

AUGUST 2020



AAPDA SAMVAAD



— Your Friends In Need! —

NDMA reviews Aapda Mitra Initiative in Dehradun



On 10th-11th August 2020, NDMA's team led by Shri Rajendra Singh, Member, NDMA and Shri Ramesh Kumar G., Joint Secretary (Capacity Building and Training) monitored the initiative in Haridwar, Uttarakhand.

The Aapda Mitra volunteers in Haridwar demonstrated flood rescue operations. NDMA team also reviewed the Disaster Management Activities of the Haridwar District wherein Shri C. Ravishankar, DM, Haridwar gave details pertaining to the progress of the Aapda Mitra Initiative.

A meeting was held with Shri Trivendra Singh Rawat, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Uttarakhand wherein discussion related to up scaling of the scheme in other districts of the State, along with training of Yuva Mangal Dal and Mahila Mangal Dal by SDRF on lines of Aapda Mitra took place.

NDMA team also visited Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority to review projects like Aapda Mitra, implementation of School Safety Guidelines, implementation of Sendai Framework in Partnership with Govt. of Uttarakhand and other activities undertaken by Govt. of Uttarakhand.

Specific recordings were held at NIEPVD with NDMA Officials and Aapda Mitra Volunteers for 'Hello Doon' - a community radio station. NDMA highlighted that community radio can be used in organising the communities to plan, implement and monitor disaster management by facilitating relief, rehabilitation and restoration initiatives.

Flood Early Warning System launched for Guwahati

NDMA in collaboration with The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), Indian Meteorological Department, State Disaster Management



Authority Assam and Guwahati Municipal Corporation launched the Flood Early Warning System (FEWA) for Guwahati on 13th August 2020.

NDMA and TERI also organised a webinar on 13th August 2020, to discuss initiatives, best practices and challenges related to science based tools and effective communication of climate risk assessments and impacts, and their role in designing policies for targeted actions.

Incident Response System (IRS) Training and Table Top Exercise

NDMA regularly conducts mock exercises to prepare all stakeholders involved in disaster management. To ensure the continuity of preparation for disasters during COVID-19, the subsequent Table Top and IRS training are being conducted via video conference, involving stakeholders from multiple districts.

- NDMA conducted an online Mock Exercise and Table Top exercise on earthquake for the State of Mizoram on 11th August, 2020. It was chaired by Lt Gen (Retd.) Syed Ata Hasnain, Member NDMA.
- On 17th August 2020, NDMA conducted an online IRS training and Table Top Exercise for flood prone districts of Jammu & Kashmir.
- Lt Gen (Retd.) Syed Ata Hasnain chaired the online IRS Training and Table Top Exercise on earthquakes for 11 districts of Delhi on 28 August 2020 conducted by NDMA.



Aapda Mitra

Your Friends In Need!

The Journey

Stuck all alone in an isolated house in Kottayam, Kerala; Manka, a 95 year old woman was rescued by brave Aapda Mitra Volunteers namely, Majeesh, Sinu, Midhun and Sreekuttan from flood caused by heavy monsoon rain. They not only rescued her, but shifted her to the nearest relief camp and provided medicine and food during this time. Similarly, with the training received from Aapda Mitra Initiative, Avinash Yadav and Ravindra Yadav were able to rescue 10 people including themselves on a boat that had overturned in Gorakhpur, U.P.

In case of any disaster or emergency, before any government machinery & support reaches, it is



I received training from the Aapda Mitra Initiative in 2018 such as what to do during an emergency situation, how to rescue people and move them to safer places etc. This training proved to be extremely useful during the 2019 Kolhapur Floods, where my team and I were able to rescue people.



Shubham Katkar,

Aapda Mitra Volunteer, Kolhapur,
Maharashtra

the community which has to respond immediately and plays the role of the 'first responder'. It is imperative to train members of communities in disaster prone areas in certain basic skills of disaster management so that they are able to respond in an informed and prompt manner as well as assist the concerned agencies in rescue and relief operations.

