UNIT 6  COMMUNITY- BASED DISASTER PREPAREDNESS PLAN

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6.0 LEARNING OUTCOME
After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- Highlight the need and significance of community-based disaster preparedness
- Explain the concept of community-based disaster preparedness plan; and
- Discuss the key strategies of operationalising the community-based disaster preparedness plan.

6.1 INTRODUCTION
The first important step towards ensuring future safety as far as possible, from disasters of any kind is to prepare an advance plan so that there is systematic, easy and comprehensive action. Planning substitutes order for chaos and introduces rationality into decision-making process. It reduces random and haphazard activity. Disaster Preparedness Plans facilitate the handling of crisis especially in unforeseen circumstances. A preparedness plan made at the community level is a comprehensive document which indicates measures to be taken up by the community before, during and after disasters. It also needs to incorporate capacity building measures for the community, development requirements of the area, etc. A plan prepared at the grass roots level, with community’s involvement ensures compliance by all concerned stakeholders. In this Unit, we shall highlight the need and significance of disaster preparedness and bring out the components of community-based disaster preparedness plan. An attempt is made to identify the key strategies of operationalising community-based disaster preparedness plan.

6.2 COMMUNITY- BASED DISASTER PREPAREDNESS: NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE
The concept of disaster management is presently undergoing a change as the emphasis is on making it more community-based. The top-down approach, it is feared, might not
mobilisation of capabilities and capacities of local population. It is also known that the local communities have an active part to play before and after disasters because:

- A good state of preparedness before a disaster strikes may reduce its impact.
- More number of lives can be saved during the first few hours after a disaster has occurred, before help arrives from elsewhere.
- The numerous problems of survival and health resulting from a disaster are dealt with more efficiently, if the community is active and well-organised (WHO, 1989).

In the face of devastating impact of disasters, the task of supporting the resilience of Indian communities has never been more urgent. Resilience is taken to mean the capacity to mitigate, prepare for, respond to and recover from the impact of disaster in a way which leaves communities less at risk than before. The three Case Studies which we shall be discussing, illustrate ways of enhancing resilience, before, during and after disaster. The first study focuses on the village of Samiapalli in the highly disaster-prone state of Orissa, which reveals how prioritising risk deduction before disaster strikes pays dividends in the future. During the 1990s, the people of Samiapalli, with the help of a local non-governmental organisation embarked on a long process of development, one element of which was to construct disaster-proof homes.

When the ‘super cyclone’ of October 1999 struck the villages, these houses saved both lives and livelihoods, while tens of thousands of people in weaker homes perished around them. Zaheerabad region of Andhra Pradesh, since mid-1990s, has been suffering an ongoing disaster of chronic food insecurity, driven by drought and the failure of pest-prone cash crops such as wheat, rice and cotton. However, inspired by a local development agency, some of the state’s poorest and most marginalised communities have rediscovered traditional, drought-proofing seeds and farming techniques in a bid for self-sufficiency. This initiative has spread to 65 villages. Similarly villages from Patanika in the state of Gujarat rebuilt their homes stronger than before, with the help of a partnership of local and international aid organisations. Farmers, left unemployed by three years of intense drought, were retrained as masons and helped build earthquake-resistant houses for every family in the village. Building on the success of this initiative, villagers were able to access government funds to create a new rainwater harvesting system to improve both their health and crop yields (World Disasters Report, 2004).

Though the community has an important role, their coping mechanisms are undervalued. But as observed in case of any disaster, the responsibility of the community and local government is much more in setting goals, devising rehabilitation programmes, managing recovery, and developing priorities. The role of central and state governments is mostly confined to rendering advice, providing funds towards relief and other resources. Hence, we need to recognise the community as a key resource in disaster management. Communities and victims are a resource because:

- They are knowledgeable about disasters happening in their own environment and are sometimes able to forecast them.
- They are rich in experience of coping, both in preparedness and in emergencies. Their coping methods practised over time and derived from their own experience suit the local environment best. The richness and diversity of ordinary people’s coping strategies is certainly a resource to be recognised (Ariyabandu, 1999).

There is a clear shift from superimposed efforts to attain development or tackle any crisis that is directed towards the people at risk. Now the capacities, methods and ways
through which people at risk manage and respond, and find alternatives to crisis and stress, are becoming important. There is a realisation gaining momentum that the global capacity to prepare for and respond to disaster needs to be strengthened. The development of improved capacity arises from the need to instil the principles of self-reliance and self-help into the vulnerable communities. The communities in many countries are playing a key role in preparedness activities.

