

Relief, Rehabilitation and Development: The Case of Gujarat

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ATI	Administrative Training Institute
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
HI	Humanitarian Initiatives
DEC	Disaster Emergency Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
DMI	Disaster Mitigation Institute
DMP	Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness
DoDM	Department of Disaster Management
EOC	Emergency Operations Centre
GPSDM	Green Paper Secretariat for Disaster Management (South Africa)
HPC	High Powered Committee on Disaster Management
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross
KMVS	Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan
GSDMA	Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority
MHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MoHRD	Ministry of Human Resource Development
MoDM	Minister of Disaster Management
MoYS	Movement of Youths
NCDM	National Centre for Disaster Management
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PRI	Panchayati Raj Institutions
SEWA	Self Employment Women's Association
ULB	Urban Local Bodies
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

ABSTRACT

The dissertation focuses on emergency management with specific reference to natural disasters in the context of Gujarat. In section one, key terms relating to disaster management are defined and a profile of Kutch, home to the epicentre of the earthquake of January 26th 2001, located 20 km north east of Bhuj, is presented. It provides the contextual background within which to place the response of various actors to the earthquake, critically analysed in section two. In section three (Kutch Mahila Vikas Sangathan) KMVS, a member of Kutch Nav Nirman Abhiyan, a district wide civil society network, is selected as a case study illustrating examples of good practice in disaster response and recovery. Learning points for KMVS are highlighted in section four. Given that Gujarat was not prepared for a disaster of this scale, the importance of the current paradigm shift from response to preparedness is explored in section five and an integrated model for disaster management is proposed. The concluding section, section six draws together the key points, identifies policy directions and potential areas for further research.

INTRODUCTION

Since the attacks that rocked the United States on September 11th 2001, there is increasing consensus within the international community that fighting poverty will help promote a safer world. In March this year donor nations committed additional resources to achieving the international development goals of 2015, which include halving poverty and hunger, combating infectious diseases and achieving universal primary education. Disasters however can erase years of development efforts in a matter of minutes. Big one-off disasters destroy livelihoods, capital investments and social networks, recurrent disasters wear down family resilience and resources. (IFRC; 2002) Disasters can also exacerbate poverty because poorer households make decisions as risk minimisers rather than income maximisers. ‘Livelihood strategies are often more about addressing vulnerability and handling shocks, then about ‘escaping’ from poverty *per se*.’ (Christoplas, Mitchell & Liljelund; 2001, p.186) Furthermore when disaster strikes, development funds are diverted to the emergency and getting the country back on track to economic and social development. The link between disasters and development is clear. Disasters threaten to derail progress towards development and therefore effective disaster management is not an ‘optional extra-but central to the very success of development itself.’ (IFRC: 2002)

Concurrently the poor and socially disadvantaged are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of natural disasters, reflecting their social, cultural, political and economic environment. ‘Silent’ emergencies associated with extreme poverty affect many more people and many ‘loud’ emergencies are rooted in poverty, so the silent emergencies need to be tackled if loud emergencies are to be avoided. (Longhurst; 1994, p.17) What is needed is a solid alliance between global disaster reduction initiatives and worldwide efforts to alleviate poverty, marginalisation and vulnerability.

This dissertation focuses on natural disasters, which in view of global environmental changes are increasing in frequency the world over and have been overshadowed by the discourse on complex political emergencies¹ over the past decade. India is one of the most disaster prone countries in the world, vulnerable to almost all kinds of disasters causing enormous loss of life, property and assets every year. The geographical statistics of India show that 21 percent of the land is vulnerable to droughts, eight percent to cyclones, five percent to floods and 54 percent to earthquakes (Sinha; 2002) The Gujarat earthquake which occurred on January 26th 2001 measuring 6.9 on the Richter scale with its epicentre 20 kilometres north-east of Bhuj, was one of the worst to have occurred in the country during the last 180 years, killing 17, 700 people and badly damaging or destroying over a million homes. Over the past year and a half aid agencies and the Government have been analysing, documenting and reflecting upon the response, sharing experiences and looking ahead.²

The Gujarat earthquake has provided a window of opportunity to learn and the consciousness and momentum for change. The concerted action of the Gujarat Government with support from multilateral agencies and numerous community based organisations has ensured that recovery processes have been rapid and turned towards long-term development. 'No single non-governmental organisation (NGO) can cover the whole range of emergency, development and lobbying activities that is required. Turbulence calls for a much greater degree of coordination, collaboration and trust between agencies operating at different levels, *before, at the onset of and during* a crisis.' (Roche; 1994) The Kutch Navnirman Abhiyan which translates as 'the Kutch rebuilding campaign,' is a collaborative of 22 Kutch based

¹ Complex political emergencies are 'essentially political in nature: they are protracted political crises resulting from sectarian or predatory indigenous response to socio-economic stress and marginalization.' (Schafer; 2000, p.3 quoting Duffield; 1994, p.38)

² On July 5th 2002 GSDMA, Caticus India and Oxfam jointly organised a workshop called 'strengthening ties' aimed at sharing experiences and strengthening the proactive approach of each player towards coordinated action. Participants shared innovative practices and difficulties encountered in the rehabilitation process and identified areas of mutual assistance with the aim to better understand technical issues in reconstruction.

