

LEARNINGS

While implementing CBDRM activities in West Bengal and Orissa, the partners have experienced lessons, which can be shared as follows:

I. Prior familiarity/knowledge of working with communities is important for any CBDRM intervention

Considering the limited project duration, in some villages, where no prior work had been initiated, the initial project activities were done at the cost of getting familiar with the communities. It took considerable time to build effective rapport with the village communities.



II. Frequent interactions and meetings with government line departments and village communities help in effective coordination and cooperation

From the project start a lot of efforts went in towards building linkages with the line departments and other government officials. This greatly helped in effective cooperation especially during the floods in Orissa



III. It is important to work towards shifting the mindsets of communities from relief to preparedness mode

Years of disasters and the relief interventions following it, have led to communities becoming totally dependent on external support. Only during and shortly after a disaster people are open for this approach and only during a disaster the concept and efforts sink in fully.



IV. Community ownership of CBDRM process is key to sustainability

We had planned for a small rescue boat made of corrugated sheet. The communities from their past experience strongly felt/voiced for a wooden boat would be more effective in facing the strong currents during floods. Together with the community it was decided to go for a wooden boat, for which the villagers contributed labor and other costs for the carpenters. This country boat rescued nearly 600 people during the recent floods in Orissa.



V. A trained cadre of local community task force for CBDRM is critical to ensure community involvement in the process

As we formed the task forces, many villagers joined task forces enthusiastically without understanding the process of CBDRM fully. This led to the drop out of task force members. After the first training and more understanding of CBDRM by the villagers, the Task Forces had to be reformed. We found that it needs practical participation of the villagers in CBDRM activities prior to the formation of Task Forces and the creation of an action plan.



VI. Trained and aware communities are active in advocating and asserting their rights

It has been observed that once the communities are trained in preparedness and CBDRM, they take initiative to interact and dialogue with the government and district authorities and are effective in advocating for their rights and entitlements.

