

7. *Planning ahead... by the people, for the people*



Gopal Hazong aged 57 years having a family of 5 members lived in Nalbari village of Assam. Every year the tyrant Brahmaputra River washed his house away. Apart from his house the whole village was being affected and ninety percent of the houses washed off. One day a trained volunteer approached him and said that they could reduce the loss that they have been facing since years. They first decided to prepare a Community Plan to combat floods. They involved all the villagers and prepared a village map. The map became a key reference point and this exercise was carried out for three days.

More details were added day by day, until every household detail was added in the map. This mapping exercise gave the villagers a chance to identify the most vulnerable and it led to discussions that described how the situations could change. It was decided by the villagers that henceforth all the houses would be built on raised platforms and to combat the problem of drinking water, all the tube wells would be raised. All the villagers then decided to contribute their best of efforts in this gigantic task and formed Village Disaster Management Teams.



In Standard IX Chapter 6, we discussed about the process of community planning for disasters. In continuation to the earlier chapter this chapter outlines the practical steps of community level disaster preparedness. It covers important steps such as awareness building in the neighborhood or community, analyzing the situation, formation of task force and drawing emergency response plans for taking long-term measures to reduce risk.

Community Planning

Community planning is a forward planning process, which identifies human and material resources and puts in place potential response system. It involves active participation from the people residing in that locality in making decision about the implementation of processes, programmes and projects, which affect them.

In other words, a community plan is a list of activities a neighborhood, community or a group of people agree to follow to prevent loss of life, livelihoods and property in case of warning or a disaster. The Plan identifies in advance action to be taken by individuals, in the community so that each one knows what to do when a warning is received or when a disaster strikes. The major thrust is to address possible scenario of an event and focus on the impact the humanitarian operations.

For what do we need to plan?

We can plan for any possible critical event. It can vary upon the scale of operations or processes involved as well as the population that could possibly be affected in case of an untoward event. The most common could be natural disasters affecting human operations or industrial disaster. The primary goal of Community Planning for disasters is to reduce the vulnerability of the concerned community and strengthen its existing capacity to cope up with disasters. The approach of preparing a Community Based Disaster Management Plan considers people's participation a necessary pre-requisite for disaster management. By involving the community in the preparedness phase, it increases the likelihood of coordinated action by the communities during emergencies.

Importance of Peoples' Contingency Plan

A contingency plan need not be sophisticated, very scientific, or computer generated model. It need not have a series of flow diagrams showing the process of planning. Use of technology or sophisticated analysis is only useful when it is combined with the people's participation. Basic information, risk assessment and intelligence analysis is normally adequate to have a functional people contingency plan for various hazards. The task cannot be of a single person in the preparation of a working plan, since accuracy is considerably enhanced through the assimilation of experience, information and skills of widest possible range of sources.

Contingency plans are prepared at different levels such as Neighborhood, Village, Block, District, State and National Levels. It has to be made very specific by involving both government and non-government organizations. The plan should be ideally people-centric and hence the term peoples' contingency plans.

Contingency Plan can be :

- Natural disaster affecting humanitarian operations and needs.
- Outbreak of an epidemic or serious health problem
- Industrial accidents (Onsite/Offsite Plans)
- Threat to staff, staff evacuation, attack on premises etc.
- Outbreak of civil conflict affecting civilian population
- Sudden shortage of food or other commodities.

Why peoples' Contingency plan?

- They know better about the risk, their vulnerabilities and the capacities.
- They have the best idea of the place where they stay and also the strengths and weaknesses of the community to cope with an eventuality.
- They are the First Responders.
- They are also the ultimate sufferers. Their plans will be more effective to respond to any situation if confronted.

An effective contingency plan is prepared involving people from all areas and different categories using participatory process. The active community members take a lead in facilitating and developing the plan. It is also important that the plan prepared at the lowest level should be in lines to the plans prepared at the higher levels for effective coordination during a disaster.

What should a Community Contingency Plan answer?

