REGIONAL NEWS
DRR and relief efforts across the country

OPINIONS MATTER
The changing face of disasters in India

NEWSROOM
A roundup of Oxfam India’s activities from the last quarter

PARTNER PROFILES
Learn about Oxfam India’s Humanitarian and DRR partners

HUMANITARIAN & DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (DRR):
Providing relief, rehabilitation and building resilience of people by reducing risks before and after disasters

63-year-old Indramaya Shreshta’s house collapsed during the massive earthquake in Nepal.
CEO’S NOTE

This is a very special edition of the Oxfam India newsletter ‘Voice’. Oxfam first came to India 64 years ago in response to the Bihar famine in 1951. Oxfam at its core is a humanitarian organisation. Responding to disasters, providing relief materials to survivors, helping them rebuild their lives and empower vulnerable communities to be better prepared for disasters are part of our humanitarian and disaster risk reduction work.

On April 25, 2015 Nepal was devastated by a massive earthquake. Over 8,700 people lost their lives and thousands were injured. Hundreds of aftershocks spread fear amongst the people in Nepal and forced them to live in the open. According to the United Nations 80 lakh people have been affected by this disaster and 28 lakh people have been displaced. Not since the 2005 Tsunami have Indian NGOs been permitted to raise funds for a disaster outside the country. But basis our work in all these years, Oxfam India was the first Indian NGO to get permission from the Government of India to provide assistance to the people of Nepal. It was a first for Oxfam India to work outside of India, and is an important milestone in our journey.

About 57% of land in India is vulnerable to earthquake, 28% to drought, and 15% to floods. In 2014-15, we were responding to at least three disasters in different parts of the country, including the floods in Jammu & Kashmir, and in Assam.

Oxfam India also launched the Haq Banta Hai (We have the right) campaign asking the Indian government to fully implement the Right to Education Act and making sure 60 lakh out-of-school children are enrolled in school. The petition started by Oxfam India garnered 400,000 signatures from across the country and will be soon submitted to the government of India. Under the banner of the Even It Up campaign on inequality, we will continue with our Haq Banta Hai campaign on the Right to Education.

We will also be launching a global campaign to reduce violence against women by changing norms that lead to the gender power imbalances we see today.

Nisha Agrawal
Chief Executive Officer,
Oxfam India
Regional news

How has your journey been in the Oxfam Humanitarian team?

In 2005, I joined the Oxfam Tsunami Response Programme in Port Blair, where I worked as a field logistician. I moved to Kolkata office in 2007, and later to the new southern affiliate, when Oxfam India was born in 2008.

Can you elaborate on your humanitarian work?

Logistics involves managing vehicle fleets, warehouses, supporting procurement, and providing field support to the logistics manager of a very large Tsunami programme. In Car Nicobar, where we set up base operations, we hired ships to move large relief and construction materials from Port Blair to Car Nicobar, Little Andaman and Nancowry islands. We provided logistics and supply support to the multiple emergencies that happened during the years; including the 2007 South Asia floods, 2008 Kosi floods, 2009 Cyclone Aila and, South India floods and Leh cloud burst response. Since 2008, Oxfam India has implemented 17 emergency response programmes supported by our humanitarian staff teams that ensure logistics, HR and IT work seamlessly.

What were your biggest challenges?

Humanitarian logistics is challenging. It’s important to provide the right relief materials and support, to the right people, in the right place, at the right time. During the 2008 Kosi floods, we were multitasking and managing HR systems for over 120 staff and setting up IT systems at the same time. Every response has new challenges, but we’re always ready to face the unexpected.

Highlights from our humanitarian & DRR programme

**Uttar Pradesh**: Poorvanchal Gramin Vikas Sansthan made the villages open defecation free. They also set up teams for community-led disaster preparedness and response.

Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan led construction of toilets. Functional community-run Vet Care Centres provided livestock vaccinations. Flood resilient crop varieties were propagated. A humanitarian warehouse at NH28 in Sant Kabir Nagar district was pre-positioned for rapid mobilisation of relief materials.

**Odisha**: Real Time Evaluation was introduced to monitor the implementation of Oxfam’s Cyclone Phailin response programme, gauge effectiveness, provide quick feedback and identify systemic issues.