NGOs which came together following the 1998 cyclone to coordinate the relief and rehabilitation effort. Abhiyan has continued to provide mutual support and learning, forging people centred development of the district and mobilised immediately in the aftermath of the earthquake to once again co-ordinate the relief effort. KMVS ‘an action oriented grass roots movement and support NGO committed to reinforcing the process of women’s empowerment through mobilisation and struggle,’ (Ramachandran and Saihjee; 2000, p.12) which played a leading role in creating the network, is an insightful case study illustrating examples of best practice based on the principles of the Red Cross Code.³

However effectively the resources spent after ‘the horse has bolted’ may do nothing to protect vulnerable communities against future earthquakes and floods. Since it is impossible to control the forces of nature giving rise to natural calamities, the only parameter that can be effectively influenced to avert disaster is the vulnerability of the affected community. (IFRC; 2002) Given that the Rann of Kutch falls into zone V of the earthquake zoning map of India, (the highest risk zone) and given that, the Indo-Australian tectonic plate slides under the more northern Eurasian plate in a predominantly northern direction at a rate of one or two centimetres per year with an earthquake over 5.0 predicted every 20 years, (DMI/HI/Mango; 2001, p.5 quoting the National Centre for Disaster Management) it is absolutely imperative that the problem of vulnerability to natural disasters is confronted and risk reduction is mainstreamed into development and humanitarian programming. The importance of a paradigm shift from response to prevention and mitigation cannot be emphasised enough and encouragingly, a serious endeavour is being made by many actors concerned to cultivate a culture of preparedness. (See Annex 6 and 7) Past adversity has stimulated Indian ingenuity to devise new solutions to the disaster problem.

³ The Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief was published in- mid 1994 and widely disseminated among the humanitarian community. ‘The aim of the code is to guard our standards of behaviour’ by developing a formal institution against which the performance of humanitarian agencies can be measured.’ (Lancaster;2002, p.2 quoting RRN; 1994, p.4)

A NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

The author made one visit to the earthquake area in June 2002 for a period of three weeks. The study draws primarily on individual interviews and group discussions with KMVS, Abhiyan, UNDP, and GSDMA staff. More limited discussions took place with local communities, international organisations (including the IFRC) and fellow students at Gujarat University. The primary research is supported with official reports from the aid agencies and Government departments concerned and the extensive literature on disasters and development practice.

1. THE CONTEXT

1.1 Understanding Disaster Terminology

‘As befits a field in which the social is combined with the physical, and in which some fifty different academic disciplines have a hand, most concepts associated with natural disasters lack fixed definitions, as they are used by practitioners with very diverse objectives and perceptions.’ (Alexander; 1997, p.289 quoting Hewitt; 1995) There are no generally accepted *definitions* but there are a number of similar *interpretations*.

Prior to defining the following terms which appear frequently throughout the text, it is important to qualify that ‘natural’ disaster is a convenience term that amounts to a misnomer because neither disasters themselves nor the conditions that give rise to them are undeniably natural. Natural disasters are strongly influenced by complex and political factors (Hagman; 1984) and often more strongly by the social conditions they affect than by the geophysical agents that precipitate them. (Quarantelli; 1995))

1.1.2 Key Terms

Disaster – The result of the impact of a natural hazard on a group of people (causing death, injury, loss of property, economic damage, etc.) that overwhelms its capacity to cope. (Twigg; 2001, p.7) (See Annex 1 for a classification of disasters)

Hazard – Potential threat to humans and their welfare. Hazards can be natural (eg. earthquakes, droughts) or introduced by human process e.g. industrial accidents. (Twigg; 2001, p.7)

Risk – The likelihood of a specific hazard occurrence and its consequences for people and property. (Twigg; 2001, p.7)

Vulnerability – The extent to which a person, group or socio-economic structure is likely to be affected by a hazard (related to their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist and recover

form its impact); the strength of physical structures in standing up to a hazard. (Twiggs; 2001, p.7)

Mitigation - Any action to minimise the impact of potential disaster. This ranges from physical measures – such as flood defences or reinforcing buildings to - non-structural measures, such as training, land use regulations, legislations, economic mechanisms and raising public awareness. Mitigation can take place at anytime before, during or after a disaster. (Twiggs; 2001, p.7)

Preparedness – Specific measures taken before disaster strikes, usually to forecast and warn against disasters, take precautions when they threaten and facilitate a rapid response (e.g. preparing disaster plans, identifying institutional responsibilities, organising evacuation procedures, stock piling food supplies, and training and equipping rescue services). (Twiggs; 2001, p.7)

Response and relief - It refers to the first stage response to any calamity, which includes establishing the control room, activating contingency plans, and disbursing assistance. (NCDM; 2001, p.56)

Recovery - This describes the activities that encompass the three overlapping phases of emergency relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction. (NCDM; 2001, p.56) (NCDM; 2001, p.56)

