by sticks. Those who got tents also lived in perilous conditions. The tents that were discarded by army men were distributed by the Delhi government to the victims. Each relief tent housed not less than three families at least. These tents did protect the victims from the sizzling heat of the sun, but did not much help in protecting them from the rains.

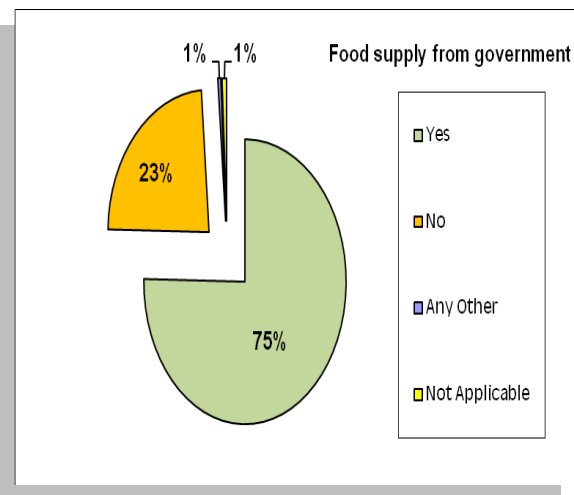
While the NDMA Guidelines on Management of Floods lay down for the formation of community level teams trained in emergency management, that would assist in planning and setting up emergency shelters, distributing relief among the affected people, identifying

<sup>2</sup> In the context of Delhi, they are nominated persons and not elected representative addressed as Pradhans

missing people, and addressing the needs of education, health care, water supply and sanitation, food etc. of the affected community, no such formation was seen; survivors were not aware of any such process that had been initiated in their localities.

One of the major worries for the victims camped on the pavement from DND flyover - Noida to Akshardham - was the pressure from the policemen to return to their dwellings or to other locations even before the waters receded. This was to clear the way demarcated as the Common Wealth Games Lanes, more so because the Games village was situated near by. Just about everything possible to decorate the city for its International guests, players and diplomats. *So what! Even houses are decked up on festivities to invite the guests, then why not the city, even if slums had to be razed to meet the beautification requirements?* Since the survivors cultivated the river bed and earned their living, they did not want to move to other locations. Even though their fields which bore their anticipated harvest till some days back were now flattened to the flooded plain, yet, the survivors preferred to stay near them. They could monitor their field from camps along the DND road, which was also somewhat cleaner in comparison to other locations. Thus the idea of relocation fell like an omen on their ears.

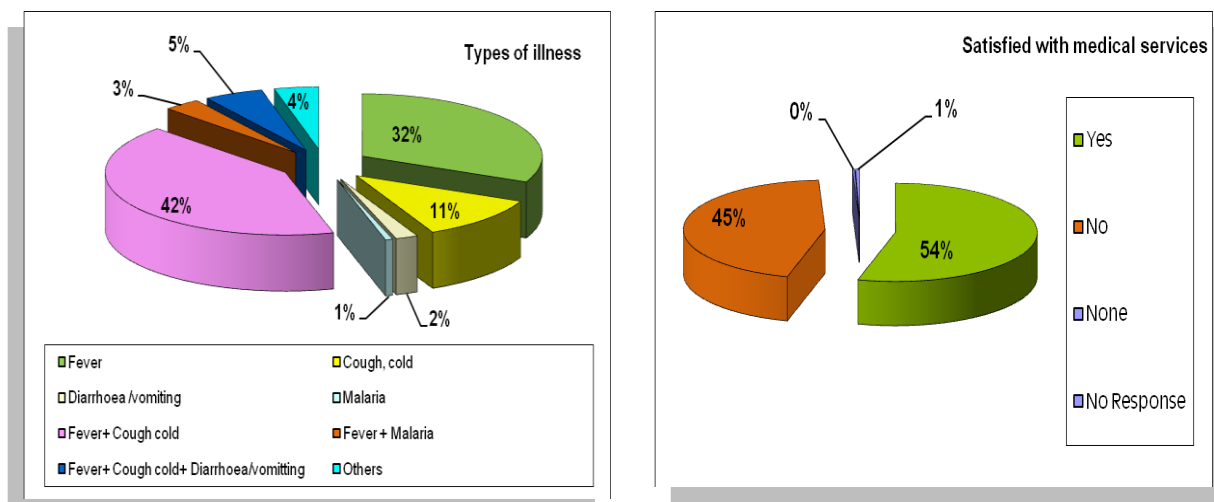
While the supply of food and water was almost regular, quantity of food was compromised, as the victims articulated their disappointment over the quality of supplies, especially food and medicines. The relief items involved two times meal, that was mostly untimely and stale reportedly (due to high temperatures), but nevertheless “regular”. The medical camps were run twice and sometimes thrice a week by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, and water tanks from Delhi Jal Board. **23%** testified non receipt of adequate and quality food supply.