**Jammu and Kashmir**: Emergency Food Security and Vulnerable Livelihood interventions included supplementary food assistance and cash transfer, restoring low cost productive assets, and recovery of lost assets in the floods.

**Assam**: In partnership with North East Research and Social Work Networking, with financial assistance from European Commission, reaching over 89,706 people across Bodo Territorial Autonomous districts. Under Humanitarian Investment Plan 2014-15 other than food, water and shelter, 15,000 displaced families were given cash grants for power tillers and livelihood restoration. Boreholes helped provide clean drinking water and improved the water supply. Shallow hand pumps were also installed in the camps along with storage and water supply system.

**Bihar**: Gram Sahyog Samitee (GSS) strengthened in villages, and members sensitised about rights and responsibilities in dealing with DRR issues at block level. Technical expertise helped adaptation to alternate crop production, disaster preparedness plans developed, and village disaster management committees formed and strengthened. With Emergency Food Security and Vulnerable Livelihood farmer clubs saving money in banks, internal loaning systems helped members get free from high rates of interest of money lenders.

5 minutes

Humanitarian logistics team member Mohan Parmar talks to us about Human Resources, IT and Administrations during disasters.

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The Changing Face of Disasters in India

India ranks among the top 10 countries when it comes to natural disaster risks. We take a look at how we deal with disasters, and the most vulnerable disaster affected.

>> Zubin Zaman

Zubin is the Deputy Director - Humanitarian & DRR operations for Oxfam India leads the Oxfam India emergency response. Zubin believes that disaster-preparedness of communities vulnerable to emergencies, can save a lot of lives.

In 2014, horrific acts of violence across India caused a loss of USD 341.7 billion, according to the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP). The summer of 2015 saw 2,000 people die from heat waves in major urban areas, especially in the state of Telangana, where temperatures reached 48°C. Disasters affect millions, irrevocably destroying livelihoods and leaving many destitute. The rest of us read about it in newspapers, watch it on TV and the Internet and get on with our lives.

A study by Bajaj Allianz looking at the Jammu and Kashmir floods, Uttarakhand landslides, Cyclone Hud Hud, also expressed concern that these would just increase in the future.

Across India, Disasters Abound

2008 to 2015 saw an increase in frequency and scale of natural disasters. Since the 1950s, a decline in monsoon rainfall has been observed, and frequency and unpredictability of heavy rainfall events also increased. Coastal populations are vulnerable to rising sea levels and saltwater intrusion, while urbanisation is threatening groundwater levels. Land, religious or ethnic conflict has regularly flared up in communities living in economically or ecologically precarious environments. In India, disasters are being seen increasing in an urban context, because dense populations have an unequal access to services, water sources and land. With better city planning, greater investment in basic infrastructure and the correct preparedness, India can protect against these natural disasters. In the aftermath of disasters, humanitarian assistance, disaster risk reduction, resilience building and preparedness are, and must be, an integral part of our lives.

The Most Vulnerable During a Disaster

Disasters and poverty are closely connected. Environmental degradation, poverty, unstable or weak economies and poor planning adversely affect the vulnerability and exposure of people to hazards. Disasters drive the poor further into a spiral of poverty, undermining their capacity to recover from social and economic losses, and reduce poverty. The wealthy either survive unaffected, or recover quickly. Unable to come back from a loss of prime agricultural land to sand casting and erosion, those displaced by flood waters and erosion in the 2012 Assam floods, continue to struggle to get back to normalcy well into 2015.

Poor rural and urban household livelihoods depend on an increasingly deteriorating natural resource base, and often volatile climatic and market conditions. They are particularly vulnerable to disasters with few assets to fall back on, and limited risk management strategies.

During the 2014 Kashmir floods urban poor living in low-lying hazardous locations, lost their livelihood when they were uprooted from their habitation. People employ a range of coping strategies during disasters, often incurring debt or selling assets that leaves them and their households more vulnerable to future shocks. This vulnerability makes rural people poorer, and prevents them from moving out of poverty. Women are even more vulnerable during disasters as they are socially and economically marginalised. In emergencies with a widespread destruction of livelihoods, women and children bear the brunt.
of the suffering. They are most frequently displaced, and their needs least consulted.

