

## LEARNING THROUGH DISSEMINATION: PUBLICATIONS AND WEBSITES

DMI publishes a wide variety of written material, from periodicals to booklets. These are aimed at different audiences, ranging from local community members, NGOs and CBOs, to state and national policy makers and government officials, to members of the international disaster management community. The format of the different items, and the language used, are chosen with the specific audience in mind. Information designed to reach national policy makers, for example, may be couched in more technical terms than information directed at local communities. The outreach efforts are also different, ranging from handouts at community learning centers for local residents, to posting on DMI's website for an international audience. This range of outreach material is discussed in the following sections.

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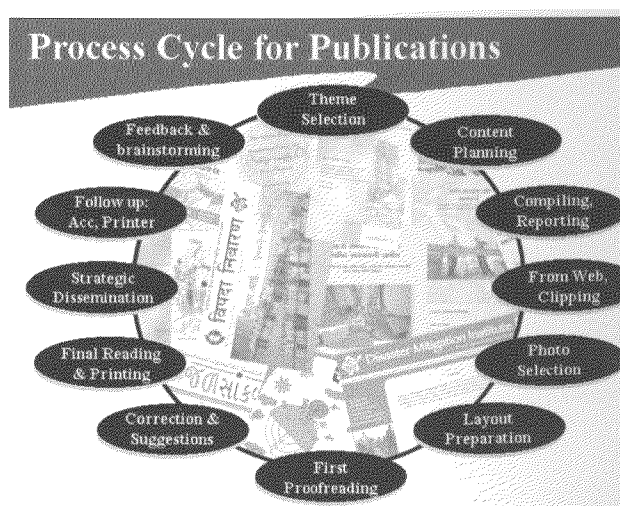
### 9.1 PERIODICALS AND INFORMATION SHEETS

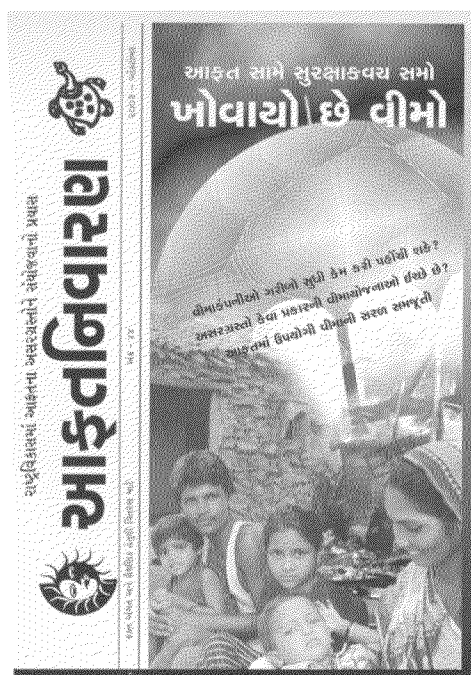
DMI publishes the following periodicals:

- *Afat Nivaran*: a monthly newsletter in Gujarati brings together the experiences and insights of NGOs, GOs, and community workers involved in disaster risk mitigation in India. 45 issues have been published from June 1998 to date. The current circulation is 2000 and it is also available online.
- *Vipada Nivaran*: a quarterly in Hindi highlights key ideas and action from the field. It reaches out to the Hindi speaking decision-makers in India. Twelve issues have been published since January 2000.
- *Jalsankal*: bimonthly in Gujarati and a part of the national water harvesting campaign of the Centre for Science and Environment. It acts as a link between grassroots level water harvesting initiatives and the national perspective. Seven issues have been published since November 2001.

Having initiated an activity, it is enlisted as a series of steps which helps in systematizing new activities.

DMI's Information Sheets are circulated through internet to researchers, policy makers, and practitioners with key mitigation issues and ideas coming out from grassroots experience. Over 100 topics have been covered since 1996. For each information sheet a separate target list of practitioners, researcher, and policy makers is developed and used.





Publishing local and global issues, ideas and experience in local language is important for field level learning. *Afat Nivaran* is DMI's 24 page monthly publication.

## AFAT NIVARAN

### OBJECTIVES OF AFAT NIVARAN:

*Afat Nivaran* ("Disaster Mitigation" in Gujarati) is DMI's main outreach instrument. The objectives of this newsletter parallel the central objectives of DMI as a whole:

- To learn grassroots realities and share these experiences with other communities, government agencies, NGOs and others in order to use the experience of vulnerable communities and those affected by disasters to increase preparedness
- To increase victims' voice in policy making
- To link disaster mitigation with development

*Afat Nivaran* is a tool for learning as it documents what DMI learns, it processes that information, and shares it with others. The focus is on learning from past risk mitigation efforts to improve the quality of each new response of preparedness and mitigation. The publication

aims at bringing the victims of disasters into the mainstream of national development. *Afat Nivaran* encourages community members to incorporate specific changes into their life in order to better prepare for disasters. This is accomplished by the readers contacting the government for specific schemes, by local community organising an assessment method, or by visiting the mitigation sites or projects.