The supply of water tanks was also sometimes irregular and these victims had to seek intervention of their area MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly) and at times the Station House Officer (SHO) to ensure the supplies. The whole political game seemed to be in full swing during the event of disasters, perhaps because these people do serve a vote bank for the MLAs. The respondents who were not satisfied with the relief also shared that at some occasions they have had to meet their water requirements from the flooded river, due to which many people including some children contracted illness.

Relief distribution was mainly carried out by the government, followed by congregations and some individuals. Quantity of food and shelter alone cannot suffice the humanitarian approach. The relief agencies, in this case, the Government, should ensure quality and proper distribution of the same too. One way of ensuring this is a thorough assessment of the needs of each social group and not one's own presumptions of what constitutes relief.

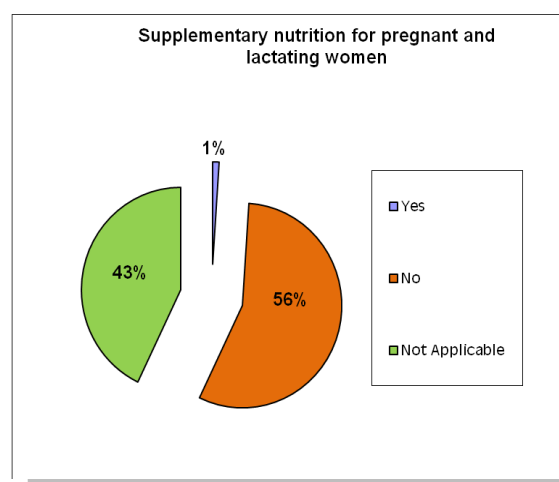
## b. Health services



In the aftermath of floods, there was a slow rise in outbreak of illness among the victims. Of the total respondents having children up to five years of age, 25% shared about the illness in their children. These infants primarily suffered with fever (32%), cough and cold (11%) and **42%** with both. These constitute **85%** of the total responses, whereas, the remaining 15% of the total suffered with other multiple illnesses. There were statements made that in the absence of water tanks on certain days, they had to drink water from the flooded river, which was cited as one possible cause of illnesses in children.

Though majority assented on the question of being satisfied with the medical services, **43%** of the respondents stated their unhappiness over the way each illness was being treated. Medical camps were run quite regularly but still the victims voiced their discontent on the manner their illnesses were being attended to without being properly diagnosed. This was precisely the time period when Delhi was grappling with many vector-borne diseases, Malaria and Dengue. Common medicines were given for all types of sicknesses to the children and adult. Some got relief from these medicines and some did not. While the victims of Chilla Khadar sheltered alongside the DND toll bridge received medical services and food even from the religious congregations, possibly because of their prominent location, in Vijay Ghat, **43%** refused access to health care facilities by any agency, including the government. Everything seemed to have been executed in a very ad hoc manner.

