

Local Government in building up disaster preparedness among the community

Abstract:

Disasters like Floods, Cyclones, Droughts and Earthquakes are increasing in India and 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, universal coverage and enlisting people's participation on an institutionalized basis. The major role of the Panchayati Raj Bodies in respect of disaster management is in the preparedness planning and its implementation during the pre and post- disaster phase. The village people are the most vulnerable for disasters and therefore the gram panchayats have to play a major role in association with the higher level bodies of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) as well as with the government agencies and others. Keeping this in view a study was undertaken in disaster prone areas in West Bengal on role of gram panchayat in disaster preparedness. A total 150 respondents were selected randomly for this study. Majority (94 %) of the respondents opined that disaster forecasting system of the local government was not up to the mark and majority (74.67 %) were getting information from electronic media like T.V and Radio about occurrence of disasters. 70 % of the respondents were getting information from friends and relatives. there was no significant association was there between the socio personal traits of the respondents and the disaster preparedness. As because most of the respondent belongs to low social strata as found from the socio-economic profile of the respondents.

Key words: local government, Preparedness, warning, Community based organization, Correlation.

Introduction: local Institution, the representative body of the people, is the most appropriate institution from village to the district level in view of its proximity, universal coverage and enlisting people's participation on an institutionalized basis. Their close involvement will go a long way in getting people prepared for countering natural disasters as well as involve them in all possible preventive and protective activities so that the impact of the disasters are mitigated and the people are able to save their lives and property. This study was undertaken in cyclone 'Aila' affected areas in West Bengal to assess the opinion of the affected stakeholders about the role of

local self government on disaster management. The empirical study revealed that main role performed by the local self government were assess loss, providing relief materials, organizing health camp, involved in rescue operation, arranging temporary shelters and so on as disaster management operation. Local government members have to liaison with various organizations to supply essential commodities and development of infrastructures to overcome the loss. The respondents had not so much positive views towards local government on the assistance provided in terms of training to the villagers, supply of agricultural inputs, communicating the warning messages. There exists some level of agreement among the various organizations in providing assistance. **Rural Local Self Government** of India is a three tier system which looks after the necessities of the villages and encourages the development of activity in the villages. In rural areas there are certain local problems which can be solved efficiently only by the local people. More than eighty percent of the Indian people live in villages and the welfare of the people implies an all round improvement of the Indian villages. With this end in view three types of self-governing institutions were created to look after the affairs of rural areas. With the decentralization of powers to Local self-government Institutions, Local administration department has an important role to play in the formulation of policy and implementation of developmental works at the grass roots level. Director of Panchayat and Director of Municipal Administration form the two field departments.

Table: 1- Opinion of the respondents about preparedness measures taken by the local governments

(n=150)

Sl. No	Preparedness measures	Extent of taking measures					
		Always		Sometimes		Never	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1	Warning systems forecast	06	4.00	03	2.00	141	94.00
2	Arrange Proper selection of safety place for rehabilitation	30	20.00	33	22.00	87	58.00

3	Stocking of food materials for villagers and domestic animals	27	18.00	30	20.00	93	62.00
4	Stocking of essentials medicines for human and animals	33	22.00	48	32.00	69	46.00
5	Arranging drinking water facilities	81	54.00	45	30.00	24	16.00
6	Arrangement of physician for human and animal health care	20	13.33	35	23.33	95	63.34
7	Maximum attention to children, disabled, age old people and women	21	14.00	57	38.00	72	48.00
8	Convey meeting to make people conscious	60	40.00	48	32.00	42	28.00
9	Helping weaker section of the communities	45	30.00	51	34.00	54	36.00
10	Shifting important materials of the communities to safer places	21	14.00	12	8.00	117	78.00
11	Make contact with the govt. officials	63	42.00	77	51.33	10	6.67
12	Making communication facilities and arranging training	42	28.00	39	26.00	69	46.00