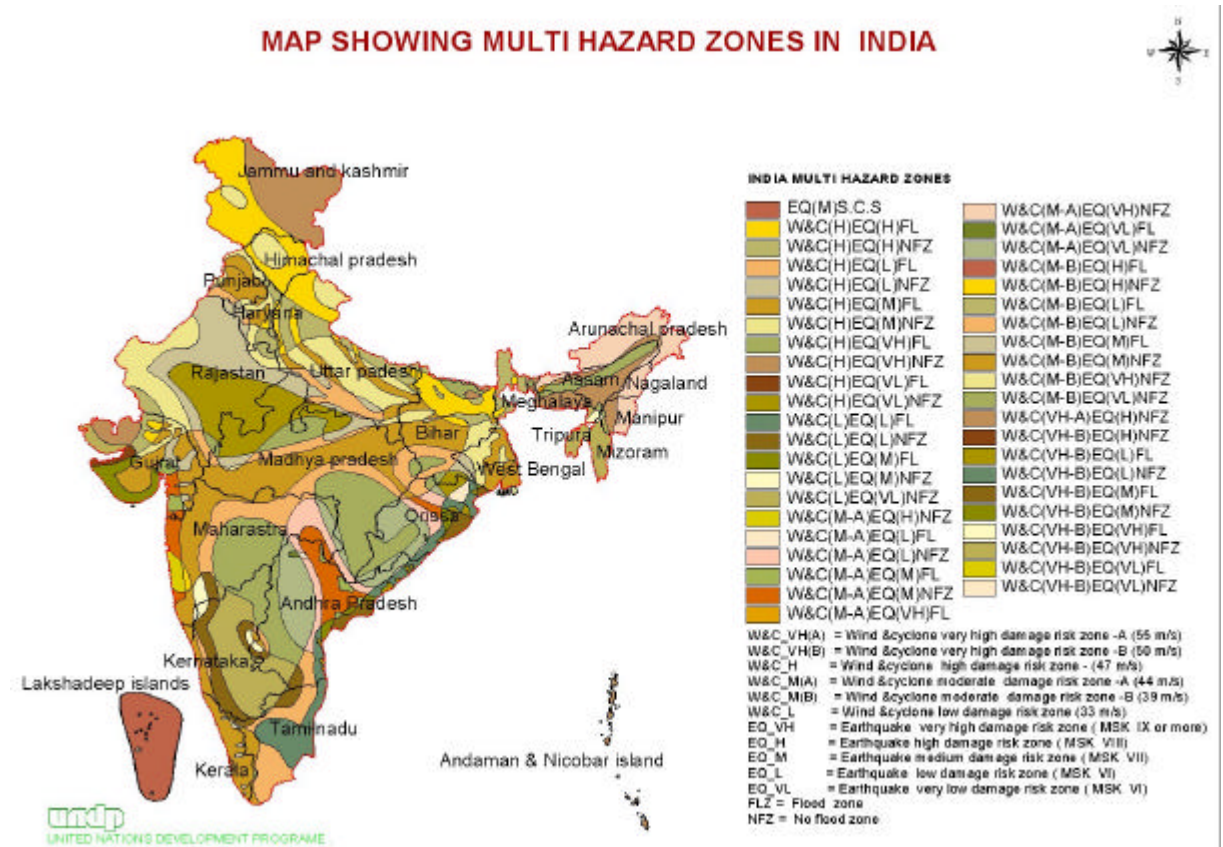
Development - It is an ongoing process involving for example the creation of long-term preparedness plans and the implementing of disaster reduction measures, such as the construction of embankments against flooding and irrigation. (NCDM; 2001, p.56)

1.1.3 A Profile of Gujarat

Gujarat a prosperous and thriving industrialised state, with a population of 30 million is accustomed to natural disasters. It experiences droughts, cyclones and flash floods with depressing regularity. An earthquake strikes every thirty years and droughts parch the land

every three years. (UNDP; 2001, p.3) The multi-hazard scenario is depicted in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1



Source: UNDP; 2002, p.7

Kutch is the second largest district in India, larger than the state of Kerala and yet is sparsely populated. Its population of one million is spread over a low density of 27 people per square kilometre owing to the ecological fragility of the area, in turn a consequence of what is termed by some a ‘schizophrenic ecological divide,’ with the sea in the South and the desert towards the North. (Ramachandran and Saihjee; 2000, p.5) Seventy three per cent of Gujarat’s arid area falls in Kutch and more than half its terrain is covered by saline mudflats (the Great and Little Ranns). The region experiences an annual precipitation of just 340mm (UNDP; 2001, p.3) and therefore the traditional economic base of Kutchi households is a varying combination of dry land agriculture and animal husbandry.