Taking into account India's high risk and vulnerability towards floods and devastation caused by floods such as in Mumbai in 2005, Kosi Mega Flood in 2008 in Bihar, Uttarakhand Flash Flood in 2013, Jammu & Kashmir Flood in 2014 and Chennai Flood in 2015; highlights the need to strengthen local community capacity and equip them for immediate response to minimize loss.

For this very purpose, NDMA launched the Aapda Mitra Scheme to train 6000 community

I took part in the Aapda Mitra Initiative in 2018 and received training on how to rescue people from a disaster, giving first aid etc.

During the flood in July 2018 in North Tripura, I took part in rescue missions and organisation of blood donation camps. Now, my team and I also impart training and conduct mock drills in schools to teach children ways to stay safe from a disaster.



Faruq Islam,

Aapda Mitra Volunteer, Sepahijala, Tripura

volunteers in 30 flood prone districts in disaster response (with a focus on flood) in 2016. The initiative since its inception aims to provide the community volunteers with the skills that they would need to respond to their community's immediate needs in the aftermath of a disaster thereby enabling them to undertake basic relief and rescue tasks during emergency situations.

To put the scheme into action, a National Technical Committee (NTC) was constituted, drawing experts from National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), National Civil Defence College (NCDC), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) and other training institutions/experts imparting specific practical training in flood relief and rescue. The NTC was responsible for preparing the framework for training module, design and methodology.

The training developed is a combination of lectures, demonstrations and practical sessions over a period of 12 days. By the end of the training, Aapda Mitra Volunteers are able to act as First Responder during floods, operate flood rescue

equipment and organize immediate relief measures. Currently there are more than 5000 Aapda Mitra Volunteers, including more than 500 women volunteers.

Girl Power!

Women are more vulnerable to natural disasters as gendered norms and behavior expected from women in most societies leave them with very little space to acquire skills and access resources which builds their resilience against disasters. There are currently 13 districts in India which have women volunteer teams. The largest team of volunteers comprising of women belong to Kolhapur, Maharashtra. There are 93 women volunteers in this team who have been trained and are addressed as 'Aapda Sakhi' and have contributed immensely in saving lives in their community during the 2019 flood and even volunteered during COVID-19, by distributing food, educating the community on prevention methods for the spread of virus. The involvement of women in the Aapda Mitra Project also highlights point no. 3 of the Prime Minister's 10-

During the flood of 2019 in Kolhapur District in Maharashtra, with the training that I received via Aapda Mitra, my team and I were able to rescue women and children. I have always wanted to help people and I feel proud to be a part of India's first woman rescue force for the community - Aapda Sakhi.



- Shubhangi Gharale,

Aapda Sakhi, Kolhapur, Maharashtra



Point Agenda for Disaster Risk Reduction which encourages greater involvement and leadership of women in disaster risk management.

From Volunteers to Corona Warriors

What started out as a centrally sponsored scheme focused on training community volunteers in disaster response in 30 flood prone districts of 25 States of India, gradually became a holistic programme which prepared communities not only for floods, but even for an unplanned calamity such as COVID-19.

As the nation began reeling under the threat of COVID-19, Aapda Mitra volunteers were ready to fight the crisis and undertook the initiative to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Aapda Mitra Volunteers in Kottayam, Kolhapur, Jagatsinghpur, Sepahijala, Purba Medinipur, South 24 PGS, Supaul, Gorakhpur, Sikkim and Assam engaged in activities such as community surveillance to enforce lockdown, home delivery of essential items, logistic support in running and monitoring quarantine & isolation centers, information dissemination and sanitation drives at public places in various districts to combat the spread of the disease.



During the Kanwar Yatra of 2018, one boy was unable to cross the Ganga River and got stuck in the middle. The public noticed that he was drowning and shouting for help, luckily, we were there and ready! Along with Jal Police, we (Aapda mitra Volunteers) were able to rescue the boy. Till date, we have been able to save 175 lives.



