

Comparisons of Performance of Non-Governmental Organization and Gram Panchayats in Disaster Management

Debabrata Mondal¹, Sarthak Chowdhury² and Debabrata Basu³

ABSTRACT

Disasters like floods, cyclones, droughts and earthquakes are increasing in India and in almost all parts of the earth due to environmental degradation, deforestation, increasing population, global warming, nuclear explosions, and air pollution. There is also worldwide concern to mitigate the growing incidence of disaster and their toll on human life, property, and environment. The role of Panchayats (local self governing institutions) is important in view of their proximity to the local community, coverage and engaging people's participation on an institutionalized basis. NGOs are organizations that are nonprofit making, voluntary and independent of government, engaged in activities concerning various societal and developmental issues. The role of the NGOs during a disaster is to have quick response and to try and save as many lives as it can with the given funds. A study was undertaken in cyclone *Aila* affected areas in West Bengal on analysis of the role of Non Governmental Organization and Gram Panchayats on disaster management. The main role performed by the NGOs were providing relief materials, organizing health camp, involved in rescue operation, arranging temporary shelters and so on. On the other hand the major functions of G.P during the post-disaster were identification of victims for compensation, relief and rehabilitation work, monitoring and supervision of relief works as well as damage assessment. The data were collected in the month of October 2013 to March, 2014 to attain the objective of the study. A total 150 respondents were selected purposively as the respondents. The data were processed into percentage, mean score and t-test. The findings of the study indicated that, the people of the disaster affected area should inform the details of the disaster sufficiently ahead.

Key words: Disaster management, NGOs, Gram Panchayats, Comparisons, relief and rehabilitation.

INTRODUCTION

Cyclone *Aila* inflicted a heavy damage on coastal livelihoods. Water, dry food, shelter and proper medication are four highest priority areas for assistance now. There is also a dire need for proper sanitation facilities. Restoration and repairing of roads and embankments are also high priority areas of concern. As repair of embankments should take a while, emergency assistance is required for the affected people to cover up to 3-4 months of food and shelter security, while extended relief assistance might be needed in some worst affected areas.

There is also an urgent need to start recovery and rehabilitation program as *Aila* features a mammoth damage on physical structures (Roy *et al.*, 2009). Cyclonic Storm *Aila* wrecked havoc on the coastal

South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal on May 25, 2009. *Aila* was the second tropical storm formed in Northern Indian Ocean in 2009. According to the Government data more than 11, 00,000 people who fled (their) homes had been sheltered in several hundred shelters in eight coastal districts so far. The Government survey estimated that the total *Aila* affected areas were: Blocks 111, Municipality 39, Villages 15401, and Population 4,53,8018.00 (GOI, 2009).

The role of NGOs assumes significance in view of their wider engagement in civic and development initiatives. Factors such as disillusionment with centralised structures; emphasis on pluralism, expanded civic engagement; and collaboration amongst multiple actors explain this change in perception. (Behera, 2002). NGOs can work toward

¹Research Scholar (Agril. Ext.), Department of Agril. Extension, Agril. Economics and Agril. Statistics, Institute of Agriculture, Visva Bharati, Sriniketan
² Prof., Department of Agril. Extension, Agril. Economics and Agril. Statistics, Institute of Agriculture, Visva Bharati, Sriniketan, WB, ³ Prof.,
Department of Agricultural Extension, B.C.K.V, Nadia, West Bengal.

reducing vulnerability through training, education and helping to establish a clear coordination of disaster response responsibilities (UNISDR, 2007).

The main focus of NGO involvement in the field of disasters is largely with respect to relief and development. Keeping these in view the present study was undertaken to assess the opinion of the affected people towards the comparisons of the role of Non-governmental Organization and gram panchayats in disaster management.

METHODOLOGY

The Sundarbans, a coastal, underdeveloped area, is one of the most visible victims of the ravages of climate change in India. Fragility of the ecosystem coupled with underdevelopment has made this region particularly vulnerable.

The districts North and South 24 parganas of West Bengal were selected purposively for the study because these two districts were the most severely affected by *Aila*. Seven blocks namely Basanti, Gosaba, Namkhana, Kakdwip, Sandeshkhali I, Sandeshkhali-II and Parthar pratima and were selected purposively. From the selected blocks, 150 villagers were selected as respondents.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The PRI members can play a role of leadership in Disaster Management at all stages. Right from the preparatory stage up to the handling of the long term development activities for risk reduction.