The area is a sensitive border district with a high defence presence and is extremely disaster prone, characterised by a history of recurrent long-drawn droughts (3 in 5 years), cyclones (2 in last 5 years) and earthquakes (2 in the last 50 years) (Bhargawa; 2002). Battling against the elements for a precarious existence has made life an ongoing struggle, the resilience of the hardy and stoic people of Kutch is remarkable and was amply demonstrated during and after the relief operations.⁴

The last major earthquake in Gujarat at Anjar (Kutch) in 1856 measured 7.0 on the Richter scale but caused damage only within a single sub-District, by contrast the earthquake of January 26th rocked twenty one out of twenty five districts in the state, but caused the greatest havoc in Kutch. Kutch bore ninety per cent of all deaths and about eighty five per cent of all asset losses. Those in agriculture, livestock rearing and salt production suffered significant losses as did the crafts sector for which Kutch is well renowned. ‘An assessment of the damage put the total direct losses state wide at \$3.5 billion.’ (UNDP; 2001, p.3) (See Annex 2)

Despite the multi hazard environment the state has lacked a comprehensive overarching disaster management strategy. ‘The Government has spent \$128 million dollars on drought relief over the last decade However short-term unsustainable work under a relief framework has left people more vulnerable to disasters and more dependent on the Government.’ (UNDP; 2001, p.3) The scale and the magnitude of the January earthquake has marked a turning point, prompting not merely the immediate and massive relief operation by the Government with overwhelming support from the international community, but it also ‘galvanized state and non-state actors- civil society organisations (CSOs) and the United

⁴ ‘Soon after the disaster a sign appeared in a heap of rubble in Bhuj declaring ‘business as usual.’ Trade in Ahmedabad was back to normal within a few days. By the end of the week small stalls had appeared even in the most devastated areas.’ (Vaux; 2001, p.14)

Nations (UN) agencies to formulate strategies and approaches together that would move them from short term relief to long term rehabilitation, securing lives and livelihoods to weather further disasters.’ (UNDP; 2001, p.3) These approaches and strategies are the focus of the following section.

2. RESPONSE

2.1 *The Government*

Sophisticated search-and-rescue operations attracted significant media coverage around the world. International aid agencies arrived quickly but not as quickly as those who were already there. 'It was the neighbourly acts of kindness and the rapid response of Government and staff officials that saved most lives.' (Vaux; 2001, p.15) One of the State Government's reports notes 'that a number of other officers and men worked under severe adverse circumstances over and beyond the call of duty. But all these have not come into public notice as there was neither the time nor the inclination to go to the press.'⁵

The State Government of Gujarat mobilised manpower, necessary equipment, and earthquake machineries on a large scale. The Disaster Emergency Committee⁶ (DEC) Monitoring Report⁷ concludes that the 'scale and rapidity of the Government response was astonishing.' (Vaux; 2001, p.16) Within three days water, power and telecommunication facilities were restored, people were provided with temporary shelters and community kitchens sprang up in no time. The Government rapidly mobilised the Public Distribution System, distributing over 15, 000 tons of food within a month of the disaster, three times the normal rate. In the health sector Government was providing primary treatment to 136, 098 patients within two days of the disaster. Because of shortages of hospital beds, a massive airlift operation was launched. Over 4,000 patients were evacuated to hospitals outside Kutch. Although there was apprehension about epidemics Government acted quickly to disburse cholera tablets initiated other measures which clearly met with success as no epidemic occurred. (DEC UK: Monitoring Report, March 2001)

⁵ See the Government's remarkable account in '*Kutch Earthquake of 26-01-2001-Note on Relief Operations*.'

⁶ The DEC is a UK based organization which launches and co-ordinates national appeals

⁷ The report followed the initial evaluation visit in March 2001 and is posted at www.dec.org.uk

Compared with the Latur earthquake in Maharashtra in 1993 the response was a great success. In Latur thousands of people waited five years for the Government to construct their homes but many resented relocation. The Abhiyan network together with UNDP scored policy victories on two fronts, by gaining broad consensus among all stakeholders on the *in situ* reconstruction rather than relocation and on the importance of owner-driven reconstruction. As UNDP highlights, ‘the lessons of Latur are clear; two years after the earthquake, a survey found that 97 percent of people in 52 villages were happy with their *in-situ* homes, owner built at \$320, compared to only 48 percent of people satisfied with their relocated houses, built at unit costs ranging from about \$1,170 to \$4,340. (UNDP; 2001, p.8)

In contrast to the solutions imposed on the people in Latur the Government came to understand that successful reconstruction could only be built upon the choices and capacities of the local people. Whenever Government deviated from that policy there was trouble. ‘It has been widely reported that people in Kutch are familiar with disasters, especially repetitive cyclones. With the lack of visibility of Government aid in the past people have become accustomed to rebuilding *in-situ* on their own. Thus after the quake the initial call for relocation did not go over well, people did not trust that aid would ever come through, and most did not see the need to relocate,’ (Salazar; 2001, p.4) as the village councils resolutions collected by the *setus*⁸ from 450 villages demonstrated.

It is worth noting that the success of the Government’s response was mediated by political considerations. At the time of the earthquake Gujarat was the only state in India where the State Government was from the same party as the Central Government, the Bharatiya Janita

⁸ To enable the co-ordinated and non-discriminatory distribution of relief material Abhiyan set up by February 33 sub-centers across the district of Kutch managed by local CSOs. Each sub-centre covered a geographical cluster of 15-20 villages in all ten sub-districts of Kutch. When the government reviewed the role of these sub-centers later in the relief phase, it mandated these official rehabilitation support centers, Abhiyan renamed them as *setu* (Sanskrit for bridges).