The State Responds

Globally, the frequency, intensity and nature of state level responses have also undergone a massive change, in the last 20 years. Countries like India are strengthening their capacity to deal with disasters, and the role of a government is increasingly more essential during an emergency response. The overall performance of international humanitarian systems has also included a push to include DRR more consistently into national strategic plans.

The mass evacuation and food distribution in Odisha in the aftermath of Cyclone Phailin proves the Indian government’s ability to deal with disasters, and the role of a government is increasingly more essential during an emergency response. The overall performance of international humanitarian systems has also included a push to include DRR more consistently into national strategic plans.

The Gap in Which Humanitarian Agents Exist

Unfortunately, there are still large discrepancies in the quality and timeliness of the government’s response. Evacuees from the Cyclone Phailin Response found poor conditions in evacuation sites and poor facilitation of the community’s return. Depending on the district and disaster type, state and district preparedness and response capacity ranges from variable to absent. The size and scale of India, variance in the quality of governance by states, makes any significant humanitarian response programme complex and challenging and daunting task.

In most major disasters vital needs are unmet, and it’s in this critical space that humanitarian actors exist. And contribute vitally to the state’s crisis response.

Governments, Civil Society and the Private Sector

Despite the Indian economy’s substantial growth rates, inequality has increased, and 41 crore people people still live in poverty. More of the world’s poor live in India, than in all of sub-Saharan Africa. While there exists an acknowledgment of humanitarian aid to India, international aid policies show a definitive shift away from funding NGo humanitarian and DRR programming in India. Donor strategies taking into account the capacity of the government and India’s huge scale of need, invest relatively small amounts of emergency response funding. They focus more on investments that influence the State to trigger wider scale preparedness and response by the authorities.

The Indian private sector has also shown keen interest in funding humanitarian responses, but these tend to favour corporate priorities like the location of a customer or manufacturing markets, rather than on a general humanitarian scale. However, the private sector is a growing influence in humanitarian assistance, and disasters such as the Haiti earthquake saw private sector construction and engineering companies play a critical role in reconstruction.

In India, the volume of corporate money potentially available to the nonprofit sector and specially to humanitarian and risk reduction initiatives has increased globally. Progressive Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) mandates launched in 2014 makes companies obliged to invest 2% of their profits in CSR. India was the first country to implement such a policy, and that has been a welcome change.

The economic impact of India’s levels of violence is estimated to cost the national economy USD 341.7 BILLION in 2014. This is equivalent to 4.7% of India’s GDP or USD 273 per person - Global Peace Index (GPI), 2015.
EVENTS

CELEBRATIONS:

• Cattle Fairs: November 4-10, 2014, Sonepur, Bihar

Oxfam India chose the Sonepur Fair, Asia’s largest cattle fair, held near the confluence of the Ganga and Gandak, to speak on issues from gender justice to DRR, in a space shared with Bihar State Disaster Management Department. Visual and digital campaigns, puppet shows and street plays were organised on social issues. Volunteers helped over one lakh visitors understand and pledge their support to a number of social causes.

• Bihar Diwas Pavilion: March 22-24, 2015, Patna, Bihar

150 middle school girls cycled 85kms from Bihar’s Arwal district to talk women’s empowerment in Bihar. 12 women from a remote village in Aurangabad visited to prepare themselves for floods, and 15 Bihar Military officials were interested to learn how they could use the rope in different ways to rescue people. Myriad visitors came from across the state for Bihar Diwas celebrations. We showcased Humanitarian and DRR work was held in association with Bihar State Disaster Management Authority (BSDMA).

• Action Week for Tax Justice and World Public Services Day: June 23, 2015

As a part of Global Tax Alliance for Tax Justice, Oxfam India is working with Public Service International for effective domestic resource mobilisation and primarily taxation. This will finance future sustainable development goals, so India can demand fair share of global tax revenue, and widen the domestic tax base focusing on redistributive role.

