



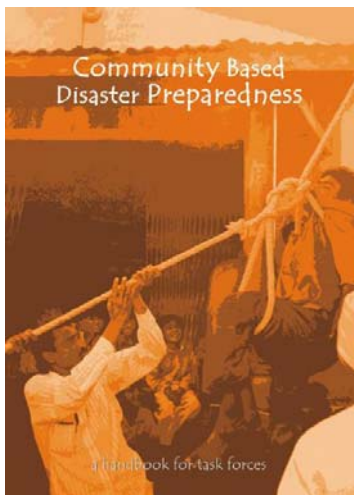
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US IOTWS Small Grants Program

Risk in the Community “Big Picture”

TSUNAMI RESPONSE PROGRAM: COMMUNITY-BASED DISASTER MANAGEMENT IN THE ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS, INDIA



US IOTWS Small Grants Program

The US Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System (IOTWS) Program has funded 17 small grants in India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand as part of its \$16.6 million two-year effort to support the development of an end-to-end warning system in the region. The grants program catalyzed and promoted pilot activities that contribute to community and bottom-up results in disaster mitigation, preparedness, and response.

Community-Based Disaster Management: India Tsunami Response

Disaster specialists from the non-governmental organization SEEDS, launched a Community-Based Disaster Management (CBDM) project in the tsunami-affected regions of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, India, to better prepare coastal communities for future disasters. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands were greatly affected by the Tsunami of 2004. More than 3,500 people perished and almost 356,000 people were affected. Of the 38 inhabited islands in Andaman and Nicobar, 30 were extensively damaged.

Community members were trained on basic skills such as developing maps to identify vulnerable areas, learning emergency management procedures, and preparing village disaster management plans. Fifteen Panchyats (blocks) in one sub-district were mapped both in terms of physical and social vulnerability and an assessment of resources was conducted. SEEDS worked with community leaders and local government authorities to form emergency task forces, and receive training on specific tasks like early warning, shelter management, search and rescue, and evacuation.

The village disaster management plans were distributed throughout the Panchyats, clearly showing vulnerabilities, resources and roles and responsibilities of task force members. All villages were similarly mapped in terms of demographic and socio-economic parameters. The maps also showed important infrastructures like hospitals, schools, police and fire stations in and around villages. SEEDS staff distributed disaster emergency kits, awareness posters and a resource handbook to the task forces in the Panchyats for education and communication purpose.

Project Achievements

The Community-Based Disaster Management Project has ensured that the villagers will factor in risk reduction as natural component in all development initiatives.



Participants in a CBDM workshop, Wandoor, Andaman and Nicobar Island:

For more information about this project contact:

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The community is more aware, proactive and prepared to respond effectively in case of future disasters. Emergency drills are planned periodically to be conducted by villagers themselves. The most significant impact from this project is that all villagers have a clear understanding of natural risks, the consequences and the importance of being prepared. All community members from school children to fishermen to farmers have a clear plan of action in case of disasters. Local government authorities have been active partners in the entire process and will now ensure that disaster risk reduction is a continuous process in these coastal communities.

Lessons Learned

Education can build long-term resilience. Communities often are not aware of risks and are therefore not prepared to respond to natural calamities. Some communities are at risk by the virtue of their existence, such as coastal communities or their livelihood, such as fishermen. It is essential that these communities receive priority in terms of establishing disaster response programs. It is also critical that communities build an internal capacity and develop their own strengths with respect to preparedness and response. Development agencies and practitioners must work with community members to help them internalize preparedness mindset.

The priorities of communities must first be understood so that they can be educated on good practices that will ensure safety and sustainability. All community-based initiatives must ensure that people are not only involved in the process but also learn to make decisions and manage their own resources.

Next Steps

In accordance with SEEDS vision to make vulnerable communities resilient to disasters, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands continue to be a focus area. SEEDS is currently involved in a strong advocacy program with local governments to replicate this model across all panchyats (blocks) of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. SEEDS is also creating a Disaster Knowledge Hub, or Citizen's Resource Center, at Port Blair. This center will cater to various stakeholder needs. Community members are encouraged to share their knowledge of vulnerability mapping and training skills with neighboring panchyats.

For more information on activities or partnership opportunities write to info@seedsindia.org

About the US Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System (IOTWS) Program

The US IOTWS Program is part of the international effort to develop tsunami warning system capabilities in the Indian Ocean following the December 2004 tsunami disaster. The US program adopts an "end-to-end" approach—addressing regional, national, and local aspects of a truly functional warning system—along with multiple other hazards that threaten communities in the region. In partnership with the international community, national governments, and other partners, the US program offers technology transfer, training, and information resources to strengthen the tsunami warning and preparedness capabilities of national and local stakeholders in the region. For more information please visit www.us-iotws.gov.