In India, in the Saurashtra District of Gujarat, around 10,000 check dams have been built responding to the Sate Government's "Build Your Own Dam" (BYOD) scheme. Under the project, the government bears 60 per cent of the total cost of the dam while the villagers shoulder the remaining costs through voluntary labour. Similarly in village Rampur in Okhaldhunga District, Nepal, monsoon rains while contributing to agricultural productivity the main livelihood, also bring the threat of soil erosion, landslides and flooding. Villagers have worked out techniques to 'manage' monsoons, to trap adequate quantities of monsoon rains for agricultural purposes and to let the excess out. Stone walls are used to stabilise slopes and to make diversions to check gully erosion. Grass and tree planting are done to reduce soil erosion during the monsoon. All construction and resource management work in the village is done to let the flood out without much damage (Dahal, 1998).

Community efforts still are being underutilised due to lack of resources, access to information, technology, awareness etc. This calls for strengthening their capacities in the following areas:

- Assessment
- Monitoring
- Early warning and preparedness systems
- Identifying and working with those who need the assistance
- Accurate and effective communications strategies
- Developing systems for cooperation and collaboration among response groups in the recovery process; and
- Effective leadership in the implementation of preparedness and response programmes.

A community-based approach is necessary not only responding to disaster situations but also in bringing about adequate preparedness with provision of human, material and financial resources. Any disaster preparedness planning needs to give importance to local participation at various levels and ways that would bring desired results to people at grass roots level.

Community-based Disaster Preparedness (CRDP) has to incorporate certain important components. These include:

- Hazard Mapping and Zoning
- Involving Panchayati Raj Institutions
- Formulating Community Preparedness and Contingency Plans
- Forming Disaster Task Forces at the village and block levels
• Capacity building of the members of task force
• Arranging mock drills at the village and block levels
• Networking with NGOs and CBOs.

The core attribute of a community-based approach to disaster mitigation and preparedness is that the principal authority over the programme must rest with the community. This control should be exercised at all key moments of a disaster mitigation and preparedness programme. Local knowledge and wisdom can best identify the needs of a community and the causes of their vulnerability. Naturally, vulnerable people themselves, rather than the bureaucrat or the outside expert, are best placed to evaluate the situation and prioritise their needs. A community's knowledge of the lives and livelihoods of its members is often the most comprehensive accurate information available. The most effective disaster mitigation strategies will be those that build on community knowledge (Palakudiyil and Todd, 2003).

There are three key elements in promoting community-based disaster management. These are:

1) Help communities work alongside local government
2) Introduce methods of communication; and
3) Create structures for coordination. (http://www.odihpn.org/report)

The Government of India UNDP Disaster Risk Management Programme (DRM) aims to build capacities at all levels to institutionalise the DRM system in India. Under this, community-based disaster preparedness is being popularised. Preparation of CBDP plans are being promoted in 169 districts in 17 states. The components of CBDP include:

• Formation of village Disaster Management Committee
• Review and analysis of past disasters
• Preparation of seasonality disaster calendar by the community
• Mapping risks, vulnerability and capacities of the village by the community
• Constitution of Disaster Management Teams
• Identification of hazard specific mitigation activities; and
• Constitution of Community Contingency Fund (CCF)

6.3 COMMUNITY-BASED DISASTER PREPAREDNESS PLAN

As we have discussed in the earlier units preparedness is a key component of disaster management. It requires systematic and comprehensive planning. Plans are generally formulated at the national, state, district and village levels. But the emphasis presently is to reach out to the community at the grass roots level and hence community-based disaster preparedness plans are being advocated. The objective of this effort is to strengthen the capacities of people and institutions at community level to face disasters. The plans are prepared with the involvement of community as they can better identify the existing resources, hazards they are exposed to prevailing infrastructure, resources, coping mechanisms etc. Hence preparedness plan needs to take cognisance of different types of activities needed at various stages of disaster management.
The community-based disaster preparedness requires performance of several types of activities at three different stages i.e., pre-disaster, during-disaster and post-disaster. Those activities are to be identified which can be reflected in the preparedness plan.

