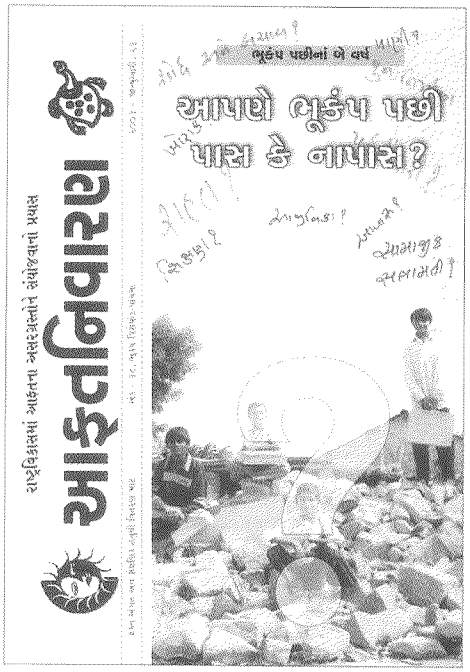


"Afat Nivaran (DMI's newsletter in Gujarati) covers risk mitigation and preparedness aspects of all disasters. Its informative articles often prove to be an eye opener."

–Rajnikant Soni, Senior Reporter, 'Kutch Mitra' (A leading newspaper in Kutch, Gujarat)

promoting and coordinating the flow, method, and value of learning within DMI. This was done through activity specific, project specific and sector specific action learning initiatives. In this context, the selection of the 'Action Learning' theme for DMI's yearlong activities was acknowledged as LR's biggest achievement. Various learning tools were developed and tested and efforts to set up a Sporadic Learning System in DMI—which presents learning as a character of ongoing activities rather than a separate task—are ongoing.

In terms of outputs, this year LR conducted activities that enabled greater reach, impact and more demand for LR. Its IEC (Information Education and Communication) wing produced a total of 52 publications covering the themes of water harvesting, risk reduction, relief standards, riot recovery, droughts and livelihoods intervention. The publications reached out to 80,000 people including local leaders, victims, CBOs, NGO workers, government officials, elected leaders and the media.

LR conducted 15 Local Capacity Building Cycles (LCBC) that mobilized a participation of 425 people—those economically active at local recovery efforts—from disaster vulnerable and affected areas. The 5 National Courses (NC) conducted this year covered themes as diverse as humanitarian standards in disaster response, community-based disaster risk reduction and livelihoods recovery and 112 participants from different GOs, NGOs, CBOs and Universities in India, South Asia and Europe. A business review of the LCBC and NC was conducted by students from the Indian Institute of Management (Ahmedabad) to gauge the potential of making these courses self sufficient in terms of funding and appropriate to the current needs of disaster risk reduction "The method is innovative, the content is suitable, the outreach is effective and the potential is tremendous," concluded the review.

DMI website, http.//www.southasiadisasters.net, receives 17000 hits a month. An internal review of the reach and impact of posting DMI's community perspective on its website led the LR to launch two new websites this year. These are dedicated websites on DMI's activity centres: Emergency Food Security Network (emergencyfoodsecuritynetwork.net)

and the Sphere Community Campaign website (sphèreinindia.net). These websites in addition to providing basic information on DMI's work also offer downloadable tools and information resources. The website on Sphere in India is constantly updated and attracts 8000 hits a month. The other two websites are being revised in their format and content to make them more usable, up-to-date, and concise.

This year LR (re)learnt that its strength lies in its functional links with all the activity centres of DMI. This link enables it to draw diverse experiences from field practice and latest developments in disaster risk mitigation and communicate these to different actors within DMI and across the humanitarian and aid sector. LR learnt about the self-supporting role of IEC, LCBC and NC in realizing a comprehensive approach to disaster risk mitigation awareness. The desirable impact of these activities, however, demanded more participation and strategic targeting.