Aapda Mitra Volunteer, Haridwar, Uttarakhand



Not only did the Aapda Mitra volunteers generate awareness amongst the public regarding COVID-19, but some also became good samaritans. After three of her family members tested positive for COVID-19, the house of Sonai's Shantibala Nath in Sonai, Assam, was declared a containment zone. As she breathed her last on July 11, there was nobody to conduct the last rites. Biprajit Paul Choudhary, Field Officer, Sonai Revenue Circle informed the Aapda Mitra Volunteers. Nazom Uddin Choudhary, Sohid Ahmed Choudhary and Rosid Ahmed Choudhary who knew how to handle the burial as



per the Standard Operating Procedure and volunteered to enter the containment zone to conduct the last rites.

Preparation doesn't stop!

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the Aapda Mitra Initiative continued to impart training to volunteers keeping in mind safety precautions. On 10th-11th August 2020, NDMA's team led by Shri Rajendra Singh, Member, NDMA and Shri Ramesh Kumar G., Joint Secretary (Capacity Building and Training) assessed the Aapda Mitra initiative in Haridwar, Uttarakhand. The volunteers in Haridwar engaged in on-site flood rescue mock drills and training of CPR post rescue. Sharing his amazement at the enthusiasm portrayed by the volunteers, Shri Rajendra Singh, applauded the volunteers for undergoing training while maintaining safety precautions from COVID-19. NDMA team also reviewed the Disaster Management Activities of the Haridwar District wherein Shri C. Ravishankar, DM, Haridwar gave details pertaining to the progress of the Aapda Mitra Initiative.

A meeting was held with Shri Trivendra Singh



Rawat, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Uttarakhand wherein it was discussed to upscale the scheme in other districts of the State along with other issues. NDMA team also visited Uttarakhand State Disaster Management Authority to review projects as well as visited NIEPVD to understand the functioning of community radio and its outreach and interacted with Dr. Himangshu Das, Director.

The Aapda Mitra Initiative is ready to be expanded to 350 districts to train 1 lakh volunteers, in order to prepare the communities in India to become more disaster resilient!

Community is the first to respond in any disaster. It is very important to enhance their skills of being resilient in various disasters. Aapda Mitra has proven the literal meaning of the word by being friends of those in need during disasters.



M. Anjana, IAS,
District Collector & District Magistrate,
Kottayam, Kerala

The Aapda Mitra Volunteers have been imparting training to others and are willing to cooperate in different situations. Through this Initiative, we are empowering the community and in turn we are empowering ourselves. These volunteers are an asset not only to the region, but to the country.



K. Vijayendra Pandian,
District Magistrate, Gorakhpur, U.P.



Rajendra Singh,

Member, NDMA

On Aapda Mitra Initiative

The Aapda Mitra Initiative was launched in 2016, with an aim to train 6000 community volunteers in 30 flood prone districts. Four years later, volunteers of this initiative have risen in the face of various disasters including COVID-19 to safeguard community members. Aapda Samvaad spoke with Rajendra Singh, Member, NDMA to take a peek into the progress of the initiative as well as future plans.

You recently led a team from NDMA to Uttarakhand to review the Aapda Mitra Project. Please tell us about your experience.

Haridwar is one of the districts selected under Aapda Mitra scheme. Under the scheme 200 Aapda Mitra volunteers were trained in disaster response especially flood risk management. DDMA Haridwar conducted a flood rescue demonstration with the support of trained Aapda Mitra Volunteers. Manual rescue as well as rescue by boat was also demonstrated. The District Magistrate of Haridwar presented a brief on mitigation activities done by DDMA Haridwar.

A meeting was held with Shri Trivendra Singh Rawat, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Uttarakhand and the following issues were discussed along with presentation of pocketbooks related to do's and don'ts for various disasters:

- Construction of Relief Shelters in various Districts of the State

- Training of Yuva Mangal Dal and Mahila Dal by SDRF on lines of Aapda Mitra
- Upscaling of Aapda Mitra scheme in remaining 11 districts of Uttarakhand
- Trauma training should be included in Aapda Mitra

A review of the Projects/Schemes in partnership with Govt. of Uttarakhand, SDMA and all other stakeholders/line departments was undertaken. A meeting was also held with the Chief Secretary. NDMA also visited the National Institute for the Empowerment of Persons with Visual Disabilities (NIEPVD), Dehradun to understand the functioning of Community Radio and its outreach. NDMA highlighted that Community Radio can be used in organizing the communities to plan, implement and monitor disaster management activities along with facilitating relief, rehabilitation and restoration initiatives as well.