Parishad (BIP) and the State Government was extremely vulnerable. Therefore, the Central Government went to great lengths to ensure an effective relief response. When the Gujarat Chief Minister was criticised for not having done enough he was replaced. However, despite the large resources made available to officials after the earthquake, the greatest failure of the Government was that there existed a total lack of information about the affected parts of Gujarat being in the high seismic zone and its implications among all sections of society. (Sinha; 2002) Consequently the community was not prepared to face a disaster of this scale. There existed lack of planning for post-disaster management in all realms and particularly in communication, co-ordination and control. There was a great deal of confusion about Government plans. Officials at State, District and *Taluka* (Block) levels often gave conflicting accounts of Government programs.

Another weakness was that the official assessments of damage were not properly conducted. Teams of inexperienced engineers were drafted in but proved incompetent or easily manipulated by political or other considerations. (Vaux; 2002, p.16) In order to build an effective decision support system there is a need to equip emergency operation centres with damage assessment/damage estimation tools such as HAZUS (stands for HAZARDS US) which is software that utilises geographic information system (GIS) technology to produce detailed maps which describe a community's potential losses due to disasters. Loss estimates calculated with HAZUS can be used for planning mitigation efforts to reduce losses before earthquakes occur and preparing for emergency response and recovery after earthquakes occur. In the event of an earthquake HAZUS will automatically receive data on the event from the network and run an analysis based on that data, the results of which will represent the Government's first official estimates of damage and loss. (HPC; 2001, p.145)

The Government was overwhelmed with relief donations, and many supplies such as second hand clothes, children's toys, crayons and so on the Government did not know what to do with and passed onto the NGOs. In the future an excellent exercise that could be adapted to the Indian context which will identify what relief material has been received, where it is and determine exactly how useful the supplies are, is the one that is presented by the Supply Management Project in the Aftermath of Disasters (SUMA) model. It was launched as a collective effort of the Latin American countries to improve the administration of supplies in the aftermath of disasters. SUMA can act as an effective tool for information and donor management with the assistance of capable personnel, versatile materials and easy to use electronic tools in order for the supplies to be classified, taken inventory of and prioritized from the moment of arrival.⁹ (HPC; 2001, p.142)

2.1.2 The International Response

The international response was overwhelming. Planeloads of relief material began to arrive within hours. 'According to UNDAC, by 10th February relief had arrived from 38 countries and the presence of 245 agencies had been registered, including at least 99 international NGOs, 55 national NGOs, 20 donor government teams, 10 intergovernmental and UN organisations and Red Cross Representatives from 10 countries. (Vaux; 2001, p.15)

In the UK the public appeal for the earthquake was the most successful ever.¹⁰

An independent evaluation led by Humanitarian Initiatives UK together with Mango and the Disaster Mitigation Institute in Ahmedabad carried out for the DEC reveals that, 'overall the response of the member aid agencies from the UK and Ireland was reasonably good, but the achievement of the best is counterbalanced by the failure of the worst.' (DMI/HI/Mango; 2001, p.145) Measuring performance against the Red Cross Code the following scores out of

⁹ For more details see, HPC, *High Powered Committee on Disaster Management Report: Creating a Culture of Prevention*. New Delhi: Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperation, Government of India, 2001, p.143

¹⁰ On 2nd February 2001 12 aid agencies from the UK and Ireland launched an Appeal for 'the survivors of the earthquake' that raised over £24 million.

ten were assigned for the total DEC response, with the proviso that there were huge disparities between members.

1. Humanitarian imperative comes first	5
2. Aid is given regardless of race etc.	8
3. Religion and Politics	9
4. Independence from government policy	N/A
5. Culture and Custom	6
6. Build on local capacities	5
7. Involve beneficiaries	4
8. Reduce future vulnerabilities	3
9. Accountable to beneficiaries	6
Ditto to donors	8
10. Dignity in images	5

Total 59

Dividing the total by ten (ten criteria) gives an overall rating of 5.9 for this disaster (DMI/HI/Mango; 2001, p.46).

Learning by aid agencies from previous earthquakes has been poor and mistakes were repeated. British NGOs failed to learn from Latur eight years previously and responded to the destruction of complex village infrastructure by attempting to build rows of concrete houses and undertaking paternalistic village adoption schemes.¹¹ Even though Abhiyan had circulated a draft shelter policy among international NGOs as early as February, emphasising that the process of rebuilding should be informed by the larger vision of building self-reliant and sustainable communities and must develop local entrepreneurship to serve local recovery, a DEC shelter consultant pointed out that, ‘members failed to use local labour and instead the work was given to contractors using migrant labour.’ (Vaux; 2001, p.17) The possibility that migrant labour is likely to be exploited and may involve violations of human and civil rights was ignored. Clearly external assistance can be visualised as a mixed blessing and sometimes, in dearth of proper management, can result in secondary disasters. Instead they

¹¹ Where there has been total destruction and people are ready to move to a new site they can enter into an agreement by which an external agency adopts and rebuilds the entire village. In that case the owners are expected to hand back their compensation to that agency and provide half the cost of the housing. Apart from CARE the DEC agencies which initially engaged in ‘adoption’ have abandoned the attempt to collect government compensation, because of the difficulties encountered in the process and have paid for the entire housing project. ‘Such agencies have begun to compete with each to show their generosity. The owners get a

should have focussed as UNDP and Abhiyan did on encouraging people to rebuild their houses in their own way.