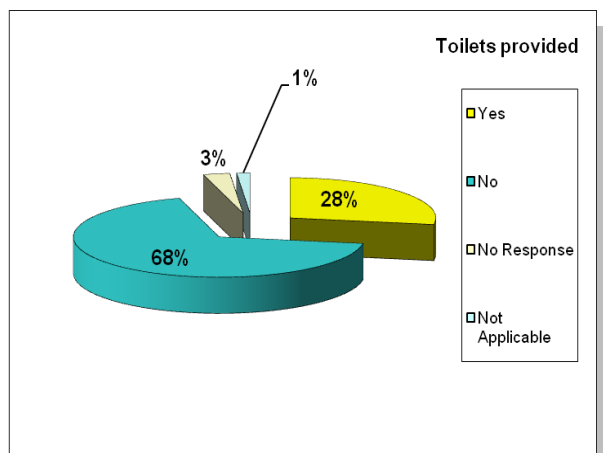
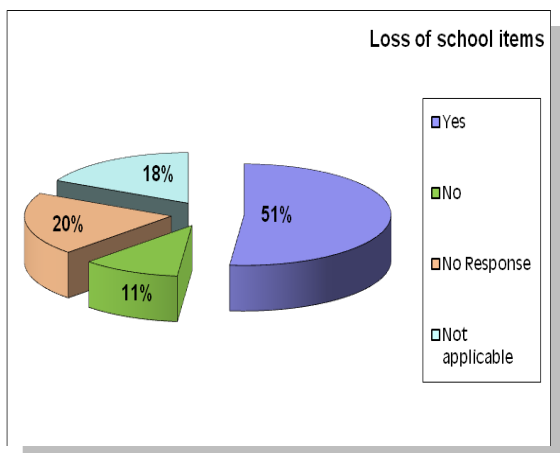
The medical camps did not have any specialised services, namely gynaecological services, labour rooms for the pregnant women, nor was any supplementary nutrition provided as under the Integrated Child Development Scheme to the pregnant and lactating mothers. Of the total



respondents, **56%** denied provision of these services. In the absence of labour room facility Champa Devi gave birth to child in most risky circumstances, amid flood and rain, helped by local women. Thus, it may be interesting and important to learn of any formal registration for supplementary nutrition program for the vulnerable and at risk people, if any, was maintained during the relief by the officials.

Also, the presence of ASHA and anganwadi worker may have been desirable and effective here, had there been any. None of the areas surveyed had their presence and this made situation all the more difficult for women and children. They could have been integrated into the health services being provided to monitor the overall health needs and situation.

### c. Inadequacies of basic amenities vis-à-vis women and children



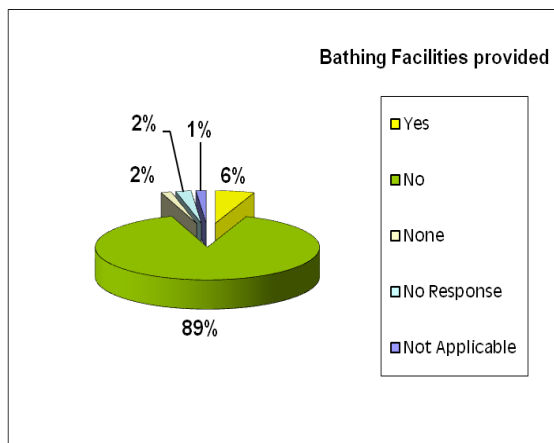
The floods caused substantial loss to school going children as well. **51%** of the total respondents reported loss of books and bags of their wards, due to which their schooling post-floods has been affected; **49%** of the children were unable to resume school after floods. Also, water logging and overflowing open pits on the road made parents to hold back their wards to avoid the risk of falling into those.

Moreover, it was appalling to learn of the difficulties these families face in endeavouring to educate their children in normal circumstances also. There is no school or even an anganwadi to introduce the new ones to the school structure. The tiny feet walk to school at a distance of 2-3 km everyday, to and fro. The children from far interiors of Vijay Ghat go to a school in Daryaganj, while those from Chilla Khadar also walk to distant school in the area. No education imparting structure exists in Shastri Park area where the flood victims live-under the Shastri Park metro depot, the stretch alongside Eastern Approach Road. The fact that small children are required to walk long distances morning and evening deters their parents from sending them to school. A keenness to educate their children was a generally observed pattern among all parents.

Women in these locations still endure absence of basic amenities, to be precise, toilets and bathing facilities, which lead to sheer disruption of their privacy. During the floods too, not all women were able to access toilets, and the bathing facilities were 'Zero', amounting to neglected hygienic conditions among the victims. On occasions, children defecated in the river. One makeshift toilet was provided to the respondents of Vijay Ghat and Chilla village

respectively. Shastri Park was devoid of even this. Those trapped in distant locations could not avail the service for they were all staying on the bund for the lack of tents. In total, **68%** respondents denied this service provision because of which women and young girls had to go to the forest areas to attend nature's call. For those who did have access to makeshift toilets abstained from its use to the extent possible for the construction workers at the locations frequented those, reportedly. Question on provision of bathing facilities met yet another big 'No' from **89%** of the respondent. Women respondents shared their greatest discomfort when they were compelled by the condition to bathe inside the tents, placing their children or a family member outside the tents to play the watch dog role.