The policy related issues in *Afat Nivaran* are addressed in a way that is accessible to a wide range of readers. A positive and constructive approach is maintained; the focus is on what is working and why and not on mistakes of other initiatives or institutions. Academic analysis is avoided. Trendy issues are bypassed. The readers of *Afat Nivaran* include individuals and communities affected by disasters, Government departments that are involved in disaster mitigation and other officials at the local to national levels, academicians, the media, NGOs and CBOs, local hospitals, local banks, cooperatives, and panchayats (local councils). Each issue of *Afat Nivaran* is focused on a different aspect of disaster preparedness and mitigation.

*Afat Nivaran* has undergone several stages in its development, with each new stage adding more depth but still retaining the focus of previous stages. At first it focused on publicizing the voice of the community. Then it focused on information sharing with and between communities and other stakeholders. More recently, each issue has been based on a specific theme. Currently, the emphasis is shifting to the raising of policy issues and sharing proposed solutions (e.g., dealing with the issue of how to address drought and flood issues together in a holistic approach—not just

reporting on what happened.) and to generate debate. Sustained efforts are made to find a policy opening on which a special issue of *Afat Nivaran* can be based. For example, a recent issue reviewed insurance experience of disaster victims. Another issue reviewed disasters and mitigation measures in India in the year 2003.

*Afat Nivaran* has also grown greatly in sophistication and publication quality. At the beginning the material in the publication came from DMI team members and community members, rather than a "professional" magazine staff. In the year 2000, a more professional approach was instituted, yet it still gave a voice to the community and allows DMI to provide information to its readers. The publication has also grown from eight to 24 pages with more photos, interactive sections, and special sections for children and women. Recently, *Afat Nivaran* is being published with closer coordination between operation and learning teams.

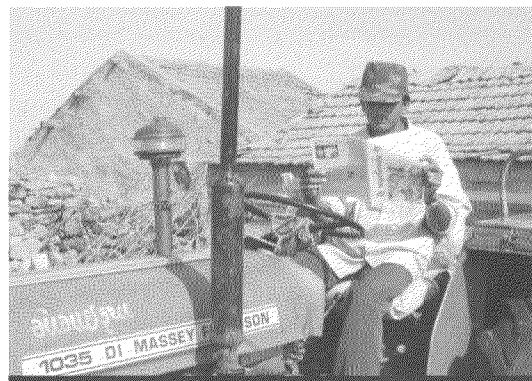
Some of the recent issues of *Afat Nivaran* have covered issues of risk transfer and disasters, urban risk reduction, floods management, drought and water management, squalls, and cyclones. On occasions special issues are published. Immediately after the earthquake a special issue was published in days. See Annex 1 for a complete list of *Afat Nivaran* issues.

#### EFFECTIVENESS OF AFAT NIVARAN:

Manish Mehta, chief reporter for the Gujarat based Chitralekha weekly, has said, "*Afat Nivaran* is perhaps the leading monthly in India published on disaster mitigation issues for and with vulnerable communities."

After 35 issues had been published DMI conducted a review in August 2002. Twenty questions about its quality and usefulness were published in a newsletter to obtain reader feedback, and six "experts" were also asked to review all past issues. The general finding was that the publication was very good (the coverage was good and the language was readable); however, it could be presented in a more professional and reader friendly manner. At this point DMI decided to make the publication more professional in appearance and to also make it more research oriented. As noted, the newsletter went from eight to 24 pages and added special sections for children and women and took up a thematic approach.

A couple of points help illustrate *Afat Nivaran's* effectiveness. In January 2001 the monthly issue was published only four days after the January 26<sup>th</sup> Earthquake and contained valuable articles on the effects of the quake and other seismic safety and relief information. Also, prior to the "up grade" of the newsletter to a more professional publication DMI received approximately five or six letters a



A reader of *Afat Nivaran*

month in response to the newsletter; after the changes and new format to a more user friendly approach DMI now receives 25 to 30 letters a month.

The *Afat Nivaran* newsletter is unique in many ways. It's the first newsletter of its kind ever published in Gujarati. It is the first newsletter mainly focusing on victims' views. It is the only disaster related publication in India that is available on-line.