The main problem with the international response therefore was that it failed to build on local capacities and the ability of communities to cope with future disasters. According to the evaluation, agencies that had been present in India for many years acted as though they had just arrived and failed to make the best use of the plethora of progressive Indian NGOs, as partners in planning and implementation, and (perhaps from this) arose a lack of attention to the importance of livelihoods.¹² (DMI/HI/Mango; 2001, p.45) Instead valuable resources were wasted flying in relief materials that could have been obtained locally. Although important skills were available locally, except knowledge of the DEC members, ‘they brought in experts to run their own show, if that hadn’t happened, perhaps they wouldn’t have packed their bags so soon.’¹³

Several explanations have been offered for the failure of many international aid agencies to engage in ‘longer term issues’ and focus on restoring livelihoods as a means of promoting security. The first stems from the short time frame allocated for the response. ‘Placing a six month spending window on emergency funds, it was trapped by imposing a time limit on something that can’t always be rushed.’¹⁴ (IFRC; 2001 on DEC) Consequently comments such as these regarding the fleeting presence of foreign aid agencies expressed by villagers are hardly surprising: ‘they are here today and gone tomorrow, KMVS was here long before

new seismic safe house and also get the compensation money. This adds to the overall effect of economic polarisation and undermines the principles of building on local capacities.’ (HI/DMI/Mango; 2001, p.32)

¹² Questions remain as to why Oxfam with a presence in Gujarat for more than twenty years made so little use of its long term partners. Respected NGOs such as Gram Vikas Trust (Dwarka) and SETU (Ahmedabad) contacted Oxfam immediately after the disaster only to be told that it was not working outside a small area of Kutch and only connected with Oxfam’s long-term drought program. (DMI/HI/Mango; 2001, p.35)

¹³ Interview with Ram Iyer; June 25th 2002

¹⁴ ‘The mismatch between availability of funds and timescale became so great that managers began to make spending funds their objective rather than helping ‘survivors of the earthquake’ as required by the Appeal.’ (DMI/HI/Mango; 2001, p.18)

the earthquake and is here to stay, we trust KMVS because we know her like the moon and stars.’¹⁵ The rule that DEC money must be spent within six to nine months and concentrated on relief rather than the long term, can be accounted for by the many misguided assumptions made about public opinion devoid of sufficient evidence. It is believed that more innovative and effective work which is often ‘open-ended’ and therefore more risky is deemed to be less accountable and therefore less acceptable. However a recent survey reveals that the public holds no such view and appreciates the need for longer term engagement.

Secondly the failure of many DEC agencies to gain a deeper understanding of the local situation and partners, exacerbating the issue of building on local capacity, resulted from a stream of inexperienced staff below the project manager and a high staff turnover. ‘Concern, Oxfam and Merlin have employed three different coordinators in the earthquake response so far-none of them having any significant previous experience in India-yet costing four to eight times as much as locally recruited managers.’ (HI/DMI/Mango; 2001, p.35)

Finally from studying the work of the Self Employment Women’s Association (SEWA) a union made up of poor working women (Vaux; 2001) suggests that ‘professionals in disaster relief do not experience disasters in the same way that they are experienced by poor working women.’ (Vaux; 2002, p.5) A disruptive or inconvenient aberration from ‘normality’ is what encapsulates the understanding and experience of the term ‘disaster’ in the North. Hence the belief amongst disaster professionals that the situation was ‘normal’ before they came and will return to ‘normal’ once the relief operation is complete, failing to appreciate that in the case of Gujarat where both low-consequence events such as recurrent droughts and floods and high-consequence events such as earthquakes and cyclones are frequently experienced, a ‘crises’ is ‘an enduring harmful situation’ rather than a ‘sudden cataclysm.’ (Alexander;

¹⁵ Interview with Nanaben; June 28th 2002

1997, p.289) A disaster is therefore not an event separate from normal life but simply an exacerbation of underlying problems.’ (Vaux; 2001, p.6)

Armed with this perspective termed by (Vaux; 2001) the ‘prevalent’ view, disaster professionals in the North tend to view disaster episodes in terms of a ‘continuum’ where the response to a disaster is divided into relief, rehabilitation and development as distinct and fundamentally sequential, with specialised agencies taking on specific responsibilities for discrete and phased programming. (Smillie; 1998) ‘Usually the first phase lasts a couple of months and is characterised by the provision of food, water and household items. The focus then shifts to livelihoods and when this is finished the third phase begins for instance housing reconstruction.’ (Vaux; 2001, p.5) This linear sequencing of disaster stages is unhelpful because different stages can occur at the same time for different segments of a population in varying contexts and because stage divisions are arbitrary and only useful in distinguishing the major functional activities of a period.¹⁶ (Kelly; 1998; p.25) Emergency relief should not therefore be defined solely in terms of food aid and medical relief, as it runs the risk of undermining local production systems, local organisations and local self-esteem. ‘Emergency aid should include such seemingly bizarre concepts as ‘relief production,’ ‘relief employment,’ ‘relief-income generation, and ‘relief institutional development.’ (Roche; 1994) Dovetailing relief with development continues to remain an important challenge for international aid agencies, ‘an emphasis on livelihoods in the immediate aftermath of a disaster is not always an articulated need amongst survivors however aid agencies must strive