They have no claims to privacy, health care information, knowledge about reproductive and child health, primarily because they have never been exposed to all these concepts. This could have been ensured by the presence and operation of community health workers-Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA). Women's needs weren't fulfilled during disaster as well. The very basics went missing in the relief services of the government. These facts bring notions of security under the scanner, more so in times of grave calamity. Those without tents, found it more troublesome, but they had no choice. Clothes for the infants, sanitary items for the women, and especially for adolescent girls went grossly missing from the relief kit.



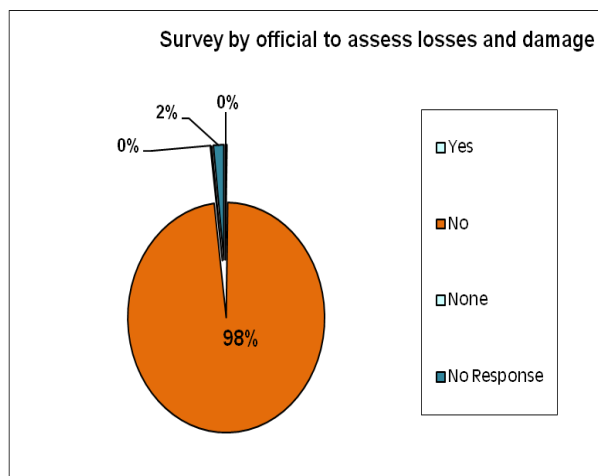
Yamuna floods also could not get them any better from the Delhi government at least during the flood phase. This speaks volumes about the insensitive attitude of the government in identifying and satisfying the basic needs of the affected population with dignity, as also upheld by the Sphere Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards. What a contrasting juxtaposition of the beauty and the beastly side of the same capital. While on the one hand all attempts were made to prevent water from inundating the Games Village, less holistic

efforts were made to provide quality emergency aid to these vulnerable sections.



## 9. *D*amage Assessment by Officials

There was just one unanimous answer to the question of assessment of their losses carried out by the officials, 'NO'. The people had a range of views to express on this. They stated that because they are poor migrants the government does not count them on their liability. Many felt it was sheer negligence and callousness on their part to not even visit them to see their present conditions, so as to out rightly avoid any dialogue on compensation. There was visible and a peculiar kind of helplessness among the survivors as they



have again engaged themselves in trying to get back to their normal lives. After having lost the crops, some have reported to have taken to petty works as cheap labour. "Ab kuch to karma hoga apne bachcho ke liye, jeene ke liye...haath pe haath dharkar toh nahi baith sakte hain naa",<sup>3</sup> said the agonised Manju Devi of Chilla village. She wished for herself and her counterparts to have gotten some work in the village itself for women like her to have earned something, since it would take time to get on with the normal agriculture work and be released of debt.

The victims expressed their restlessness and distress on sharing that they are the ones to work all day long, but now with the floods and crop loss, it is not they who would get compensated but the landlords who owe their leased land. While the landlords also sit clueless if they'll receive any compensation for the land is disputed one. The case is still going on for years between the Irrigation department of the UP government and the Delhi Development Authority. But, the marginal farmers are undoubtedly the worst hit. They have no support systems. They felt less sure of getting any compensation for the losses they have incurred, but did show hope of being compensated with the help of this survey. They have no hopes whatsoever for having the officials visit them, listen to their sufferings and enumerate their losses.

The NDMA Guidelines on Management of Flood under the Dissemination of Information section lays down provision for expediting the sharing of accurate information on the extent of the damage and other details of the response activities through electronic and print media soon after the floods. However, as discovered from the facts, this principle has just been not adhered to by the Delhi government.

<sup>3</sup> "Something has to be done now for our living, for our children...we can't just sit with one hand on another".