**Community-based Preparedness in Pre-disaster Phase**

a) Orienting the community towards the nature and effects of the disasters to which they are vulnerable.

b) Taking stock of the resources of the community such as schools, primary health centres, cyclone shelters, communication facilities, roads and other infrastructure and skilled individuals.

c) Assessing the risks and vulnerabilities of the community. The various elements at risk that include the physical structures, as well as the vulnerable sections of the community such as women, children, physically challenged, old, etc., need to be examined so that the preparedness measures are appropriately planned.

d) Formulating preparedness plan at the community level, that takes into cognisance the community needs, measures to be taken by the community before, during and after the disaster strikes, resources available at various places, clear allocation of responsibilities amongst all concerned officials, departments, Panchayati Raj Institutions, NGOs, CBOs etc. A properly prepared plan facilitates the community to effectively execute the plan.

e) Specifying the role of community in handling the disaster.

**Community-based Preparedness During-disaster**

a) Organising Search, Rescue and Evacuation activities. This includes identifying the disaster victims, bringing them to safer places, provision of first aid, distribution of relief, adhering to evacuation plan etc.

b) Providing shelter for people as well as livestock. This includes arrangements for water supply, sanitation, kitchens, fodder for animals, medical services and first aid etc.

c) Clearing of debris from collapsed buildings, bridges, trees, other structures, re-establishing of transport and communication services.

d) Moving of injured to the nearby health centres and hospitals.

e) Disposing of dead humans in order to contain the spread of diseases is another important task. Identification of dead bodies, compliance with police formalities, mobilising resources for disposal of bodies in accordance with religious and cultural practices, are activities which involve the community. Disposal of dead animals is important as it has effect on health and environment.

f) Assessing damages immediately on the occurrence of disaster facilitates quick emergency relief. This is to be done with reference to the number of households, population, livestock, area affected etc.

**Community-based Disaster Preparedness in Post-disaster Phase**

a) Undertaking a detailed damage assessment covering verified number of human lives, identification of live victims as well as the dead, livestock, infrastructure, damage to crops and the estimated value.
b) Drawing up a comprehensive economic rehabilitation plan that includes restoration of agricultural activity through necessary inputs, rehabilitation of artisans, marginal, small-scale and business people, those pursuing other occupations, replacement of cattle, agricultural and other equipment, boats, fishing nets etc.

c) Ensuring social rehabilitation through strengthening of existing health centres, schools, anganwadis, community centres, vocational training centres, psychological counselling to the affected to enable them get back to their normal routine.

d) Building an appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanism in community-based disaster preparedness programme. This is needed to facilitate proper utilisation and implementation of resources.

Community-based disaster preparedness is essential to assess the damages arising out of disasters, determine the extent and type of assistance. A community-based disaster preparedness plan is a comprehensive action plan which specifies the demographic profile, resources available with the community, measures to be taken before, during and after the occurrence of disaster. It is said to contain an inventory of several types of resources available at the community level, roles and responsibilities of different administrative agencies, Panchayati Raj Institutions, NGOs, CBOs and community.

**Community-based Disaster Preparedness Plan**

A Community-based Disaster Preparedness Plan, broadly is to indicate the following aspects:

- Village profile
- Profile/information about the community
- Disaster profile
- Inventory of resources of the community
- Emergency communication procedures
- Specific roles and responsibilities (of different agencies and functionaries)

**Components of Community-based Disaster Preparedness Plan**

**Pre-disaster Phase**

- Risk assessment and vulnerability analysis
- Resource analysis and mobilisation
- Warning system and its dissemination
- Organising community response mechanisms
- Construction and maintenance of cyclone/flood shelters
- Mock exercises and drills
- Strengthening of community self-help capacities

Specification of roles and responsibilities of various functionaries and agencies. (Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), Government functionaries, NGOs, Police, Primary and District Health Centres, Disaster Task Force and Community)

**During-disaster Phase**

- Search, Rescue and Evacuation
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- Shelter for disaster affected (community as well as livestock)
- First aid and other medical support
- Clearance of debris
- Restoration of communication system or use of alternative communication system
- Disposal of Dead
- Relief distribution
- Property security and public safety
- Immediate damage assessment
- Information, Education and Communication (IEC) and training
- Role of various functionaries and agencies. (PRIs, Government functionaries, NGOs, Police, Primary and District Health Centres, Disaster Task Force and Community)

Post-disaster Phase

- Damage and needs assessment
- Psychological support to the victims
- Restoration of lifeline support
- Agricultural, economic and social rehabilitation
- Information, Education and Communication and training
- Role of various functionaries and agencies, (PRIs, Government functionaries, NGOs, Police, Primary and District Health Centres, Disaster Task Force, and Community)

The community-based disaster preparedness plan is to reflect the needs, resources and strategies mutually agreed upon by the local people. The activities are to be clearly defined, specified, target-oriented, in consonance with the capacities and capabilities of the community. The plan with its components as discussed above, is comprehensive that provides counter-disaster measures including preparedness and mitigation, provisions for emergency action, ways of creating awareness amongst the community and also indicate the developmental requirements to establish a link between disasters and development.