A typical contingency plan should answer the **WHO, WHERE, WHEN, WHAT** and **WHY** with regard to Disaster Preparedness. The Plan should answer the following:

Who/Whom	Who is assigned what? Who is living where? Whom to give priority? Who will listen to messages? Who will mobilize what?
Where/Where to	Where to inform? Where does each family live? Where do they go? Where do they work? Where are the safe places for shelter?
When	If it is an event with early warning: (Well before the event or on raise of early warning/Just before the event or a season/During different stages of the event/ After the event) If it is a sudden event: (Before the event - preparedness measures/ During the event/After the event)
What	What arrangements are there at the community level? What are the available resources? What material needs to be stocked to meet the emergency? What equipments are available? What is the condition of safe shelters and the equipments? What is to be done at different time intervals?
How	How to reach a place? How to get the message? How to disseminate the message in case of early warning? How to plan movement of people to safe places? How to ensure security? How to ensure stock in supply of essential food/water? How to take care of emerging rescue/medical attention? How to keep in touch and seek outside help?
Why?	Why each of the above?

Note: This is not to be treated as a complete list. It is just an example.

The contingency plan is followed by a set of operational plans by various individuals, teams and agencies. Further improvement of the plan should be carried out based on the lessons learnt during practice.

How to prepare a plan and what should a contingency plan consist of?

The Contingency Planning Exercise is a forum and opportunity for all sections of the society to participate. Each has something useful to contribute to the planning. The views of one may differ from others, but this will often be to the advantage of the planning process since it provides a useful forum for all assumptions to be questioned and refined. The end product is thus more realistic. To start with the plan one individual or a group of people may facilitate the Contingency Planning Exercise. Due importance is given to each individual in the development of the Plan.

In this part we will look into some detail on the preparation of the Contingency Planning process. There is no clear demarcation of an exact procedure as situation may vary in terms of geographical spread, the hazard, the location from the hazard, the exposure, vulnerability aspects and processes involved. A typical Community Contingency Plan will involve following basic steps:

- Initial awareness and rapport building
- Outlining the profile of the community
- Analyzing the situation on a participatory basis
- Selection of Task Forces, Indicative Responsibilities and Capacity Building of Task Forces
- Rehearsals/ Mock Drills.

1. Rapport Building and Initial Awareness

Rapport building with the senior citizens, Village Self Help Groups, youth clubs, elected representatives etc .is the first step in preparation of the Community Contingency Plan. The main objective is to motivate them and get them involved in the planning process. Usually Government functionaries working at the village level, elected representatives and voluntary organizations help in the preparation of plans at the community level.

Discussing the recent disaster incident and the losses and risks that were involved could generate initial interest. The discussion has to be done through a participatory process. If the community does not have a recent experience to recollect, but still is a potentially vulnerable area the incidences of nearby areas should be discussed.

Local knowledge to cope up with the disaster should not be overlooked during these discussions. It is essential to tap information and take it forward towards a meaningful process during the next step of analyzing situations.

The important task here is to mobilize community participation through awareness generation techniques by various options such as:

- Mass meetings
- Cultural activities
- Street plays
- Audio/visual aids



People in group discussion



Street play in an urban area to sensitize the community

- Displaying of posters

This awareness campaign will help the people to understand the need for planning.

2. Formation of a village disaster management committee (VDMC)

Village Disaster management Committee (VDMC) is formed in each of the village and it is responsible for initiating disaster preparedness activities. It consists of local elected representatives, grass root level government functionaries, NGOs, CBOs, youth clubs and members from the Mahila samities. Senior citizens too are a part of the committee. The head of the VDMC takes a lead in mobilizing the community for the preparation of the Disaster Management Plan.

3. Outlining the profile of the community

It involves outlining data pertaining to the following namely:

- Population
- Local resources (both human like skilled manpower - health practitioners, Ex- servicemen etc and material like boats, generators etc).
- Housing pattern in that locality (RCC, tiled etc).
- Cropping and Occupational pattern

4. Review and Analysis of Past Disasters

It refers to prioritizing disasters based on its frequency and analysis of the estimated losses. This can be carried out by taking the help of elderly people of the village. The villagers analyze the losses that they had incurred during various disasters and learn the best practices carried out. Based on the assessment of the situation actions need to be assigned to the community members.

A village disaster management committee save dozens lives.....