## VIPADA NIVARAN

### OBJECTIVES OF VIPADA NIVARAN:

The audience for *Vipada Nivaran* ("Disaster Mitigation" in Hindi) is mainly policy makers—elected and administrative officials at the state and national level throughout India. The objective of the publication was to fill a gap—previously in India there was no common platform, no single source for sharing information and experiences among agencies involved in disaster mitigation—from one disaster to the next or from one geographic area to another. In addition *Vipada Nivaran* is designed to address policy issues at the state and national levels. For example, *Vipada Nivaran* has addressed the need for improved town planning to provide adequate storm drain facilities to mitigate flooding hazards. It has addressed the issue of quality of relief; national policy on disaster risk; and putting mitigation on national agenda. In addition, the publication has pointed out the need to look at flooding and drought disasters holistically.

One thousand copies of *Vipada Nivaran* are printed for each edition. It is also available on the Internet at the



*Vipada Nivaran*, published in Hindi, the national language, links local and national learning around policy and action in 24 pages each month.

DMI website. The content of *Vipada Nivaran* includes translation of material from *Afat Nivaran* and new material covering topics of policy interest. As with *Afat Nivaran*, *Vipada Nivaran* is growing and gaining strength in its content and layout. It is now a 24 page publication. However, the Hindi publication is now in a transition period. The intent is to make the current quarterly into a bi-monthly publication. Also, the format has changed from a small booklet to a professional magazine format similar to that of the effective *Afat Nivaran*. See Annex 2 for a complete list of *Vipada Nivaran* issues.

### EFFECTIVENESS OF VIPADA NIVARAN:

DMI has received many letters, including Email responses, that have expressed approval of *Vipada Nivaran's* content and presentation. The issues of *Vipada Nivaran* has helped establish DMI and its work as a fast growing name on disaster risk mitigation in other states of India.

## JALSANKAL

### OBJECTIVES OF JALSANKAL:

This publication devoted specifically to water harvesting was instituted because drought is a perennial problem in Gujarat State. There are many initiatives at the grassroots level to address this problem but there was no formal communication link between the various stakeholders *Jalsankal* ("water chain" or "linking water" in Gujarati) was launched with India's most respected environment agency, the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) in Delhi. This newsletter aims to link grassroots level rainwater harvesters, local CBOs, NGOs, and individuals dealing with the ongoing water crisis in Gujarat, with policymakers.

CSE already had an English publication ("Catch Water") on the subject of rainwater harvesting. DMI and CSE decided that a joint effort would be worthwhile whereby this publication would be translated into Gujarati by DMI in order to take it available to the grassroots level. Water Security is the oldest activity center in DMI giving it a lot of experience in this subject so it would add value by providing information of its own. DMI would also lend its general experience and expertise in the communication of information. In return, material from DMI would be translated into English and included in CSE's publication. There are several Gujarati publications on water but almost all focus on the NGO sector. *Jalsankal* reaches out beyond NGOs to public officials, teachers, students, business houses and professionals.

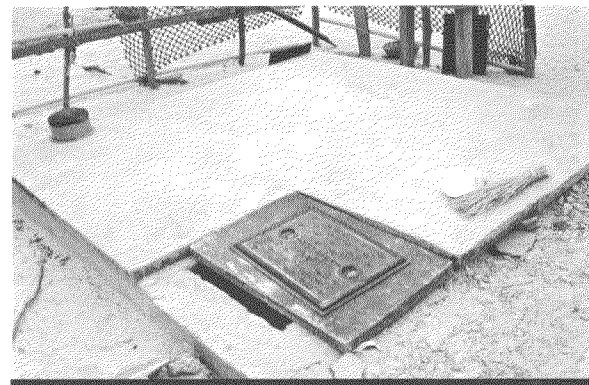
*Jalsankal* is a bi-monthly publication consisting of 10-12 pages. One thousand copies are usually printed. The newsletter is disseminated to policy makers, elected state and nagarpalika (small town) leaders, NGOs, and selected water harvesters. DMI now proposes to change the status of this publication—in the future it will be printed as a supplement to *Afat Nivaran*. It makes sense to combine these publications since they are both published in Gujarati and are intended for the same audience; it can be treated as one of the "themes" that *Afat Nivaran* now focuses on. See Annex 3 for a complete list of *Jalsankal* issues.

### EFFECTIVENESS OF JALSANKAL:

The effectiveness of *Jalsankal* can be illustrated by the fact that one District Collector wanted to share this information with all of the



*Jalsankal*, meaning water links, connects water harvesters with other water harvesters.



Demonstration projects have a tremendous impact. Sometimes more impact than years long awareness campaigns.