¹⁶ (Seaman; 1994) illustrates that a developing country Government or community group are likely to have a different view on the definitions of and practical relationships between relief and development to those of donors. He cites the example of Bangladesh where the great storm surge disasters which have struck coastal 20 Bangladesh have caused hundreds of thousands of deaths and are typically seen by outside agencies as ‘natural’ disasters, having primarily an immediate human effect. Paradoxically, flood surges create relatively slight short term medical and other relief needs apart from short term rescue and first aid. The effects are primarily economic and can be managed by the intensification of ‘normal’ development, recapitalization of the normal domestic economy and the replacement of public capital. The distinction between relief and development in such cases may be a very fine one: the very short-term problem of rescue aside the type of activity involved may be little or no different to that associated with ‘development.’ (Seaman; 1994, p.35)

to make it a component of their initial response.¹⁷ This is something multilateral agencies such as UNDP and local NGOs such as SEWA¹⁸ and KMVS have accomplished fairly successfully and is discussed below.

2.1.3 UNDP and the Transition Recovery Concept

The transition recovery project was implemented by UNDP in Gujarat, as a test case supported by the Department for International Development DFID UK. Transition recovery offers an approach which contrasts the ‘prevalent view’ and has the potential to:

- Close the gap between relief and reconstruction;
- Break the downward spiral of unsustainable development and facilitate a sustainable reduction in vulnerabilities and risk;
- Improve co-ordination between a wide range of local, national, regional and international partners;
- Build on existing social and human resources enabling a rapid recovery of livelihoods and development with relatively small financial inputs;
- Build capacities and demonstrate approaches that can be applied on a larger scale.

(UNDP; 2001, p.6) (See Annex 3)

UNDP managed to strike a fine balance between respect for local practices, without venerating them, and the introduction of outside innovations, without exalting them. It complemented (not substituted) local recovery process through: the promotion of vulnerability reduction initiatives implemented by local communities; information dissemination relating to seismically safe construction methods and government policy to

¹⁷ Interview with Sushmaben Iyengar; July 5th 2002

¹⁸ See T.Vaux, *Self Employment Women’s Association (SEWA), Life, Livelihood and Gender –A better model of disaster*, unpublished

affected communities; support to the *setu* network designed to provide the interface between communities, the district administration, and NGOs; capacity building of GSDMA by deputing technical experts; and finally the deployment of National UN volunteers to support the sub-centre network, shelter and livelihood projects and block level administration.¹⁹

KMVS is a long-standing local partner of UNDP and Alkaben describes UNDP as ‘very helpful, colleges rather than donors, they do require a lot of reports but will make the effort to participate in our meetings, observe and take notes.’²⁰ Sushmaben acknowledges that UNDP and Abhuyan have experienced a synergistic relationship, however questions, ‘how much was it UNDP, or how much was it the individuals specific to the organisation at the time,’ as ‘appropriate organisational behaviour hinges on the personal values, commitment and motivation of practitioners.’ (Fowler; 1997, p.23) She acknowledged the visionary self-aware leadership of Praveen Pardeshi who was the Latur collector during the time of the earthquake, ‘he had learnt his lessons, knew what a disaster was, and was non-official which meant we were able to collaborate very well.’²¹

¹⁹ Interview with Ram Iyer; June 25th 2002

²⁰ Interview with Alkaben Jani; July 3rd 2001

²¹ Interview with Sushmaben Iyengar; July 3rd 2002

2.1.4 An Introduction to KMVS

KMVS came into being in 1989 in the Kutch region of Gujarat as a registered Trust and Society with the objective of working with poor rural women.²² Its overarching mission is the ‘total empowerment of women through their conscientization, mobilization and organisation into local collectives capable of independently addressing gender inequalities in the development process and engendering a sustainable socio-economic transformation of the region.’ (Ramachandran and Saihjee; 2000, p.2)

Empowerment is an elusive concept and is open to differing interpretations.²³ The pioneering team of KMVS began with an open-ended agenda and no fixed or final definition of empowerment. KMVS does not possess an issue linked identity rather it has chosen to build capabilities to respond to issues as they emerge, a strategy characterised by learning, reflection, and experimentation. ‘There were several jokes about constantly looking back and analysing. Apart from the regular two year exercise of systematic reflection almost every forum is used for self-assessment. The cycle of reflecting-planning-reflection has been internalised by the organisation and it has become the trademark of KMVS.’ (Ramachandran and Saihjee; 2000, p.37) In the first year it focused on learning about, and building a rapport with the local women.

²² While rural women form KMVS’s main constituency they are not treated as an undifferentiated category and stratifications along the lines of caste, class, ethnicity and religion are recognised. Respecting diversity and resisting the temptation of generalised or simplistic solutions is one of KMVS’s greatest strengths.