Villagers of a sea coast village in Cuddalore district in Tamil Nadu were taking lessons on Disaster management when they were caught by killer tsunami waves. The lesson learnt came handy to them in saving many lives. The death toll restricted to 22 -21 in this village of around 2000 population. Villagers were asked to make use of local resources such as dry tree stem or empty drums when drowning in sea. The Village had of the VDMC set up in October last year. Women in team were engaged in giving first aid to the victims.

Source: Dainik jagaran

5. Seasonality Calendar for Disasters

While analyzing the past experiences pertaining to various natural hazards, communities develop the seasonality calendar based on the occurrence of the disaster.

Seasonality Disaster Calendar													
	Hazards	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct	Nov	Dec
1	Flood							√	√	√			
2	Cyclone				√	√					√	√	
3	Drought								√	√			
4	Forest fire				√	√							
	√	Month of Occurrence											

4. Mapping Exercise

One of the most important activities of preparing the Disaster management plan at the village level is the mapping of risk, vulnerabilities and capacities of the village by the community itself as it is a simple and cost effective tool for collecting ground level data. This is done through Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) exercise. This mapping exercise aims to provide a pictorial base to the planning process especially to the semi-literate populace and ensures maximum community involvement across gender, caste and other divides. The villagers/community members are encouraged to draw the maps on the ground using locally available resources such as stones, colour powders etc. for different items and indicators. The types of maps are as follows:



Mapping exercise of a village in progress

ACTIVITY

Form a group of 10 students and draw a **social map** of your locality showing the households, community places, roads etc. give symbols to each item demarcated in the map as shown in the map on your right.

(a) Social Mapping

The villagers/community need to pictorially show the overall layout of the locality. The map shows

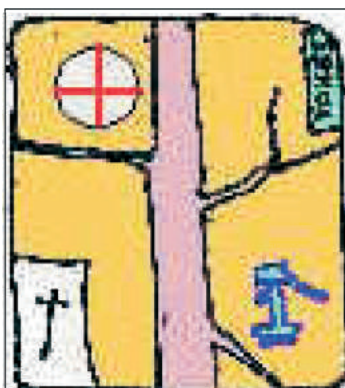
- ◆ Location of the habitat with respect to natural topography
- ◆ Number of pucca houses and kuchha houses
- ◆ Other common infrastructure (eg. Safe shelter, temple, mosque, church, drinking water facilities, school, health centre, hospital, telephone, public addressal system, road, electricity etc).



Social map of Pathapeta village

(b) Resource Mapping

It focuses on the locally available resources and assets that can be utilized for building the capacities of the community during and after disasters. Individual skills too can be identified in the map. The resource map is therefore not limited to a map depicting the available resources but also plotting the distribution, access and its use.



Mapping of the natural resources in the area includes:

- ◆ Individual skills (community leaders/doctors/drivers, swimmers etc)
- ◆ Resources around the area (boats, food stock etc)
- ◆ Important locations such as open land/low lying and elevated areas
- ◆ Protection bunds
- ◆ Drainage facilities
- ◆ Agriculture area, Forest area, mangrove plantations, shelterbelts etc.



The picture is a Resource map prepared by the community under the Village Plan of Assam. Map shows the location of human resources, equipments to be used during emergency, open spaces etc.

(c) Vulnerability Mapping

In this mapping exercise the members of the community are expected to know the hazards that the village is prone to and the possible areas that are likely to get affected like:

- ◆ Household wise vulnerable groups
- ◆ Vulnerable houses and defunct infrastructure
- ◆ Low lying areas prone to floods
- ◆ Landslide prone areas
- ◆ Location of hazardous industries/ electrical installations/ tall weak structures - buildings, etc.
- ◆ Narrow roads.



Vulnerability Map of Barahipur Village

(d) Safe and Alternate route mapping

In this exercise the members of the community are expected to know the places that are safe. For example in areas that are frequently affected by floods we need to know the houses that are located on raised platforms, multi-storied buildings, mounds etc.

This map should also show the alternate safest approach route to the area. It could be either roadway or waterways.

5. Selection of Disaster Management Teams (DMTs)

After analyzing the situation and mapping out the resources the next step is to form Disaster management teams/ task forces from the village/ward/city so as to carry out response activity for facing any crisis situation.

