

Clarifying the fine line between auxiliary and autonomy

Another lesson learned from the 2002 disaster response experience was the need to clarify the fine line between local government and the Red Cross community. The case of Nalbari puts this into perspective.

“Our flood disasters are too great for the government to handle everything alone. The Indian Red Cross relief services are indispensable to post-flood humanitarian needs.”

*Mr. Samria, deputy commissioner,
Gualpara district, Assam.*

In Nalbari, local disaster preparedness initiatives are now managed by a nine member central committee from three different villages as a direct result of the risk reduction pilot project. “We supervise the project and encourage our people to participate and to help the work of the Red Cross in our communities. We decided to form a central committee to oversee activities and prevent problems as a group,” explains the secretary general of the committee, Mr. Madhav Chandra Das. The committee’s membership is cross-generational and its members are civil servants and retired teachers. The key role of this committee comes into focus in ongoing inter-village initiatives for preparedness but especially during relief operations.

During the 2002 disaster relief activities, the community volunteers went door to door to select the beneficiaries and the final list was approved by the central committee. During a group meeting, the central committee members discussed their main problem during these operations. District government authorities made their own list and they then ended up with two different lists of beneficiaries. The government decided to use its own list and ended up distributing food outside of the targeted areas. “The government prepared its list sitting in their offices but we actually went door to door,” explains the committee’s secretary general. “We needed to find a way to coordinate and ensure respect for the independent survey of the Red Cross.”

To prevent this situation from repeating itself in future operations, the Red Cross organized a workshop for the community leaders and district authorities. The aim of the workshop was to create a peaceful environment where the difficulties of the relief distribution could be discussed. The workshop also helped to clarify the line between the job of the government and that of the Red Cross, especially for honorary members of the Red Cross who also hold government positions.

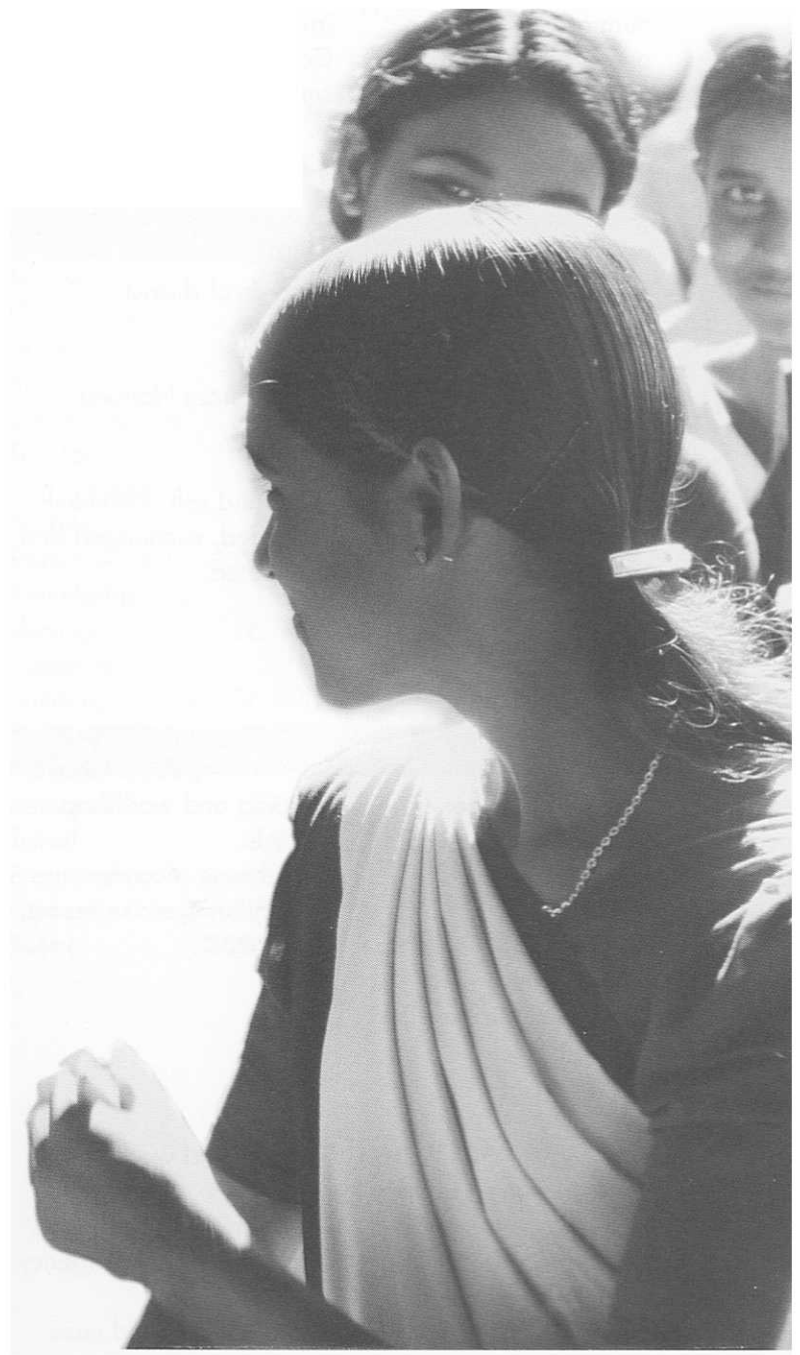
The committee acknowledges that the Red Cross and the government must work together for the benefit of people in need. They also recognize that often the local authorities provide them with a facility when they need one. But the community leaders also emphasize that when there is a disaster the government has authority over two vital parts of an operation - clearance of goods and transport of relief material.

