

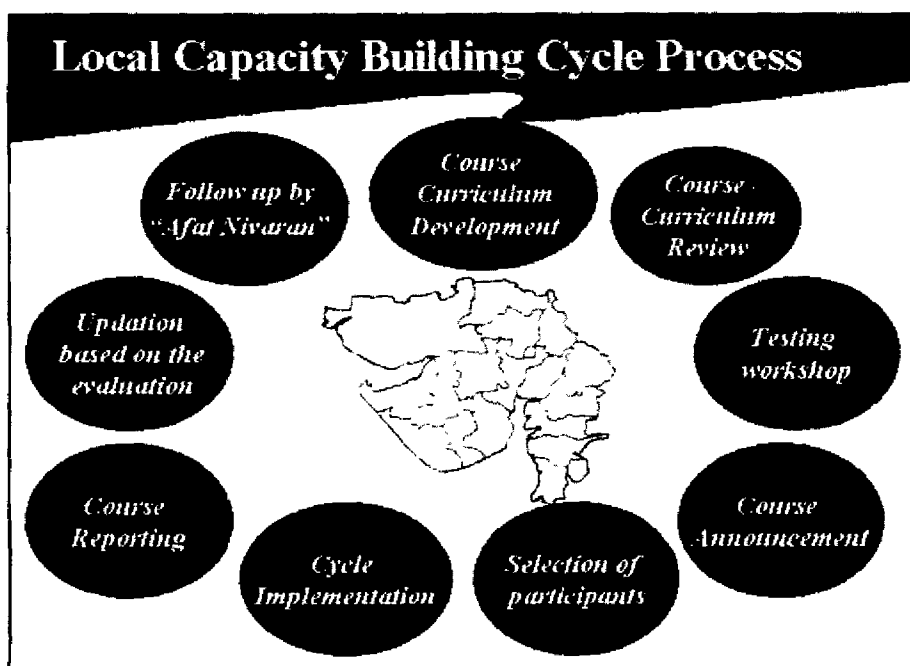
## LEARNING FROM TEACHING I: LOCAL CAPACITY BUILDING CYCLES

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Community capacity building cycles prepare leaders from vulnerable communities to work towards disaster preparedness. The term “cycle” refers to DMI’s training courses since they are designed to be repeated in different areas, and it is hoped that people who have attended one course will attend others in the future. Therefore, there is a cyclical nature to this programme. In actuality, conducting the courses is only one part of the cycle. The cycle starts with the identification of a subject and goes through the process of finding the relevant background information, identifying the proper participants from the community, conducting the consultation with them so as to learn from the ground realities and test the various approaches towards enhancing the capacity to be prepared for disasters and to recover fast in a sustaining manner. The consultation gives new learning to the community and to DMI. The DMI will take it through its sharing and dissemination process to further its relevancy and again that goes back to the community and DMI, completing the cycle.

The term “training” refers to one specific course that is given in a particular time and place. The term “course” refers to the type of training programme provided which may be given more than once.

Local knowledge and community capacities are central to the capacity building activities. There is a balance between community based approaches and scientific knowledge. The reality of experiences that take place in the field with the community are in the centre of learning methods. Participatory and innovative learning methods are used in each cycle.



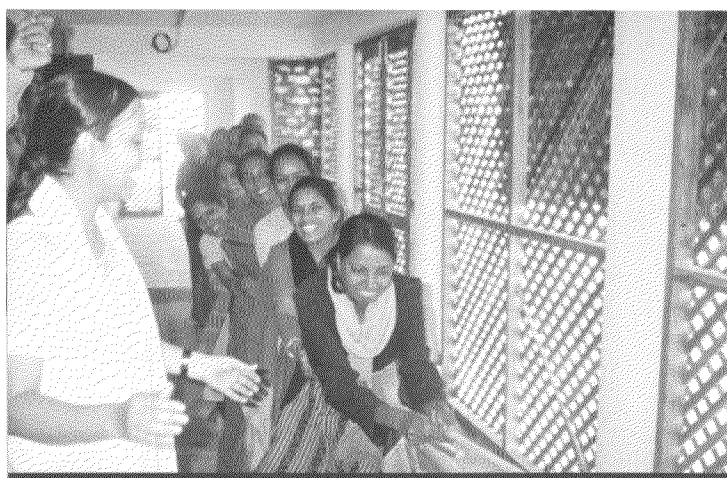
Without building local capacity, impact cannot be achieved.