• Chris Martin in Delhi: July 2, 2015

In July, the lead vocalist and co-founder of Coldplay, and Oxfam’s global ambassador Chris Martin visited Oxfam India’s partner project site Empowerment for Rehabilitation Academic and Health (EFRAH). Martin, and actor Freida Pinto visited the resettlement colony of Madanpur Khadar on the outskirts of Delhi, where EFRAH works with the children of rag pickers, domestic workers, construction workers and street vendors to bring out-of-school children back to school.

Later, at our New Delhi office, Martin commended the work by the organisation, and was keen to understand the ground realities that fuel our work towards poverty and inequality reduction.

LEARNINGS:

• Mock Drills: January 2015, Jaitpur District, Odisha

Village level mock drills were organised in 10 villages in Jaitpur district, to help the people for early warning, timely evacuation, search & rescue and shelter management in disaster situation. Village Disaster Management Committees and 288 task force members participated. “Table Top Exercises” were held in all villages, before the drills and short review meetings organised to identify the gaps.

• Conflict Analysis and Sensitisation:

March 3-7, 2015, Kaziranga, Assam

A five day training workshop held with 18 Oxfam India Humanitarian and DRR team members from across the country, covered conflict analysis and sensitivity training sessions. Future conflict response projects targeted capacity building plans that developed and incorporated conflict sensitivity indicators. Field visits and conflict related advocacy helped identify and provide recommendations for activities in Assam conflict response project.
• Online Gender Learning Course: May-July, 2015, Across Oxfam India offices
An online gender module for all Oxfam India staff was organised by the Gender Justice and HR teams. All interns and volunteers were trained in gender justice and women’s rights, through practical examples, exercises and videos, underlying our commitment to gender justice.

• Communication and Documentation Trainings: 21-24 July, 2015, Bhubaneswar, Odisha
Regional offices in Odisha and South India organised a training programme for partners on Project Cycle Management (PCM) and Communication. One project coordinator from each partner organisation was provided, and trainings covered documenting case studies, photo-documenting processes, and developing content for social media.

• Asian Circle Visit: March 7, 2015, Chhattisgarh and Odisha
The Asian Circle, a diverse network of influential women supporting Oxfam to fight poverty and gender inequality, visited Oxfam projects in India, and met counterparts in the hope of creating an India Circle. The aim was supporting Adivasi women in fighting violence and inequality in two of the poorest states of India, Chhattisgarh and Odisha.

• #HaqBantaHai campaign:
Oxfam India networks launched a campaign Haq Banta Hai (We have the right), to demand quality education for children across India. On April 4 Sadak Chhap and a team of young students supported by Oxfam India performed in Dilli Haat, to demand full implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act. Across India, rallies, street shows, corner meetings and radio episodes tried to highlight the shortcomings of the RTE Act, such as inaccessibility for differently-abled students, discrimination due to social and class differences and unavailability of basic facilities such as toilets.

DISCUSSIONS:
• Real Time Evaluation: December 2014, Jammu & Kashmir
The effectiveness of Oxfam India interventions are assessed by Real Time Evaluation (RTE). In our continued commitment to improve Oxfam India’s humanitarian programmes and strengthen effective and timely interventions in the future, a RTE was initiated to assess the Jammu and Kashmir response programme. The evaluation captured emerging lessons both for Oxfam India as well as being of relevance to other operations of Oxfam International.

• Closure of Kashmir Response:
In it’s final stages, the Kashmir response programme has implemented support to weavers, rehabilitation of water systems at the Taluka level, food assistance in some food insecure locations, vouchers for urban flood affected poor, livelihood restoration inputs for petty vendors. Since April 25 Nepal earthquake overshadowed the Kashmir Flood response programme, however, a team of humanitarian staff continued to implement and deliver the early recovery part of the project.

• State Level Meeting of Women Farmers:
June 17, 2015, Patna, Bihar
Women farmers came together for state level meet in Bihar to discuss land rights. Oxfam India along with partners Pragati Gramin Vikas Samiti, and Nav Bihar Samaj Kalyan Pratisthan Kendra organised a state level meeting of women farmers elevating land rights issues of women in the public sphere, and addressing the issue of recognition of women as farmers in state policies and women’s land rights.

Many women farmers shared the problems they experience, at the daylong session.
Reports

A status report on public expenditure towards agriculture sector in Bihar, focusing on smallholder agriculture and women farmers was shared at state level meet in Bihar focused on investment in agriculture and smallholder farmers on June 25, 2015.