## 10. *R*ecommendations to the Concerned authorities

### **Short term**

1. As many anganwadis as required to cater to all children (0-6), pregnant women, lactating mothers and adolescent girls in the locality should be established immediately.
2. The victims should be compensated for their individual losses and damages, houses, crops, livestock and any means of livelihood lost, for which the administration must carry out the loss and damage assessment transparently and in consultation with the victims and community leaders;
3. Wage loss and income loss incurred by wage labourers and self-employed people during the floods should be estimated and the people compensated accordingly.
4. Those who have lost their ration cards, and to those whom ration supplies have been stopped from the time floods occurred should be resumed; issued new ration cards;
5. Those who have lost their ration cards, BPL cards and other such certificates to be re-issued the documents;
6. The homeless victims (of Shastri Park) to be provided housing facility with clearly laid down amenities and means for survival school and anganwadi in the vicinity of the locality to which they may be sent(non-negotiable);
7. Women to be connected with some means of livelihood
8. Regular health services, ASHA workers to be designated in the localities
9. The farmers of Vijay Ghat and Mayur Vihar who have been cultivating the Yamuna land for years, leased out to them by the Delhi Peasants Co-Operative Multipurpose Society Ltd, of which they are members, to be compensated immediately for the crops and investments they have lost; the labourers (share croppers) who have been working on their fields also should be proportionately compensated.

### **Long term**

1. Recognize and enumerate the large number of Dalits and other marginalized communities who live along the Yamuna with a view to developing a master-plan for their in-situ rehabilitation. This has to be without endangering their current livelihoods and security, with due consideration being given to Disaster Risk Reduction and reflected in a Disaster Management Plan for the entire settlement in these areas.
2. The legal tenure of all the families inhabiting the banks of Yamuna should be settled and the government should put an end to any further demolitions and evictions that

make these excluded and discriminated communities more vulnerable and impoverished.

3. Create an easily retrievable and annually updated database of the families thus enumerated giving all the details of the identity / entitlement documents in their possession so that in the event of the loss of these documents they could be replaced without delay.
4. The Delhi government to chart out plans for securing the victims against such losses of flooding in future, by laying down measures for insuring their crops, livestock and other assets (if any).
5. Designated Flood Shelters that the people can use in the event of floods
6. Designing housing / residential settlements keeping recurrent floods in view
7. Representatives (youth) of the communities to be included /trained in rescue and relief task forces

## 11. *Conclusion*

The rescue and relief phase has now ended and rehabilitation is still an untouched subject. The report unearths facts of unsubstantial and shoddy relief to the victims and ones again exposes the vulnerability and sad fate of Dalits and marginalised groups, who by 'default' end up being victims of any disaster, manmade or natural. But if one gets into the root causes for their victimisation and vulnerability, poor socio-economic, locational factors will invariably surface. Had there been a scientific planning and enumeration of the number of people living in these locations, considerable damage to the victims could have been avoided. Moreover, this pre-disaster planning could have taken care of a systematic and even relief provision.

It is going to take time for these agricultural labourers, the tillers of the Yamuna river bed to regain normalcy, after a substantial loss of the season's crops. The vulnerabilities of these victims living in this flood prone location should have been kept in mind and some appropriate rehabilitation planned to have saved the damage incurred by these poor families, depending primarily on agriculture for survival. There has been a sheer violation of human rights in carrying out relief activities by the government. The little that was given could have been given with due respect and dignity, without compromising on basic essentials, but the overall findings have just vocalised the pathos behind the rosy projection of the 'unforgettable' CWG. While in some areas the victims received something, in other, they were completely bereft of anything. Although yet to be vetted by the union government, crucial aspects of the draft guidelines of the NDMA on Health, Food and Sanitation have gone ignored. This unequal distribution led to antagonism among those who received something and those who couldn't, owing to their place of settlement, the bunds, at the time of flood.

## **Draft NDMA guidelines on Food, Health, Hygiene & Sanitation and Water**

One common thread that runs across all guidelines is 'Participation of Communities', which stresses on the participation of disaster-affected people in decision-making, and implementation, to ensure equitable and effective programmes, reinforcing people's sense of dignity. It goes a step forward to say that special effort should be made to ensure the participation of women and other vulnerable groups within the assistance programme.

### **NDMA guidelines on Minimum Standards of Relief for Food**

*Section 3.2.3* The vulnerable groups like pregnant women, lactating mothers, children, old age people, differently able people, PLHIV/Aids, excluded and marginalised groups shall be identified in the camps shall be provided with additional supplementary food to meet their special requirements.

*Section 3.2.12* also lays down the norm of encouraging some alternative livelihoods and income generation activities in the aftermath of disasters, acknowledging the difficulties and vulnerabilities of different groups of people in reinstating normalcy to their shattered lives. The draft guidelines also state that this may be done by organising women and community self help groups.