Further, LR identified the community as its primary target group and community-based approach to disaster mitigation as its primary focus. The learning needs of the local communities were kept at the forefront while ascertaining new activity areas and executing its regular activities. Thus, grassroots experiences were highlighted and most publications were produced in the local language, Gujarati. LR also plans to revive and restructure its publication Vipda Nivaran that is the only disaster focussed publication in Hindi (national language of India). This Hindi publication caters to community workers and policy makers across India specially the northern Indian belt. To build team capacity and for better performance LR invested in team building activities and reorganised the team set up to spread responsibility and authority.

"The lesser the distance between learning and action, the greater the value of both learning and action," summarised Vandana Bhatt before starting the group planning exercise during the Annual Day.

Action Plans:

In light of these learnings, LR in the coming year plans to (a) further develop focus on community-based learning approach; (b) consolidate current activities while venturing into new areas like audio-visuals to ensure expansion; (c) build a "sporadic learning" system in DMI to spread the organisational learning across the organisation while not projecting it as an additional task and (d) generate financial resources to undertake need based and timely activities. In the longer run the LR plans to set up an in-house training and publications facility. "Learning costs money and time. DMI must ensure provision of these in all future projects," recommended Shivani Khanna during the Annual Day.

C. Organisational Resources (OR):

Organisational Resources is the brain of DMI. It coordinates communication, management, administration, and finance of all the 11 Activity centres in DMI. Started in 1995, the OR was initially called the

Communication and Administration Unit. Today it has two teams: the Communication and Administration Team and the Finance and Accounts Team. The Communication and Administration Team's work includes sharing information with DMI partners at the local, national and international level; managing incoming and outgoing communication; maintaining contact and mailing systems; maintaining standard formats and checklists for internal documents; maintaining category-wise data; and coordinating with the teams and activity centres.

The Finance and Accounts Team on the other hand is involved in the purchase of assets; insurance, investments and taxation; team contract and review related matters; project cost management and auditing; fulfilling financial obligations towards partners, authorities and individuals; designing accounts and finance manuals "DMI is constantly changing, and is at times difficult for many to understand. OR gives DMI some form and hierarchy to easily relate to the expectations of the outside world," commented Prakash K.K.

Organisational Resources developed a data management system to organise the wealth of data generated by DMI. This has helped convenient data storage and sharing accross activity centres.

Output and Learning Areas:

The highlights of OR this year was implementation of the latest and appropriate information technologies like computers, the latest software, local area network and EPABX systems. It also developed a data management system to organise the wealth of data generated by DMI for both convenient storage and sharing across activity centres. Storage of manuscripts, archives and communications were organised and a new filing system developed. With the expansion of the DMI team and database came the complementary expansion of office space and furnishing that was supervised by OR.

A Finance Manual was compiled based on the teams' learning from past experiences with partners. A Spot Audit method for monitoring DMI's Finance System was also developed. This method incorporated DMI learning related to both small and large projects with different demands of reporting and auditing.

Action Plans:

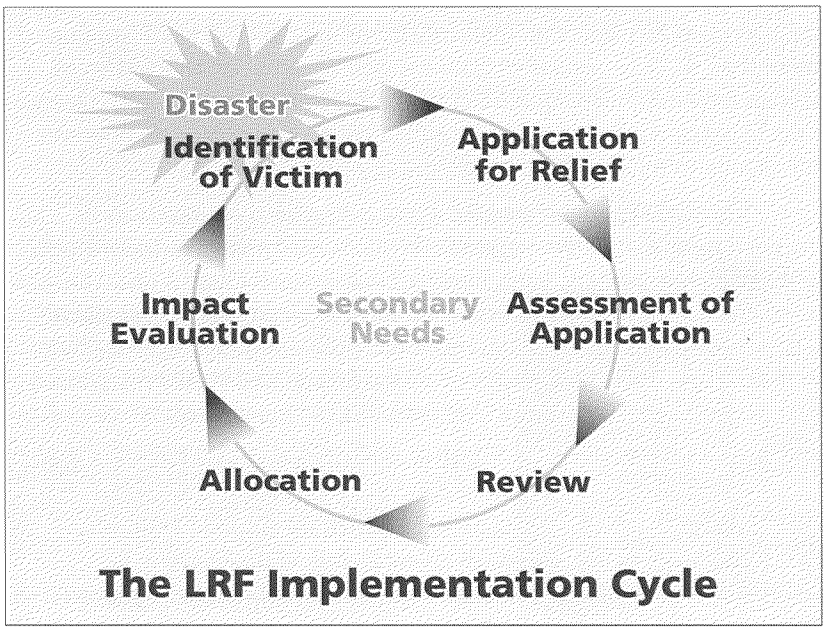
The Communications and Administration department acknowledged various areas of improvement for themselves this coming year. Improvement in LAN security and timely follow-up with partners were high on the list. They also planned to develop computerised registers, monitoring method development, establish database links with GIS and work on relative costing methods. The accounts and finance department will work on developing formats and systems to minimise administrative work and the cost of time and finances incurred to the organisation. The resource gap between the unit cost of organisation and availability from various sources will be bridged through this improvement.