The plan is an important tool for bringing about coordination between the efforts of various agencies that includes government, private sector, international agencies, NGOs, CBOs and community. This is of importance as the personnel, resources and organising capabilities of NGOs and government are to be mobilised and coordinated. A plan evolved locally with the involvement of key stakeholders would be useful in reducing the extent of damage and controlling loss of lives. It proves advantageous in undertaking activities such as resource mapping, vulnerability mapping, hazard mapping etc. The High Powered Committee (2001) also recommended the formulation of plans at community, family and individual level and developing individual kits for survival. We have mentioned about this in Unit 10 of this Course.

There are many institutions in our country which are initiating efforts in this area of community-based disaster preparedness. The government along with NGOs and international agencies are undertaking this activity. The Panchayati Raj institutions are supplementing the ongoing efforts in this area. For instance in Orissa, Panchayat or village assembly is an
effective mechanism in making CBDP more sustainable. In Indira Gandhi National Open University, the Faculty of Public Administration, School of Social Sciences, has also made some efforts in this direction. During 1998-90, a Project on Community Awareness on Disaster Preparedness (CADP) was taken up in collaboration with the Yashwant Rao Chavan Academy of Development Administration (YASHADA), Pune. The major objectives of the programme have been to create awareness on disasters, upgrade information and strengthen the resilience and self-confidence of local communities in select villages in the State of Maharashtra. Similar activity sponsored by Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India was undertaken during 2000-2002 in 100 villages each in the Five States of Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Orissa and Uttar Pradesh. New initiatives in the form of constitution of Disaster Task Force (DTF), formulating Community Action Plan on Disaster Preparedness etc., were introduced. The most important aspect of this effort is to initiate strategies to operationalise community-based preparedness plans. We shall be discussing this in the next Section.

Under the Government of India – UNDP Disaster Risk Management Programme, in Lahotigali Block of Morigaon District in Assam, local residents expressed their concern for adopting preparedness and mitigation techniques during flood season. It was decided to construct a raised platform with a flat bank cum community fishery to be used during flood and non-flood season. The site for this was donated by the village members. Gram Sabha was entrusted the task of approving the purchase of machine boats and their maintenance. Being aware of the community’s vulnerability to disasters during frequent occurrence of floods, the disaster management committee’s representatives involved the community in the mitigation activities. Through community sensitisation meetings, committees have been able to prepare the CBDP plan an integral part of a development plan for the community (Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, 2004).

6.4 OPERATIONALISING COMMUNITY-BASED DISASTER PREPAREDNESS PLAN: KEY STRATEGIES

The operationalising of community-based disaster preparedness plan requires the active participation of local communities. It involves:

- Generating awareness amongst the members of community regarding the vulnerabilities and risks involved in several types of disasters. This also needs the utilisation of traditional wisdom that is already available with the people. We shall be discussing in detail about this aspect in Unit 7 of this Course.

- Propagating community participation vigorously at grass roots levels, as most of the actions are needed at the individual or community levels. The governments have limited resources. Hence participation enables people to strive towards self-reliance instead of excessive dependence. Community participation helps in identification and prioritising problem areas and generates solutions.

- Organising local people in disaster task forces, disaster management committees, and groups for dissemination of warnings, search, rescue and evacuation teams etc.

- Sensitising the Panchayati Raj Institutions towards formulating community-based disaster preparedness plans and integrating them with the district and State plans.

- Involving development workers in eliciting community participation. The community can identify their formal and non-formal leaders with their help and guidance.
• Constituting Disaster Response Organisation at the community level. Zubair (2003) suggests formation of such an organisation, which can be entrusted the designing and sharing of Counter Disaster Plan with all community members. A Counter Disaster Plan or a Community Level Contingency Plan helps to consolidate the community's efforts to prepare for hazards. The plan provides guidelines for operation and clarifies the roles and responsibilities of all concerned before, during and after the occurrence of disasters.