Why was the Aapda Mitra Initiative launched?

In case of any disaster or emergency, before any government machinery & support reaches or outside help gets galvanized, it is the community which has to respond immediately. As the community plays the role of First Responder, the impact of a volunteer from the community in disaster response can be tremendous, as the extent of damage – in terms of economic and human loss is greatly influenced by the initial response to a disaster. Therefore, there lies a critical need to train people in certain basic skills in disaster management so that they are able to respond promptly and also assist the concerned agencies in rescue and relief operations.

Keeping this in mind, NDMA initiated the Aapda Mitra scheme in 2016 to promote a culture of volunteerism in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and to create a pool of 6000 trained and certified volunteers in 30 flood prone districts of 25 States/UTs of India.

How has the Aapda Mitra Initiative helped in building local capacity?

There is a need to develop the capacity and skills of the community so that they can deal with disasters in a more pragmatic manner. This is also highlighted in point eight of the Prime Minister's 10 point Agenda on DRR which emphasizes 'Local Capacity Building Initiative.' Some of the States have reported that the services of these trained community volunteers have been exceptional in rescuing the stranded people during floods and cyclones such as Kerala Flood, Kolhapur Flood,



Assam Flood, Cyclone Fani etc. These volunteers are also providing their services in COVID-19 containment zones in coordination with District Administration which is commendable.

The scheme has been influential in training and strengthening the capacity of the local volunteers and following suit, other DDMA's are demanding to raise the similar cadres in their districts. The identity given to the local volunteers has given access to the Government organization and Non-Government organizations for the support as authorized resource persons as well as involving them in disaster responses. The volunteers have been primarily trained for flood, but as seen during COVID-19, these volunteers are willing to serve in any kind of situation for the community.

How has the participation and inclusion of women been in the initiative?

Women are more affected by natural disasters than men, since they have limited access to resources and skills for effective emergency response. Empowering women through involving them in the disaster management process is important for reducing community vulnerability to disasters and this has been highlighted in point three of the Prime Minister's 10-Point Agenda on DRR which emphasizes 'Greater Participation and Leadership of Women in Disaster Risk Management.'

More than 500 women volunteers from 13 States have undergone Aapda Mitra training. These



trained women volunteers play an active role in disaster situations by evacuating their children & elderly family members to higher ground & by rescuing household goods needed for their survival during onset of a disaster.

These women volunteers also assist the District Administration in creating awareness among women of different communities, resource mapping and in conducting training. Many young girls are being trained to take up the task of educating other women which empowers them, helps in developing their personalities and increases women's participation.

How has the Aapda Mitra Initiatives adapted in view of the COVID-19 crisis, can you cite an example?

In the current situation of COVID-19 pandemic,

some of these trained Aapda Mitra have worked/ are working in close coordination with the District Administration of various States viz; Assam, Supaul, Bihar; Kottayam, Kerala; Kolhapur, Maharashtra; Haridwar, Uttarakhand; Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh; Sepahijala, Tripura; Jagatsinghpur, Odisha; Purba Medinipur & South 24 Pgs, West Bengal and Sikkim; to support the needy including persons with disabilities in providing home delivery of essential items such as food, ration, medicines, dissemination of information & awareness generation and preparation & distribution of food.

Are there any future plans to expand the Aapda Mitra Initiative?

Based on exemplary actions performed by the trained volunteers during emergency situations, and the Vision 2024 of the Government of India, there is a strong demand from States/UTs to upscale it in other districts of India to train more volunteers. Thus, NDMA is planning to upscale the scheme in 350 districts which are prone to landslide, earthquake, cyclone and flood with an aim to train 1,00,000 volunteers across India and with a maximum provision for women volunteers.