Monitoring will be strengthened through devising various

calendars such as the Project Duration Calendar. Learning process will be mapped. Learning process will be monitored. OR will also introduce focussed Human Resource Development initiatives and provide timely and appropriate financial skill support to the larger DMI team.

D. Livelihood Relief Fund (LRF):

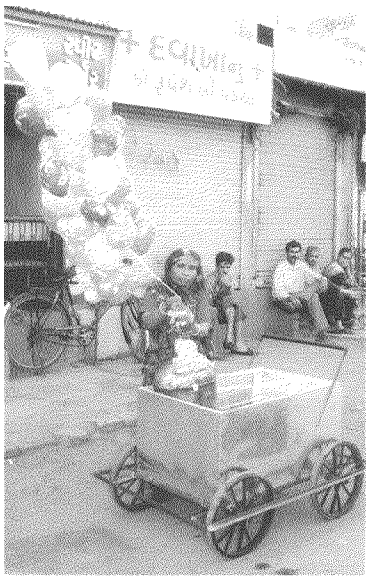
The Livelihood Relief Fund was initiated by DMI, in response to the June 1998 Kandla Cyclone in Gujarat. It aims at providing timely and effective 'retail relief.' LRF supports the livelihood recovery of vulnerable groups, who are affected by natural disasters and conflicts. Its focus is on economic recovery of disaster-affected victims through a tailor-made approach in linking relief with long-term rehabilitation and sustainable development of the victims' household. The LRF's approach to disaster



The LRF Implementation Cycle

mitigation and risk reduction is of a strategic investment in disaster response for development. "Livelihood support makes a big difference in the pace and sustainability of recovery," pointed out Neeraj Trivedi during (Samvad) reflection-triggered exercise on LRF's learning.

Applications for livelihood relief are received from community-based organisations and affected individuals. These are assessed on the applicant's needs. Relief is allocated on demand basis. The process is one-to-one. The victims are also supplied with livelihood related knowledge and services. The whole recovery process is being monitored and an evaluation is conducted to ensure that the given livelihood relief is effectively used. The LRF receives donations in cash and kind from individuals and organisations, both, from India and abroad. "Investments in livelihood recovery also stimulate shelter and water sector recovery, and so on in this arid area," concluded Rashid Khan from Patan district during the Annual Day.

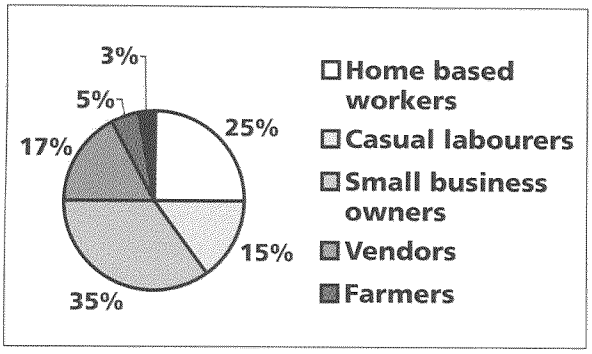


Livelihood regeneration for the unorganised sector and disaster-affected urban work demands asset building and risk transfer A total of 9500 individuals revived their livelihood with LRF support in 2002–03.