54 Since people have no competency in managing the disaster at the individual level, the local
55 government functionaries have to extend all support to the people and community as a whole.
56 Preparedness measures taken by the local governments have also been collected from the
57 respondents and analyzed. Majority (94 %) of the respondents opined that disaster forecasting
58 system of the local government was not up to the mark. Mixed responses were obtained from the
59 respondents about the preparedness measures taken by the local governments as observed from
60 the above table. While the local government has taken adequate steps to drinking water facilities
61 for the villagers but in case of other aspects like arrangement of essential medicines, physicians
62 and temporary shifting of people, the steps taken by the local government was not satisfactory as

expressed by the respondents. It is observed from the table that majority (62 %) of the respondents had arranged for their basic foods for themselves and domestic animals also. At the same time 36 % of the respondents had stated for not extending help to weaker communities. Mixed responses were obtained on other precautionary measures taken by the as mentioned in the table. The district administration has to select safety places sufficiently ahead for rehabilitation if required due to intensity of the disasters like flood and cyclone. Similarly, all attempts are to be taken up for stocking of food materials, essential medicines, materials for temporary shed etc. It is also essential to alert physicians for health care and skilled personnel for rescue operation as expressed by the respondents.

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

(n=150)

Sl. No	Source of information	Extent of utilization of information sources						Mean score	Rank
		Always (3)		Sometimes (2)		Never (1)			
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%		
1	Print media	45	30.00	12	8.00	93	62.00	1.68	V
2	Electronic media	112	74.67	24	16.00	14	9.33	2.65	II
3	Government official	55	36.67	39	26.00	56	37.33	1.99	IV
4	Gram Panchayat	69	46.00	54	36.00	27	18.00	2.28	III
5	Friends and relatives	105	70.00	39	26.00	6	4.00	2.66	I
6	NGOs	33	22.00	24	16.00	93	62.00	1.60	VI

(Maximum obtainable score-3)

It is observed from the table that majority of respondents (74.67 %) were getting information from electronic media like T.V and Radio about occurrence of disasters. 70 % of the respondents were getting information from friends and relatives. 46 % reported that they were getting information from local institution like gram panchayat and village ward members about

79 occurrence of the disasters. Mixed responses were observed about the information through print
80 media like newspapers, farm magazines, publicity through govt. department and NGOs.

81 **Table: 3-Status of forecasting on disaster by the local government**

82 (n=150)

Sl. No	Forecasting status	Extent of Information availability	
		Number	Percentage
1	One day	120	80.00
2	Two days	30	20.00
3	Three days	00	00.00

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84 Disasters like flood and cyclone occurs very fast , Therefore people should get information as
85 early as possible so that they can take some preventive measures .Information collected from the
86 respondents about time period of getting information about the occurrence of the disasters have
87 been analyzed and presented in the above table. The data in the table-3 revealed that majority (80
88 %) of the respondents were getting information only one day before of the occurrence of the
89 disasters. None of the respondents were getting information three days and rest 20 % two days
90 before of the occurrence of the disaster so that they could able to make preparation for the safe
91 storage of food grains, household articles, shelters for domestic animals, prepare and preserve
92 dry foods .Getting information on 1 day before of the occurrence of the disaster by majority of
93 the respondents was not sufficient for all these preparatory measures.

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98 **Table: 4-Perception of the respondents about disaster warning system given by the**
 99 **concerned local governments**

100 (n=150)

Sl. No	Perception	Status of perception					
		Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1	Sufficient information not given by the local government	84	56.00	57	38.00	9	6.00
2	Not covering all the people	85	56.67	65	43.33	0	0.00
3	Neglecting weaker section of community	78	52.00	60	40.00	12	8.00
4	No information about alternative measures	66	44.00	69	46.00	15	10.00
5	Casual approach	51	34.00	93	62.00	06	4.00
6	Insufficient planning for rehabilitation	90	60.00	60	40.00	00	00.00
7	Insufficient attempt for ensuring food security	75	50.00	51	34.00	24	16.00

101 From analyzing the statement it is observed from the table that statement 6 received the
 102 maximum weightage from the respondents followed by statement number 2 and 1. From this
 103 table it is amply evident that the respondents had a poor perception about the disaster warning
 104 system taken by the concerned local government.