*Section 4.2.7* provide for additional nutrient and support should be provided for pregnant and breast feeding women. The risks associated with inadequate nutrient intakes for pregnant and breastfeeding women include pregnancy complications, maternal mortality, low birth weight and impaired breast feeding performance. Pregnant and breast feeding women should receive daily supplements of iron and folic acid. Post partum women should also receive vitamin A within six weeks of delivery.

*Section 4.4.2* provides for formal registration of all households that receive food aid, and identification of vulnerable groups and at risk groups for registration for supplementary feeding program if any.

### **NDMA draft guidelines on Minimum standards for Medical Relief**

*Section 4.2.1*, provides for supporting the existing local health workers (Asha, Anganwadi workers and other programs) in the community and integrated into health services, taking account of gender and ethnic balance.

### **The NDMA draft guidelines on Minimum Standards for Sanitation & Hygiene Promotion**

*Section 2* specifies the importance of having provision of appropriate facilities for defecation as a response essential for ensuring people's dignity, safety, health and well-being.

*Sections 2.2 (8) and 3 (3.1.3)* emphasise on planning and provision of facilities for women's sanitary disposal or providing them with the necessary privacy for washing and drying sanitary protection clothes.

## Annexure 2

### Case Studies

#### Case 1

#### **Vijay Ghat**

*“I could not procure a tent for my family in floods while it rained heavily then, whereas some families possessed extra numbers. Nor could we get food... because we are Muslims”.*

Md. Salim Khan left his hometown Guwahati, Assam, with his wife Shamina and their eldest child for Delhi in search of better prospects about a decade ago. All these years they have been settled at Vijay Ghat, and live a precarious and solitary life just because they are Muslims. Salim works as a daily wage earner and now has four young children and his home maker depending on him with a measly pittance of Rs. 100 and even less per day.

They have lost every asset in the Yamuna floods. They could not acquire boats to move to safer locations with their belongings. When Salim tried to seek assistance from the boats deployed in the area, he was charged Rs. 200 for it. He did not have a penny then and had no option but to let off his household items in the flood waters. At that time he could just think of his family. Both Salim and Shamina somehow managed to move to the upper area with four small children and settled at the nearby bund for a month with other families.

While some families had extra tents lying with them, he could not secure even one for his family, alleged Salim. They had to bear with the situation and manage with the resources available at that point in time. Shamina wept as she stated that they did not even receive any food items that were being distributed by the officials, and were mistreated by other flood victims for being Muslims. Not to end here, they had to move back to their dwellings where only the debris of their thatched houses was left. The police officials pressurised them to leave the bund to make them invisible to the guests of the Commonwealth Games that would pass through the area. Thus, they had to return even before the water had receded.

Now, they have built back their jhuggis again with a loaned sum of Rs. 10,000. They live in the most unhygienic conditions, and there is no agency (anganwadi) to take their children to school and teach them a healthy way of life. Floods have just compounded their miseries by pushing them into indebtedness. Salim has not been able to resume work after floods on account of poor health; symptoms he shared were consistent with that of dengue. Given the paltry earnings and the long medical history of Salim's ill-health, it is perhaps even difficult to speculate on how this family will get back to the normal track without any systemic support and proper rehabilitation package.

## Case 2

### **Shastri Park**

*“I delivered amid flood and rain under the open sky...”*

Champa Devi, w/o Bharat Kumar, living in Shastri Park delivered amid floods and incessant rains. The delivery was attended to by some local women under the gazing sky, in most risky circumstances. There was no provision of a labour room nor was any supplementary nutrition provided as part of relief package by the government. It would perhaps be obscenely out of place to expect the government to dispense baby stuff (feeder bottles, clothes, napkins etc) when basics for pregnant women went inhumanly missing in the entire relief distribution. There was no medical assistance at hand. Now, Champa's new born is a month old and has survived the hardships and hostile conditions posed by floods.

They are natives of Ghazipur, UP and had come to Delhi in hope regular livelihood opportunities. They hail from the Mallah caste of the Scheduled caste community, and to eke out a living, they do leased farming. They could not access temporary shelters for the distance between them and the shelter was quite much. They were incapable of seeking boat services for they were charged. They lost their utensils; winter clothing and all other possible household item they could posses. It was highly discomfoting to see the present conditions of this family after floods, with not even adequate clothing for their two infants to protect them from the chill of already approaching winters.