Table 1: Role of PRI according to GOI-UNDP, 2009

Phase		
Pre-disaster	During disaster	Post- disaster
Organising awareness campaign and promoting community education on disaster preparedness	Arranging emergency communication through available resources	Damage assessment particularly assisting in identifying victims for
Articulation of community need for developing preparedness plan through community involvement and Panchayat ownership	Evacuation to temporary shelter and running relief camps	Formulating rehabilitation and reconstruction plan of houses and other local infrastructures
Identifying the resource gaps both	Supplementing rescue and	Enforce minimum

physical and manpower and replenish the same through capacity building	relief efforts in coordinating different agencies	specification for safe reconstruction
Establishing synergy with local agencies including NGOs/ CBOs	Monitoring of Relief distribution	Supervise and monitor long term reconstruction and mitigation projects
Activating the DM Plans with the participation of the community	Safe disposal of carcass and arranging safe drinking water and sanitation	
Encouraging people to insure assets and livestock		
Formation of Task forces and their capacity building		
Establishing convergence with local institutional structures created for implementing education, health, livelihood, social justice and so on.		

Emerging trends in managing natural disaster have highlighted the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as one of the most effective alternative means of achieving an efficient communication link between the disaster management agencies and the affective community. The specific role of NGOs in respect to disaster management is:

Pre-disaster: Training and capacity building of NGO staffs and task forces, set up of information channel to the village and district, advocacy and planning and regular contact with block control room.

During disaster: Activate of channel of warning dissemination to reach the target groups, help block administration for wide dissemination of warning, immediate rescue and first-aid, including psychological aid, supply of food, water, medicines, and other immediate need materials, ensuring sanitation and hygiene and damage assessment.

Post- disaster: Technical and material aid in reconstruction, Assistance in seeking financial aid and Monitoring

Table 2: Sources of information utilized by the respondents with respect to the disaster

Source of information	Extent of utilization of information sources						Mean score	Gap (%)
	Always		Sometimes		Never			
	No	Percentage	No	Percentage	No	Percentage		
Print media	45	30.00	93	62.00	12	8.00	2.22	26.00
Electronic media	120	80.00	12	8.00	18	12.00	2.68	10.67
Government official	54	36.00	39	26.00	57	38.00	1.98	34.00
Gram Panchayat	75	50.00	48	32.00	27	18.00	2.32	22.67
Friends and relatives	105	70.00	39	26.00	6	4.00	2.66	11.34
NGOs	45	30.00	36	24.00	69	46.00	1.84	38.67

(Maximum obtainable score-3)

Significant gaps were observed on the sources of information provided by the stakeholders as perceived by the respondents in the disasters affected study areas. The findings therefore revealed that the respondents were not getting information always from any of the source as mentioned in the table-2, but electronic media followed by friends and relatives and print media were the better source of information about occurrence of disasters.

Table 3: Participation of the stakeholders in disaster management

Institutions	Extent of participation				Mean score	Gap (%)
	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Never		
	No.	No	No	No		
Government Organizations	33	21	72	24	2.42	39.50
Non-Governmental Organization	36	45	45	24	2.62	34.50
Gram Panchayats	27	51	27	45	2.40	40.00
Friends and neighbours	63	57	18	12	3.14	21.50
Voluntary organization	48	30	45	27	2.66	33.50
Press and media	18	35	53	44	2.18	45.50
Credit institution	9	21	33	87	1.68	58.00

(Maximum obtainable score-4)

The study on the participation of the stakeholders in disaster management revealed that all the stakeholders under study had not participated adequately in disaster managements and significant gaps were observed on their participation.

However friends and neighbours and voluntary organizations participated better than others stakeholders under study. Maximum gap was obtained in case of credit institution followed by press and media and non-government organization.

Table 4: Opinion of the respondents about assistance provided by the Non Governmental Organization for mitigating the disaster

Nature of assistance	Extent of opinion					Mean score	Rank
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree		
Disseminate warning information	06	12	15	57	60	1.98	IX
Organize awareness camp	25	36	15	50	24	2.92	VI
Arranging temporary shelters	72	45	00	18	15	3.94	I
Providing relief material	59	48	21	10	12	3.88	III
Organizing health camps	43	60	12	19	16	3.63	IV
Supply of agricultural inputs	12	18	21	75	24	2.46	VIII
Provided financial assistance	00	00	00	72	78	1.48	X
Involvement in rescue operation	69	42	09	15	15	3.90	II
Assess loss	12	18	24	75	21	2.50	VII
Arrange/ providing training and education	36	42	24	36	12	3.36	V

(Maximum obtainable score-5)

Table-4 depicted that majority of the respondents strongly agreed about the assistance provided by the NGOs on all the statement mentioned in the table except financial assistance and supply of agricultural inputs.

Data revealed that majority of the respondents agreed with the assistance for the providing relief materials, involvement in rescue operations, arranging temporary shelters, organize health camp and developing communication facilities. Besides these respondent were strongly agree (ranked Xth) on the assistance for providing training and education to the children respectively. At the same

time, majority of the respondents strongly disagreed and disagreed with their involvement in financial assistance.