Policy Briefs

- Mines and Minerals Bill 2015: Disempowering the Community:
  A host of unaddressed concerns in the bill (that provides a legal framework to regulate the mining sector) questions the government’s intent to protect the interests of the indigenous populations.

- Right to Education Act: Claiming Education for Every Child:
  While concerns regarding privatisation of education remain, RTE Act, the reports says offers a first step towards an educational system in India that offers access, equity, and inclusion of all children.

Working Papers

- Financing Healthcare for all in India: Towards a Common Goal:
  This paper explores available evidence, contextualizes and maps the debate in the country around healthcare for all.

Practice Notes

- Community-Based Monitoring to Claim Right to Food:
  Three reports in Jharkhand, Bihar and Odisha, acknowledge contribution of the RTF schemes- expansion of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), public distribution centres and rural job programmes- along with National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) in the improved ranking. It notes that despite uneven implementation of the social schemes across different states, it has helped improve the condition of children in parts of India.

- Creating Awareness to Improve Maternal Health in Jharkhand:
  Oxfam has been supporting RTF Campaign Odisha since 2013, to create a team of volunteers who empower the community to demand and access the food schemes and monitor the implementation of the same. The volunteers of RTF Campaign Odisha work in 10 districts in the state.
Our partners are our heroes. Oxfam India has been working, and will continue to partner with local NGOs to implement the Disaster Risk Reduction programme across India. The partners bring in-depth knowledge of the target community; strong linkages with key stakeholders and prior experience of working with development issues.

ADITHI | Patna, Bihar

ADITHI is a women’s organisation works on projects in different rural and urban areas of Bihar and Jharkhand. They work around the issue of disaster risk reduction and community-based disaster preparedness with focus on women and building resilience of vulnerable community members to disasters. In addition, they focus on promoting livelihood, public health & education and advocacy against child marriage, female infanticide and foeticide, as well as on anti-trafficking of girl children and their sexual exploitation.

Steps taken:
- ADITHI has been working with Oxfam since 2007 on themes such as Livelihood, Institution Building, WASH and advocacy.

Outcomes
- Under the current DRR programme, ADITHI is working in 15 villages in Sitamarhi district in Bihar, with approximately 36,000 women and girls, reaching out to around 6,000 households.

BRAHMAPUTRA RIVER BASIN RESILIENCE BUILDING PROGRAMME (BRBRBP)

As part of Oxfam India’s DRR programme in the Brahmaputra River Basin in Assam, the BRBRBP reaches more than 94,000 women, men and children. In approximately 17,000 households in 110 villages across the five most flood-prone districts, the goal is to sustainably increase resilience against natural disasters and emerging hazards, with a focus on the most vulnerable groups. BRBRBP hopes to increase community disaster preparedness through capacity and institution building and improve availability of safe water, sanitation facilities and hygiene during floods.

Steps taken:
- By increasing food security and reducing loss of livelihoods during floods.
- Investing in advocacy to build collaborative linkages between key stakeholders.
- They work to ensure programme interventions are relevant, representative, and sustainable. These interventions combine ‘software’, and ‘hardware’ (infrastructure interventions) to facilitate a fundamental shift among disaster affected populations, from dependency on relief to proactive preparedness and protection.

Outcomes
- 110 villages have the capability to anticipate and prepare for natural disaster, with a substantial improvement in water, sanitation and hygiene.
- Improved food security and support livelihood of target communities by providing productive assets, protecting livelihood assets, and building resilience in maintaining productive assets even when disrupted by disasters.
- Strengthened government, civil society, and community action for disaster risk reduction in order to enable communities, government and civil society organisations to identify, plan and act for reducing the vulnerabilities of communities to disasters.
Based in Balasore, Unnayan was established in 1990. Having been Oxfam India’s DRR programme in Odisha from 2009, Unnayan’s programmes increasingly focus on women, children, tribal and dalit communities.

** Steps taken:**
- Unnayan works mainly on developmental issues with a focus on institution building, access and control over resources, entitlement over services, acquisition and adoption of new knowledge, skill and technology for a switch over from relative marginalisation to a self-reliant livelihood maintenance system.

