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INTRODUCTION

DISASTER MITIGATION INSTITUTE: THE LEARNING ORGANISATION

Disaster Mitigation Institute (DMI), Gujarat, India, is a community based action research, action planning and action advocacy organisation. It works towards bridging the gap between policy, practice, and research related to disaster mitigation, in an effort to link the communities to national and international level relief to long term recovery action and learning.

Established after the 1987–89 droughts in Gujarat, DMI evolved from project to programme, into an autonomous organisation in 1995. Learning from its practice and the field needs DMI has evolved to work in four integrated security sectors—livelihood security, food security, water security and habitat security—in an effort to ensure human security for disaster risk reduction. DMI values both learning and action in all its efforts.

1.1 LEARNING SOFTWARE

OUR VISION

Create safer communities through combined and complementary disaster mitigation efforts of various humanitarian stakeholders.

OUR MISSION

To reduce the disaster risks of vulnerable communities of India by promoting mitigation efforts, through learning and action that ensure human security by integrating food, water, habitat and livelihood security.

Focus:

DMI's focus is on promoting the adoption and practice of disaster mitigation through:

- Partnership with the poorest within disaster vulnerable communities of India
- Integrating water, food, habitat and livelihood security
- Capacity building of multiple humanitarian stakeholders
- Synergy between traditional and modern risk reduction strategies of India
- Capturing and disseminating lessons and innovative ideas
- Promoting use of humanitarian standards in disaster response
- Providing timely and targeted relief in a sustainable manner

Activities:

DMI's spectrum of activities for disaster risk mitigation include:

- Awareness Generation
- Capacity Building
- Direct Implementation
- Policy Advocacy
- Research and Publications
- Networking

Simultaneous work and integration of these activities have ensured DMI's emergence as one of the very few disaster-focused organisations in India that has maintained multiple access and presence at the grassroots, national and international levels.

Learning Partners:

DMI aims at learning from its partners, local or other. In an effort to realise the above vision, DMI works with multiple stakeholders across geographical space and areas of specialization. DMI has forged a partnership with local communities in Ahmedabad, Surendranagar, Patan and Kutch districts of Gujarat; Community-Based Organisations across Gujarat; Civil Society Organisations in India; NGOs; INGOs; Government Agencies; Indian, European and American Universities; and stakeholder or membership networks. This partnership is in acknowledgement of the belief that mutual trust, respect, shared goals and joint learning are the prerequisites of a good partnership.

1.2 LEARNING HARDWARE

Legal Status:

DMI is registered with the Charity Commission and the Society Registrar (1960) Act of the Government of Gujarat. It is also registered with the Ministry of Home Affairs of Government of India under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) and the Commissionerate of Income-Tax Department (benefited by 80 G) of the Government of India. The legal status promotes action and learning.

Evolving Structure:

DMI was founded after the repeated 1987–89 Gujarat droughts. Facing new challenges and realising upcoming opportunities DMI has evolved from a project to an autonomous organisation in 1995. Based on its learning from field experience, DMI has developed four sector security programmes realised through eleven activity centres.

Sector Security Programmes:

DMI has four Sector Security Programmes:

- Water Security
- Habitat Security
- Food Security and
- Livelihood Security

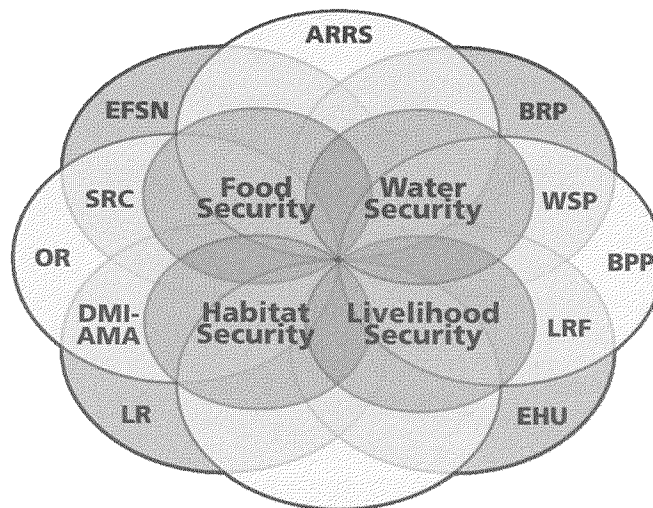
An integrated approach to these programmes is followed in an effort to realise human security and sustainable disaster risk reduction. Human security is not possible—individual or collective—without these four securities. These securities are also crucial for achieving a successful transition from the disaster event to recovery and preparedness with risk mitigation as a constant focus.

Activity Centres:

These securities have to be realised through concrete mitigation activities. DMI has consolidated and institutionalised its mitigation

activities under 11 activity centres.

- Action Review and Research Services (ARRS)
- Bhuj Reconstruction Programme (BRP)
- Building Peace and Protection (BPP)
- DMI-AMA Joint Centre for Disaster Risk Management (DMI-AMA)
- Emergency Food Security Network (EFSN)
- Emergency Health Unit (EHU)
- Learning Resources (LR)
- Livelihood Relief Fund (LRF)
- Organisational Resources (OR)
- Sphere Resource Centre (SRC)
- Water Security Programme (WSP)



DMI's Organisational Structure:

These activity centres have evolved in response to the field gaps and demands for disaster mitigation that are common in India. Some activity centres are larger and developing faster, while others are emerging and finding their form. All activity centres have a clear action agenda, a dedicated team and ongoing projects.

To integrate the 4 securities within and across the 11 activity centres, organisationally DMI has evolved a matrix structure. This structure strives to achieve the goal of integrated and sustainable disaster risk mitigation (see diagram). Projects undertaken by DMI intersect between Sector Securities and Activity Centres. This structure promotes specialisation of capabilities, a steady pace of work, internal and cross team interaction and interconnectivity with the organisation. It is an attempt for institutional innovation to suit Indian humanitarian context. Functionally, DMI's structure is ever evolving and changing as it is designed to be a "strategy focused organisation."

The DMI team:

DMI is young and professional. DMI has been built by a multi disciplinary, multi sectoral, multi cultural, multi experienced and committed team of technicians, professionals, field practitioners and volunteers (local community and international). Its 63-member team is drawn from fields as diverse as journalism, GIS, social work, urban planning, architecture, engineering, data management, economics, finance, accounts, information technology, business management, political science and disaster management. These multiple team characteristics bring varied perspectives to DMI's multi-level work. In fact DMI's broad-based, open, inclusive and ever evolving approach to disaster risk mitigation owes its allegiance to its dynamic team and risk mitigation traditions of India.



The team is flexible and horizontal. This helps timely response to the demands of different disasters, communities and partners. Despite being spread across geographical space and activity centres, mechanisms for interaction and coordination in weekly meetings, regular team monitoring and reviews facilitate cross-activity and cross-geographical learning exchange. The practice of cross activity centre secondments helps exchange of new ideas and varied approaches to project activities. This also helps the team to develop internal skills and capacities. Together the DMI team works towards translating its learning into action with the aim of better disaster response and disaster risk mitigation.

The DMI Team during the Annual Action Learning Day.

On April 17, 2003, the entire DMI team got together to review their work, share their learnings in 2002-03, and chalk out an action plan for 2003-04