Mission Jagriti

Disaster Training at your doorstep

-Tripti Bhatt, IPS, Commandant, SDRF, Uttarakhand

A disaster can strike anywhere, anytime and leave behind damage. With proper preparation and training, a person can tackle the disaster safely, however training for a disaster isn't accessible to all. The task of disaster mitigation and response is so huge that formal institutions of the state can at best be instrumental in creating the enabling conditions. Specific actions have to be designed and implemented locally. One such localised disaster training programme is 'Mission Jagriti.'

The Uttarakhand State Disaster Rescue Force launched Mission Jagriti in 2019. It is a decentralised stakeholder focused approach to strengthen community based disaster mitigation and response. It involves stakeholders of various departments and civil society in a comprehensive training approach towards disaster resilience and is a combination of traditional training methodology with pre-recorded classroom audio-visual training for remote areas with lack of infrastructure.

The programme consists of a combination of offline and online training wherein there is a strong focus on imparting hands-on training. It utilises modern methods like pre-recorded audio visuals, documentary, quiz, app, games etc along with training via demonstrations, nukkad natak, educational videos in local languages, posters,

radio, pamphlets etc. The programme also focuses on conducting mock drills and organising 5 to 7 day summer/winter camps and educational fairs where disaster training is given in an interesting and organised manner to school children.





This doorstep approach of the programme became extremely useful in the time of COVID-19 where more than 25,000 people were trained in a matter of just 3 months, covering various departments. Training was given at COVID Care Centres and Quarantine Centres and to all the sectors or essential services that were gradually opened post/during lockdown. Zoom App based training along with awareness videos also gave a de-centralised ground based training in far flung areas across the state keeping social distancing with trainees.

Being locked in homes, 'Corona Warriors,' a quizzing app became a successful project in engaging and educating people on COVID-19. The Mission also focused on utilising social media such as WhatsApp for dissemination of training, knowledge and resources.

While the initial objective of the programme was to increase the number of ground level community preparedness against any impending disaster, it became very influential during COVID-19 outbreak, wherein Uttarakhand SDRF became the nodal training agency for COVID-19. It covered all the departments including police, health, essential services, roadway drivers, COVID-19 care centres and quarantine centres.

The training sessions are conducted in small batches, which gives a focus on the specific needs of the stakeholders, instead of a one size fits all approach. This particular approach has been extremely useful in imparting quality training according to the specific needs of the community and area.

One of the unique points of training under this initiative is that unlike the trainee coming to the trainer, in Mission Jagriti, the trainer goes to the trainee. This training at the doorstep approach has been beneficial in imparting training in the most remote areas and enhancing community preparedness for disaster mitigation and response.



THE FIVE FAQs- LANDSLIDE

1

What is a landslide and why does it occur?

The sudden collapse of a mass of earth or rock from a mountain or cliff. Landslides occur when gravitational and other types of shear stresses within a slope exceed the shear strength (resistance to shearing) of the materials that form the slope.



What is the impact of a landslide?

- Loss of life
- Loss of property
- Blockage of travel path
- Environmental degradation

2

3

What precautions can a person take to stay safe from a landslide?

To avoid landslides from occurring, one can practice growing more trees as they hold the soil together, keeping drains clean, avoiding construction near steep slopes and near drainage paths, and being alert for any warning signs such as subsidence of building, cracks on rocks, muddy river water etc.



How can people stay safe during a landslide?

The first thing to remember is to NOT panic! If there are any warning signs such as unusual sounds like trees cracking or boulders knocking together, then one should make sure to move away from the landslip path or downstream valley quickly and inform the nearest Tehsil/District HQ.

4

5

What should one do after a landslide has occurred?

One has to remain alert after a landslide as well by not touching/walking over loose electrical wires or fallen poles, checking for injured and trapped people, rendering First Aid immediately to injured persons.





“ The country cannot forget the services rendered by the unsung heroes who have done excellent work in the field of Disaster Management. ”

-Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

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