• Mobilising local assets, resources etc., of the community. This can include traditional wisdom, folklore, traditional capability of comprehending disaster/hazard warning signals etc. Constitution of Community Disaster Preparedness Team can make a difference in implementation of Disaster Preparedness Plan. For instance, in the recent tsunami, training of members of local disaster relief committee of Samiyarpettai Taluk of Cuddalore district, in Tamil Nadu enabled them carrying out rescue operations, giving first aid to victims, organising distribution of relief materials etc (The Hindu, 2005).

The operationalising of community- based disaster preparedness plan can be entrusted to the PRIs, disaster task force members, trained volunteers etc. The community-based strategies are yielding significant results. For instance, the Bangladesh Red Crescent has trained village volunteers working in coastal districts who are equipped with preparedness skills. In Orissa, a long established NGO, Gram Vikas has been working with tribal people. Its Rural Health and Environment Programme (RHEP) premised on community ownership of processes and outputs, focuses on shelter, sanitation and drinking water. Its approach in the wake of Orissa super cyclone created a community able to revive its day to day life within days of the cyclone impact (www.odilipn.org/report).

Community-based disaster preparedness goes much further than traditional disaster management in focusing on locally specific vulnerabilities, coping strategies and resilience. However, in practice, CBDP approaches have tended to address the symptoms of vulnerability rather than its root causes. Ensuring that disaster mitigation and preparedness measures are both appropriate and sustainable will require rooting vulnerability reduction within a wider developmental approach. Some recommendations, in this regard, according to International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC), which is based on its field research in the Philippines include:

• Analysing the root causes of vulnerability to disaster
• Understanding the strengths of local livelihoods and capacities
• Listening to community perspectives and priorities
• Including others actors from the start so that the burden of risk reduction can be shared
• Advocating issues that the community itself cannot tackle; and
• Promoting the integration of risk reduction into development planning. (World Disasters Report, 2004)

Joseph Keve and Jonathan Rout (2003) outline the key ingredients of disaster management with a community perspective. These include:

Clearly defined and agreed criteria for the identification, selection and verification of the most deserving beneficiaries.
- Emphasis on greater involvement and decision-making by women within the organisation, among volunteers and beneficiaries and in the community.
- Priority for the weakest and most vulnerable people.
- Strong local contribution.
- Conscious focus on livelihood-based programme input provides long-term and sustainable benefits to the community and at the same time increases the commitment and feeling of solidarity between the community and the workers.
- Right inputs to be given at the right time.
- Planned cooperation with all government and non-government agencies whenever such collaboration adds value and increases the effectiveness of the NGO.
- Strategic planning and coordination to bring together forces and resources to achieve optimum results.
- Using small inputs to achieve big and lasting impact, e.g., using food for work programme to rebuild livelihood assets or providing paddy seeds at sowing time so that poor farmers do not fall into the clutches of money lenders.

6.5 CONCLUSION

The community-based disaster preparedness through various measures such as formulation of plans at community level, evolving preparedness and mitigation measures, generating awareness etc., can go a long way in effective disaster management. The community by organising itself in the form of committees, task forces and groups will be able to assess their strengths, weaknesses, and experiment with innovative methods, identify skills etc. Human beings everywhere are organised at the community level to carry out collective tasks. The people live in diverse social situations and accordingly their priorities could vary. But the community level is the key focal point for disaster management efforts, particularly in the mitigation and preparedness process. This needs a strong commitment from the community, and commitment on the part of local authorities to motivate community for participation. Any effort towards mitigation or preparedness or recovery should be to work with the communities instead of doing things for them.

6.6 KEY CONCEPTS

| Community-based Disaster Management Plan | A plan prepared in consultation and by the community members to safeguard their community against any likely disaster. Specific roles and responsibilities are outlined for individuals. |
| Hazard Mapping | It is the process of establishing geographically where to and to what extent particular phenomena are likely to pose a threat to people, property, infrastructure and economic activities. It represents the results of hazard assessment on a map showing the frequency and probability of occurrence of various magnitudes or duration. |

(www.wcwp.org/training)
6.7 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING


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Website
www.odihpn.org/report

6.8 ACTMTIES

1) In your area, discuss with the members of Resident Welfare Association or any other group and get their views about the community based disaster preparedness and preparation of a plan.

2) Contact a few shop owners near your house and attempt to make a disaster preparedness plan in case of a fire or earthquake or any other disaster.