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106 **Table: 5-Preparedness measures taken by the respondent as pre-disaster management**

107 (n=150)

Sl. No	Precautionary measures	Extent of measures taken					
		Always		Sometimes		Never	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
1	Temporary change of permanent place	69	46.00	60	40.00	21	14.00
2	Storing of food items	45	30.00	57	38.00	48	32.00
3	Shifting of cattle	78	52.00	36	24.00	36	24.00
4	Collect medicine from govt./ local administration	24	16.00	45	30.00	81	54.00
5	Collection of safe drinking water	33	22.00	84	56.00	33	22.00
6	Collection of materials for cooking food	54	36.00	38	25.33	58	38.67
7	Collection and storing of cattle feed	56	37.33	75	50.00	19	12.67
8	Collection of materials for temporary shed	36	24.00	81	54.00	33	22.00
9	Shifting important household materials	78	52.00	44	29.33	28	18.67
10	Demanding Govt. services for all support	84	56.00	66	44.00	00	00.00
11	Keeping communication materials with self	42	28.00	75	50.00	33	22.00

108 Mixed responses were obtained about the precautionary measures taken by the respondents for
 109 the occurrence of the disasters like flood and cyclone except majority of the respondents taken
 110 preparedness measures for preservation of safe drinking water (56.00%) and not preserving

common medicines (54.00%) and majority of the respondent (56 %) demanded government services for all support. 52 % of the respondents shifted important documents/ materials to a safer places. Though deficiencies were observed on preparedness measures taken by the respondents on various aspects covered under study, 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 functionaries in emergency.

Table: 6- Correlation between Socio-Personal traits of the respondents with preparedness measures taken by the respondents

(n=150)

Sl. No	Socio-personal traits	<i>r</i> value
1.	Age	-0.001
2.	Educational status	0.207
3.	Family size	0.117
4.	Income	-0.154
5.	Social participation	-0.097
6.	Cosmopoliteness	-0.244
7.	Article possession	-0.180
8.	Livestock possession	0.212
9.	Possession of farm implements	-0.064
10.	Mass media exposure	0.134
11.	Holding size	-0.083

From table 6, it is found that there was no significant association was there between the socio personal traits of the respondents and the disaster preparedness. As because most of the respondent belongs to low social strata as found from the socio-economic profile of the respondents. The respondents did not preparedness themselves on advance even they could not

access to receive any warning information for preparing themselves. Hence, the results reject the hypothesis.

Conclusion:

Local institutions may come into the Disaster Risk Management cycle at various stages; Micro-Finance Institutions (MFIs) can carry out important functions in preparedness, reduction or mitigation and risk transfer, as well as response (coping) and recovery. Government post-disaster relief compensation programmes and international assistance may also act as a “two-edged sword” by providing ‘incentives’ for poor people to locate to disaster-prone areas. Legal and regulatory environments differ enormously from country to country, as does the degree to which the necessary norms that would allow to reduce disaster vulnerability are actually applied and enforced. The appropriate allocation of the power to act between levels of authority from individual to global is an essential element in the search for a more comprehensive approach to natural hazard risk reduction. The public administration should thus take on a facilitatory role and responsibility in the process, as government can effectively link up knowledge, technology, skills, resources, and the expertise offered by specialist institutions with grass-roots experience, organisational capacity, and participatory management skills. Successful disaster reduction strategies involve careful efforts to combine knowledge, technology, expertise, institutional capacities, management skills, and practical experience for optimum results, which would not be possible without proper collaboration between the two key players: state and civil society.

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