The central committee reiterated that as a people they prefer “peaceful resolve of all situations on behalf of the collectivity”. Through the community-based disaster preparedness pilot project they have been able to participate in educating the authorities on the international responsibilities of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. They have now reached an agreement with the district authorities that in the future, when a beneficiary list is submitted by the community-based disaster preparedness committee, the government will not cut down or alter the list.

Reflecting on this experience, the president of the disaster preparedness central committee states that “finally all we needed to do was to simply educate ourselves, our community and the government authorities on the roles and responsibilities of the Indian Red Cross Society. It took time, but we believe that the results will speak for themselves during the next flood.”

“We learned about Red Cross procedures and principles. During the workshop we were able to discuss our situation peacefully avoiding quarrels and making sure that we cooperate for the benefit of our people.”

*The committee's president,
Mr Modhab Chandan Ras*



Annex Assam, India

Disaster preparedness risk reduction.

Logical framework

<i>Project summary</i>	<i>Measurable indicators</i>	<i>Means of verification</i>	<i>Important assumptions</i>
GOAL			
Strengthened disaster preparedness and disaster response capacity of IRCS Assam State Branch to further reduce vulnerability of communities during disasters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improved response time by Assam branch to disasters occurring in the state. ■ Higher level of community participation during disaster preparedness and response and improved quality of response by communities. 	<p>Lessons learned exercises.</p> <p>Programme review and evaluation with community involvement.</p> <p>Community ownership survey.</p>	IRCS national headquarters will have sufficient organisational capacity to provide leadership and link this project to a wider IRCS capacity-building programme.
PURPOSE			
To improve disaster response time to chronic flooding in the state, learn from these response programmes, and build community-based mitigation models on this learning experience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Two district branches demonstrate an improved ability to develop warning systems and respond to disasters in a timely manner. ■ Four communities demonstrate an increased ability to prevent and mitigate the impacts of small disasters. 	<p>Records of district meetings.</p> <p>Reports from National Societies.</p> <p>Hard and soft documents produced, exchanged and distributed.</p>	Security situation in Assam continues to remain stable and the government of Assam cooperates with the state branch on programme linkages for information sharing.
OUTPUTS			
1 Strengthened capacity of Assam State Branch at state level to predict and respond to disasters in timely and effective manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increased number of trained IRCS Assam branch staff and volunteers. ■ Mobile disaster response unit functional. ■ Increased stock level in Assam branch warehouse. 	<p>Training and workshop records.</p> <p>Warehouse records.</p> <p>Simulation exercise report.</p>	Investment in a branch development process is parallel to this programme.
2 Strengthened capacity in four vulnerable communities to undertake community-based disaster mitigation activities as	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Four communities trained in disaster preparedness. ■ Four completed community VCA and community emergency plans. 	<p>Training and workshop records.</p> <p>Community hazard maps and community emergency plans.</p> <p>Video, reports and case</p>	Active community participation.