## Case 3

### **Chilla village, Mayur Vihar Phase I**

*“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 this year their fields were levelled by the Yamuna floods. They don't know what to do now. They had borrowed huge sum for paying off the landlord here. They paid Rs. 4000/- per bigha. This year they had borrowed money on interest from the vegetable whole sale vendor at Ghazipur sabzi mandi (whole sale market).

Sitting under the shade of a huge banyan tree Manju Devi sighed looking at her devastated fields now and her four daughters' future. She had been long cherishing a dream to educate her daughters so that they did not have to undergo the uncertainties of a living as they did. Her family subsisted on a dignified income with all that they cultivated and sold. Now, she is torn with the thoughts of having lost everything, the crops, the house and having drenched in debt neck deep. She doesn't know how to support her daughters' education, nor does she know how the loan will be repayed with Rs. 120/- as the pittance for her husband's daily labour. The loan they'd taken was lent to them on the condition of supplying their produce to that particular vegetable dealer besides paying interest on principal amount.

She simply wishes how better it would have been if her daughters could have been enrolled in Delhi government's Ladli scheme, but she is not aware of the important questions of WHOM, WHEN, HOW to approach. Also, she felt that having some opportunity for livelihood through self help groups could have helped several women in like her in the village. She has urged her husband, Gauri Shankar, to take to daily wage work so that they could get something to live on.

The floods have only compounded their daily life struggles and drudgery for making both ends meet. Women like Manju Devi, who are somewhat literate and breeding dreams in their heart and eyes for a decent future of her daughters, who are willing to work to supplement family income, often meet a dead end given the social and geographical settings they come to occupy. Perhaps women like her are those who need psycho-social support from the government and some sort of assurance for a suitable rehabilitation to get on to the normal way of life. In the current phase where no loss and damage assessment has been done so far, she is less hopeful of any easy going for months to come.

#### **Case 4**

##### **Vijay Ghat**

*Pyarelal, son-in-law of Dev Prakash, is living in Vijay Ghat for years now with his wife at his in-laws' house. He was agitated when the surveyors approached his family for interview, but later cooperated and sat down to share his grievances and reasons for this suppressed anger, fuelled by floods.*

We had sown vegetables on this very land where today we are deprived of everything. The unprecedented floods have swept away everything. Our shacks were washed away too. We were so badly hit by the floods that we had to move up to the bund to protect ourselves from drowning. We stayed there only...on the bund. We did not get tents, not did we get food items, because we were trapped on the bunds and could not access the tents that lay on the roadside. The tents came to us only after I called up some media channel informing them of it. The pradhan did not allow relief material to reach us. The police did not bother either. When I raised voice against the uneven distribution of relief, the police shouted back at me saying that I was being loud with my demands.

We make a living out of farming, by selling off the produce in vegetable markets. The vegetables we had sown, including onion, tomato, garlic etc. are so unbearably expensive in the market now. We can't buy these items. We are having to compromise on our children's petty demands due to high inflation in the market. We have suffered huge loss.

This land on which we farmed is the government land. Before the year 2003, many families lived here and this village used to bustle with people. After their relocation to Bawana, and other places, only these many families are left and life is painful, uncertain and insecure. We can't buy any asset; actually forget that, we find it difficult to acquire a sim connection also, for we don't have any proper address, only the village name and constituency on our voter identity cards. No enquiry comes to our village. There is no school nearby, no anganwadi. Children of the village have to walk to Daryaganj to make it to some school. For the first time the census survey was carried out in our village for 2010, as far as I can remember. The

police come only when a new jhuggi is assembled, to extract whatever minimum, and for the poor families, 'maximum' can be pulled out as bribe. Floods have aggravated our miseries, making even bare survival challenging for us in the face of all these bitter and agonising facts.

**National Dalit Watch**

National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights  
8/1, 2nd Floor, South Patel Nagar, New Delhi 110008

Tel.: 011 45668341, 45037897

Website- [www.ncdhr.org.in](http://www.ncdhr.org.in)

Blog- [www.nationaldalitwatch-ncdhr.com](http://www.nationaldalitwatch-ncdhr.com)