So far 55 trainings have reached about 1275 leaders from Self Help Groups, CBOs, Panchayati Raj Institutions, School teachers, Urban slum volunteers and other communities in Gujarat. These have been conducted in the context of five disasters: earthquakes, droughts, riots, cyclones, and floods.

The following courses have been developed, tested and run:

- Community Based Disaster Risk Mitigation (CBDM)
- Disaster Preparedness for School Safety
- Participatory Rural Risk Appraisal tools
- Participatory Appraisal of Recovery
- Safer Building Construction
- Emergency Medical Response (First-Aid)
- Urban Town Planning and Poor
- Food Security
- Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response
- Water Audit

Initial cycles on community based disaster risk management were organised in partnership with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), Delhi, covering 80 participants from 25 villages. Other cycles have been run in partnership with the Ahmedabad Municipal School Board, European Union, CARE (UK), Gujarat Red Cross, leading private schools, World Food Programme and others. See Annex 7 for a complete list of Local Capacity Building Cycles.



Leaders of women's federation learning importance of coordination at a Community Learning Centre of SEWA.

## OBJECTIVES OF LOCAL CAPACITY BUILDING CYCLES

The aim of these cycles is to strengthen preparedness capacities of vulnerable communities by promoting a community based disaster risk management framework. The courses are conducted in the local language and are drawn from daily realities and packaged for field use. These cycles are aimed at preparing mitigation leaders from vulnerable communities to build a safer future. A balance of community-based approaches and scientific knowledge is maintained. Participatory and innovative learning methods are used to augment the learning process. For example, courses include interactive exercises on hazards, vulnerability, mitigation, and preparedness capacity assessment clarify the roles and plan of actions.

Historically, money is hardly ever spent on building the capacity of the community that is affected by a disaster, especially in their own

language, in their own location, and according to their own demands. DMI's Local Capacity Building Cycles is an effort to modify that historic trend in response to a growing realization of the ineffectiveness of top down approaches to disaster risk management. DMI promotes a community-based disaster risk management approach to address specific local needs of vulnerable communities; and it is a long-term development approach to disaster mitigation, not a short-term relief only effort.

### EFFECTIVENESS OF LOCAL CAPACITY BUILDING CYCLES

Local Capacity Building Cycle training programmes have successfully used interactive exercises on hazards, vulnerability, mitigation and capacity assessment to clarify the plans of action for many village communities, school teachers, self-help groups, and Panchayati Raj institutions. The feedback from the participants revealed that these cycles enable them to foster a culture of initiatives, bring the concerns of the poor central to relief and rehabilitation, and raise the premium on reflection. One participant from Patan village in Gujarat said: "I knew how to fight drought, but now I know why I did what I did "

In July, 2002 DMI commissioned a review of the Local Capacity Building Cycles by members of the Department of Social Work at Sardar Patel University in Gujarat, and Purdue University in the USA. The review revealed that the cycles were useful in many ways, most importantly in:

- Promoting a culture of local mitigation initiatives,
- Bringing the concerns of the poor to the forefront of the relief and rehabilitation process by building their capacity, and
- Building a knowledge base from and for the local communities

The Local Capacity Building Cycles have led to many specific changes that people have incorporated into their life that helps them prepare for or deal with disasters when they occur. For example, courses on safer building techniques have resulted in more seismically safe homes; farmer organizations have been formed; DMI volunteers have become much more capable and knowledgeable in dealing with the local communities; disaster management curriculum developed by DMI has been incorporated into schools' teaching programmes; and a business development organisation (Chamber of Commerce and Industry) geared to serve DMI beneficiaries has just been created.

Mitigation means many things to different people in different contexts DMI helps them find their own meaning.