Output and Learning Areas:

During the last year, LRF provided relief to victims of high profile disasters like the 2001 Gujarat earthquake, 2002 Gujarat riots and to the low profile disasters like the ongoing Gujarat droughts and the 2002 Gandhinagar's quall. To date LRF has reached out to many disaster-affected victims, which includes home based workers, casual labourers, small business owners, vendors and farmers. Its focus is on small business and on economic recovery."LRF works mostly in slums and low income areas within affected communities," said Kiranbhai to the participants of the Annual Day. Occupation groups there, who work hard, save and invest in their local markets and hence contribute substantially to local economic recovery of the disaster-affected region. Thus relief to these groups acts as both an economic investment in recovery efforts of victims and as a long-term social protection measure. In the year 2002–03 LRF supported more than 9437 beneficiaries from earthquake and riot affected areas. It is an easy number to quote but was a difficult one to achieve. It took time to set up systems and move ahead with a certain speed; however the results were almost always encouraging.

The 1700 families that LRF supported after the Gujarat Riots 2002, included rickshaw pullers, vegetable vendors, readymade garment workers and small shop owners, both, men and women and Hindus and Muslims. " The challenge of providing livelihood relief to victims of human-made disasters or conflicts is unique. Economic and emotional recovery have to match pace. But working together always helps," said Viralben who had experienced such challenges in her fieldwork in Ahmedabad.



LRF is not only a financial fund, but also a pool of data and knowledge. It recently, with the National Council for Applied Economic Research (New Delhi), completed a benchmarking study to understand the impact of the Gujarat earthquake on the livelihoods of the vulnerable amongst the poor. Similarly, based on its recent livelihood allocation experience during riots, LRF is documenting a Rapid Assessment Method. Additionally LRF has a database of 9500 earthquake and riot-affected victims that can be used to generate livelihood learning for application in the South Asian context. Based on the lessons learnt form the ALNAP 12th Bi-annual Meeting (hosted by DMI, 2002), LRF has devised a 'Pass-book System,' to monitor the use of its funds and the impact of its work.

In the course of its work, the LRF learnt a range of lessons related to livelihoods that it shared with various humanitarian actors. These lessons relate to the complexity of livelihood assessments and needs, the reality of shelter as home and place of work, the need for monitoring livelihood recovery and providing secondary infusion of relief for long term livelihood recovery.

LRF advocates the timely, adequate and most importantly demand-driven livelihood support across the relief and rehabilitation phase. It has also experienced that timely livelihood relief helps victims not only to protect other basic securities such as, food, water, shelter, and health but also builds assets and reduces the need for external aid in future disasters. Thus, for LRF the livelihoods approach sits on the crossroads between disasters and development.

Action Planning:
In relation to these learning elements, four key priorities have emerged for LRF action in the coming years,

- Non-tangible asset building, through trade facilitation, vocational training, managerial and marketing inputs;
- Converging micro credit and micro insurance for risk reduction and risk sharing
- Livelihood relief fund capitalisation for sustainable operationalisation of LRF; and
- Focus on Risk Transfer

In addition LRF will focus on the themes of consolidation, expansion and experimentation. It will set up a more effective implementation process for all LRF projects as per the project requirements; access new affected areas like Kheda, Vadodara, Anand and Kadi; document its experiences, conduct in-house training of LRF team every six months and strengthen its monitoring system. LRF will also try to share livelihood learning details at the national and regional level.

Timely livelihood relief helps victims not only protect other basic securities such as, food, water, shelter, and health but also builds assets and reduces the need for external aid in future disasters

E. Water Security Programme (WSP):

Started in 1988, the Water Security Programme is the oldest activity centre in DMI. It developed in response to the recurrent droughts in Gujarat and has been involved in a wide range of community-based risk reduction activities. Its focus has been on issues related to water security in rural and urban vulnerable communities, with concerns of environment protection and capacity building of communities being on the forefront. It has worked in the areas of advocacy, technical counselling, awareness building, implementation of water structures, networking water harvesters and documentation of stakeholder initiatives in water management. "Quality, access, affordability, and quantity of water is becoming a big issue both before and after a disaster," said Jikesh Thakkar describing WSP's 30 village wide water security work in Gujarat.