Table 5: Opinion of the respondents regarding assistance provided by Gram Panchayats for mitigation of disaster

Nature of Assistance	Extent of opinion					Mean score	Rank
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree		
Disseminate warning information	25	27	12	45	41	2.67	VIII
Organize awareness camp	57	60	00	20	13	3.85	I
Arranging temporary shelters	42	45	18	18	27	3.38	V
Providing relief material	42	48	09	30	21	3.40	IV
Organizing health camps	30	33	15	12	60	2.74	VII
Supply of agricultural inputs	15	21	27	24	63	2.14	X
Provided financial assistance	60	48	6	15	12	3.68	III
Involvement in rescue operation	39	24	12	40	35	2.95	VI
Assess loss	51	57	6	26	10	3.75	II
Arrange/ providing training and education	18	12	9	63	48	2.26	IX

(Maximum obtainable score-5)

Table- 5 depicts the opinion of the respondents towards assistance provided by the Gram Panchayats during disasters. The majority of the respondents agreed that G.P arranged awareness camp, which ranked first followed by they assessed loss after the disaster.

They gave the compensation to the victims (ranked IInd) and provision of relief materials during the disasters ranked IVth. G.P members arranged primary health treatment for the villagers and livestock.

The respondents opined that they themselves arrange their shelter to the school buildings, pucca buildings, on the road and relative's house. The respondents had not so much positive views towards G.P on the assistance provided in terms of training to the villagers, supply of agricultural inputs, communicating the warning messages.

Table 6: Comparative assessment of GP's role in providing assistance in disaster with respect to Nongovernmental organizations

Name of the GP	Perceived Mean Score of assistance provided by the various organizations	
	Gram panchayat	Non Governmental Organization
Basanti	3.68	3.68
Bharatgarh	3.14	3.14
Jharkhali	2.88	2.88
Ramchandra khali	3.14	3.14
Nafar ganj	3.26	3.26
Choto molla khali	2.92	2.92
Satzelia	2.98	2.98
Lahiripur	3.24	3.24
Kumir mari	2.98	2.98
Rangabelia	2.72	2.72
Surjanagar	3.18	3.18
Rishi Bankim Chandra	3.04	3.04
Mousuni	3.22	3.22
Sibarampur	3.20	3.20
Namkhana	3.24	3.24
Budha khali	3.36	3.36
Haripur	3.42	3.42
Dakshin roy pur	3.36	3.36
G-Plot	3.04	3.04
Pathar pratima	3.06	3.06
Digambarpur	3.20	3.20
Ramganga	2.98	2.98
Durbachati	3.06	3.06
Kalinagar	3.20	3.20
Hatgachi	3.18	3.18
Bayermari = I	2.94	2.94
Bermajur-II	3.22	3.22
Bermajur-I	3.20	3.20

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Sandeshkhali	3.00	3.00
Jelia Khali	3.36	3.36
Overall mean	3.14	3.14
Paired t-value with respect to		5.17
GP with p-value	--	p<0.001

From the table, it is found that the t value for the difference between the gram panchayats and Non government organization is 5.17. It is highly significant. So we can conclude that there is difference between the mean score of assistance provided by gram panchayats and Non-governmental organization.

CONCLUSION

The Panchayati Raj Institution (PRI) is a statutory body elected by the local people through a well defined democratic process with specific responsibilities and duties. The elected members are accountable to the people of the ward, rural community, block and the district. Keeping the above in view, the study identified the role of gram panchayats and non- governmental organization in disaster management.

The main role performed by the panchayats in post disaster management were providing relief materials, management of crops, management of disaster affected household articles, repair of damaged houses, health and sanitation measures and repair/ maintenance of infrastructure, transport and communication facilities.

The NGO provided assistance for the providing relief materials, involvement in rescue operations, arranging temporary shelters, organize health camp. Besides these NGO also arranged on the assistance for providing training and education to the children respectively.

But they did not provide any financial assistance. In terms of preparedness measures were taken by the respondents themselves were preservation of safe drinking water, shifted important documents/ materials to a safer places. Although poor preparedness measures were observed on storing

ready to eat materials, collection of materials for temporary shed, preservation of common medicines for health and drinking water, in day to day use drinking disasters, keeping communication materials particularly radio and mobile for getting information about further sensitization of the disasters and contact over mobile with the government. The findings of the study indicated that no significant differences were observed on the opinion of the villagers disaster management measures. Comparative analysis of the assistance provided by Gram Panchayats and Non Governmental Organization revealed that there was difference between the mean score of assistance provided by gram panchayats and non government organization.

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