Selection of Disaster management teams

Willing and active men and women folk from the community can be members of the Disaster management teams. The DMTs/task force should also involve experienced and skilled people such as doctors, nurses, fire fighting personnel, Ex-service men, police personnel, swimmers, youth with Scout/NCC/NSS background, Civil Defence personnel's, mahila samiti members and others. It is ideal to have a team of 25 members per task force for a unit of 400-500 households. If the area/community is large, it is advised to increase the number of teams accordingly.

It is necessary to allot and specify the responsibilities to the selected task forces in pre/during and post disaster operations. The different task forces are as follows:

Early Warning Team, First Aid Team, Rescue and Evacuation Team, Shelter Management, Relief Team, Water and Sanitation, Carcass Disposal Team, Trauma Counseling, Damage Assessment

ACTIVITY

Select any one of the teams and indicate the role and responsibilities of the team members in pre, during and post disaster

6. Training of Disaster Management Teams (DMTs)



Village Volunteer being trained in Search and Rescue

The selected team members need to be well trained in specific skills so as to carry out their specific tasks efficiently during a given situation of a disaster. The DMTs, which need to be well trained, are:

1. First Aid Group
2. Rescue and Evacuation Group
3. Water and Sanitation
4. Trauma Counseling

To train the DMTs/task force members one take the help of the Fire Services, Local health Centre, Red Cross, St. John's Ambulance etc.)

7. Rehearsals/Mock Drills and Plan Updating



Village DM Team Carrying out Mock Drill



Village Task force members doing Mock Drill on measures to be taken during fire incident

It is important to conduct live disaster situation drills/rehearsals. Mock drill is an integrated part of the disaster preparedness plan, as it is a preparedness drill to keep the community alert.

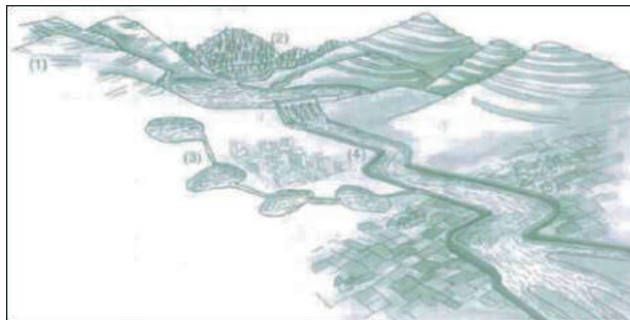
The drills are basically a series of actions according to the plan and are usually tried out as a dummy exercise by keeping the people informed of the exercises. If practiced several times the community would be well prepared to respond to the situation. This is usually done keeping in mind the real time situation. In case of areas prone to cyclone or flood the drills shall be conducted twice a year, one immediately before the cyclone/flood season and other after 6 months time.

The plans should not just remain on paper rather it should be dynamic and working. The plan should ensure that it addresses the responsibilities of the task force members as well as the families/ individuals living in that area. Over a period of time there could be many changes/developments in an area for which the contingency plan has been prepared. Hence it is very important that the plan is revised every six months or at least once in a year with updated information. The working plan prepared by the community should be aimed towards the development in the region. It is also important to note that there should be an effective convergence of the plan prepared by the community with the larger programmes/development plans of the region.

Suggested activities for students:

Choose any one natural disaster occurred in the country -

- Identify what it was, where and when it occurred.
- What effects did this disaster have on the local community, various lifelines and essential services?
- Were the local people prepared and did they have any contingency plan?
- What sort of problems did the effected population went through and how did they cope with during and after the disaster?
- What steps do you think should have been taken by the community and the administration to prevent the losses?
- In a few points describe suitable mitigation and preparedness measures that the community should take in advance to guard this kind of disaster occurring again.



1. Define Community Contingency Plan and give two reasons for the need of a Plan?
2. Name four elements of Community Contingency Plans or what should the Community Contingency Plan consist of?
3. Identify the components to be present in a Resource map?
4. Identify four different task forces and list out two responsibilities of each of the task forces?



References for further reading:

www.ndmindia.nic.in

www.osdma.org

www.gsdma.org

http://www.undmtp.org/modules_e.htm (A book on Introduction to Natural Hazards, 3rd edition Disaster Management Training Programme, UNDP DHA 1997),

http://planningcommission.nic.in/plans/planrel/fiveyr/10th/volume1/v1_ch7.pdf (Chapter 7- Disaster Management: The Development Perspective)





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