**Outcomes**
- Under the current DRR programme, Unnayan is working in ten villages of Balasore
- Reaching out to around 1,120 households mainly on the themes such as livelihood, institution building, disaster preparedness, WaSH and advocacy.

**PEOPLE ACTION FOR DEVELOPMENT (PAD)**

PAD works to bring about socio-economic development and sustainability to communities with knowledge, skill training, demonstration and backup support.

**Steps taken:**
- Through Self-Help Groups and Disaster Management Committees practices of sustainable livestock management, disaster management and improved agriculture development are promoted.
- Through formal and informal education, PAD focuses on participatory approach and making people self-reliant as efforts for improvement must come from the community.

**Outcomes**
- With Self-Help Groups communities are eager and open to take up other livelihood options, and formations and promotion of disaster management committees have helped communities face natural and other calamities.
- PAD has worked with European Commission (ECHO), German Agro Action, ActionAid and Terre des hommes Germany, to create participatory methods that help in the flood relief and rehabilitation.

**SOCIAL ACTION FOR APPROPRIATE TRANSFORMATION AND ADVANCEMENT IN RURAL AREAS (SATRA)**

Into its seventh year SATRA offers rural people across various fields economic development, livelihood generation, awareness on right base issues. Microfinance is the core programme of SATRA.

**Steps taken:**
- Livelihood generation is a major programme run by SATRA, where farmers are informed on how to apply scientific management system to traditional farming activities.

**Outcomes**
- System of Rice Intensification (SRI), where farmers are encouraged to produce rice by applying scientific methods and intensification of mulberry silk, are two areas where SATRA interventions have yielded results.
MORIGAON MAHILA MEHFIL (MMM) | Assam

Morigaon Mahila Mehfil and Oxfam have partnered to respond to some of the worst floods that have hit Assam, including 2004, 2007, 2012. In 2011 given their experience in responding to disasters they began to work on community based disaster risk reduction programme in Morigaon, one of the most flood prone districts of Assam.

Steps taken:
- The project has put planned efforts to reduce the disaster vulnerabilities of the communities living along the Brahmaputra river.
- Their current collaboration is along themes such as livelihood, institution building, WaSH and community mobilisation at the village level.
- MMM works on women empowerment, domestic violence related counselling and training to frontline health workers on National Rural Health Mission, relief & rehabilitation programme for immigrants and income generating programmes.

Outcomes
- MMM has already promoted 30 Village Disaster Management Committees (VDMCs) and have provided these VDMCs with training for disaster response.
- Various critical needs of the flood prone villages have been taken up, including disaster task force group formation at village level, mock drills, setting up raised grain banks to protect productive assets, setting up search and rescue units with country boats and equipments.
- The project covers over 6,000 men, women and children in 30 most vulnerable villages. It has an established training and production centre for weaving, rearing, knitting, tailoring, including weaving of silk muga, sericulture and food processing activities.
- MMM works on agricultural development and construction of shelters for flood affected people and low cost housing, sanitation, 300 units of smokeless Chulhas under the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana.

NORTH EAST AFFECTED AREA DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY (NEADS)

NEADS is a Disaster Risk Reduction Programme partner in Assam working in two flood prone districts on the southern bank of Brahmaputra River; Jorhat and Golaghat. Under the current DRR – community resilience building programme, NEADS works on themes of capacity building of over 16,000 disaster affected men women and children on risk reduction with special focus on vulnerable livelihood protection, institution building which includes strengthening village disaster management committees, reducing risks to water and sanitation conditions in the 27 flood prone villages, and mobilising the community to be disaster prepared.

Steps taken:
- NEADS has been working in Assam, mainly in Jorhat district, since 1986. Besides disaster risk reduction, NEADS also works in areas of quality education, agriculture, and child sponsorship projects

Outcomes
- NEADS is implementing the Assam DRR programme in 30 villages in these two districts Golaghat and Jorhat districts and reaching out to around 2518 households.
Saim, 45. She fled her home with her family when the earthquake began. She found shelter in the Tundikhel camp. Oxfam provided chlorinated water to over 35,000 people.