Project summary	Measurable indicators	Means of verification	Important assumptions
pilot projects in two high flood prone districts of Assam.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mitigation activities have reduced the impact of disasters on target communities. 	<p>studies. Post-disaster reports</p>	Assam branch commitment to knowledge sharing remains high.
<p>3 Improved compilation and sharing of knowledge (community-based disaster preparedness) video, case studies, lesson learned exercise) within the IRCS and with other agencies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ One video and two case studies produced on community-based disaster preparedness and mitigation project. ■ Two lessons learned exercises documented. ■ Distribution and use of IRCS produced or translated disaster preparedness material. 	<p>Awareness material in communities and with partner agencies. Workshop reports.</p> <p>Video and case studies. Planning documents.</p>	

ACTIVITIES	INPUTS			
1.1 Hire staff and equip disaster management unit in state branch.	Project budget:	CHF	Narrative and financial reports from IRCS.	IRCS capacity is not stretched by a major disaster in India.
1.2 Conduct training for IRCS Assam branch staff and volunteers in disaster management, vulnerability capacity assessment (VCA), project planning and management.	Community projects	64,000	Monitoring visits by International Federation delegates and staff, British Red Cross technical staff and DFID evaluation visits.	
	Stock pre-positioning	55,500		
	Transport and storage	4,500		
	Mobile Response Unit	25,000		
	Knowledge sharing	16,000		
1.3 Procure 7,500 temporary shelters (tarpaulins) and preposition in Assam.	Capacity building	36,000		
	Training	40,000		
1.4 Design and equip one fully resourced air-portable mobile disaster response unit (MDRU) with operation room equipment.	National Society personnel	15,000		
	Travel	5,000		
	Programme support	39,000		
	Total	300,000		
1.5 Use MDRU for training, and exercise the deployment through simulation.				
2.1 Select four communities and establish working relationships.				
2.2 Train communities in community-based disaster risk reduction methods.				

<i>Project summary</i>	<i>Measurable indicators</i>	<i>Means of verification</i>	<i>Important assumptions</i>
<p>2.3 Conduct VCA in selected four communities.</p> <p>2.4 Design and implement community risk reduction measures (community-based first aid and disaster preparedness, early warning systems and small mitigation projects) in the targeted communities.</p> <p>2.5 Link mobile health teams in Assam branch with disaster preparedness by adding disaster preparedness training in their programme.</p> <p>3.1 Conduct structured lessons learned and planning exercises (two for disaster response and two for community-based disaster preparedness pilot project) and develop these as case studies for future training and for sharing with others.</p> <p>3.2 Produce a video documentary on community-based disaster preparedness project in one community and use it for learning and sharing experience.</p> <p>3.3 Translation and production of DP material in local language.</p> <p>3.4 Coordination with governments and NGO's for training and knowledge sharing.</p>			

The Fundamental Principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

Humanity

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, born of a desire to bring assistance without discrimination to the wounded on the battlefield, endeavours, in its international and national capacity, to prevent and alleviate human suffering wherever it may be found. Its purpose is to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being. It promotes mutual understanding, friendship, cooperation and lasting peace amongst all peoples.

Impartiality

It makes no discrimination as to nationality, race, religious beliefs, class or political opinions. It endeavours to relieve the suffering of individuals, being guided solely by their needs, and to give priority to the most urgent cases of distress.

Neutrality

In order to enjoy the confidence of all, the Movement may not take sides in hostilities or engage in controversies of a political, racial, religious or ideological nature.

Independence

The Movement is independent. The National Societies, while auxiliaries in the humanitarian services of their governments and subject to the laws of their respective countries, must always maintain their autonomy so that they may be able at all times to act in accordance with the principles of the Movement.

Voluntary Service

It is a voluntary relief movement not prompted in any manner by desire for gain.

Unity

There can be only one Red Cross or Red Crescent Society in any one country. It must be open to all. It must carry on its humanitarian work throughout its territory.

Universality

The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in which all societies have equal status and share equal responsibilities and duties in helping each other, is worldwide.