²³ In the 1980s when empowerment replaced ‘women’s development’ organisations like the Self Employment Women’s Association (Gujarat), and Co-operative Development Federation (Andhra Pradesh) focused on economic empowerment, enhancing women’s access to credit, linking them to markets, and training women to take control of their incomes thereby promoting full employment and autonomy. Autonomous women’s groups and feminist organisations in rural and urban areas focused on enhancing the inner strength of women, their self-esteem, making private issues like domestic violence, dowry harassment/death public and focused on providing support structures such as shelters for battered women, counselling and legal cells. A third approach was to enable women to come together as collectives and enhance their collective bargaining power. The national Mahila Samakhya Programme and several NGO initiatives concentrated on facilitating the creation of rural women’s groups (*Mahila Sangh*). Gradually as women gained in strength they would articulate their needs and be supported in their work with external inputs giving primacy to education and training as precursors to economic activity through self-help.

Viewing participation as a means to empower women through setting up a process to control their own development, (as opposed merely to instrumental participation aimed at improving project efficacy)²⁴ (Nelson and Wright; 1995, p.1) KMVS created a decentralised organisational structure²⁵ and focused on building collective relationships. Collective action around self-defined priorities has given women the confidence to exercise greater bargaining power within the household and to participate more actively within the community.

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Levels of Participation

Participation as a cosmetic label	Participation as a means (efficiency)	Participation as an end (empowerment)	Nelson and Wright (1995) Okali et al. (1994)
	Instrumental Participation	Transformative Participation	
Contractual	Consultative	Collegiate	Biggs (1989)
Passive Participation	Through Consultation	Interactive Participation	Pretty et al. (1995)
Providing Information	Functional Participation	Self-mobilisation	
	Participation for Material Incentives		
Rhetoric without the contents	Co-opting practices (<i>you</i> participate in <i>our</i> project)	Empowerment (<i>We</i> participate in <i>their</i> project)	Chambers (1004)
Source: Pijnenburg & Nhantumbo; 2002, p.193)			

²⁵ At the core of KMVS's organisational edifice is a decentralised three-tier structure where the three tiers do not necessarily reflect a hierarchical ordering. The first tier is composed of the *mahila mandals* that are formed at the village level consisting of 30-40 members paying an annual fee of five rupees. Each *mandal* has a core team with some members taking on specific responsibilities relating to health, education and so on. Each *mandal* elects a leader called an *Agewan*.

The second tier is made up of the *Taluka Sangathans* which are federations of *mahila mandals* belonging to each *Taluka* with an average of 1000-2000 women. The core groups of the different *mandals* constitute the lead group of the *Sangathan* and it is their role to provide necessary leadership to the *Sangathan* activities. A *Taluka Samiti* of eight to ten women in turn supports the lead group. They are selected by *Sangathan* members and operate from an office at the *Taluka* headquarters. The *Taluka Sangathans* have now begun to access independent grants and manage their finances including income-generation activities with only technical assistance from KMVS. KMVS has attempted to develop every *Sangathan* as an independent local organisation- democratically elected and self-managed.

The third tier is KMVS itself. The four *Taluka Sangathans* are integrated into its structure. It acts as a large resource centre for the *Sangathans'* activities and the interface between the rural women and the state, NGOs and donor agencies. The KMVS organisational structure is constituted by the apex level governing, executive and administrative bodies. Apart from the executive team, KMVS consists of seven in-house resource units- education, health, savings, credit, craft production, natural resource management and *Panchayat* – that are independently co-ordinated by KMVS members. (KMVS; 2001, p.3) (See Annex 4)

Empowerment came to be understood a positive-sum gain,²⁶ ‘empowerment through ideas’ as in the Freirian (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed*; 1970) sense. By channelling its efforts into raising collective awareness and skills development, KMVS has created an environment in which, women collectively develop their power to perceive critically the way in which they exist in the world and then act to address the underlying structural conditions which generate inequality.²⁷ KMVS functions as a resource centre for the *Sangathans*’ activities providing technical inputs through training and moral support to meet needs in a disaster as well as in the long term in order to build up the self-organisation and self-esteem of poor women sufficiently for them to participate further upstream in policy making processes.

²⁶ (Sharp 1992) has developed two models of power transfer. The first model of zero-sum power transfer suggests that in order for one party to be empowered another must lose power. This either requires the voluntary ‘dis-empowering’ of those with power or the wresting of their power by force. Sharp’s alternative framework for empowerment, the ‘positive-sum model’ suggests that there is not a finite amount of power and that power can be created.

²⁷ ‘Discussions on why they had become such frenetic craft producers took them into a process of tracing the roots of the problem—the ecological degradation and ensuing effects on women—poor health and lack of female education. Status as piece-rate workers was discussed in view of their own gendered relationship with the so-called middlemen who often happened to be an influential male member of the extended family. The ‘middlemen were looked at in terms of their critical function and role in the production process, if this middle agent was to be eliminated someone had to play his role. Could women do that collectively?’ (Ramachandran and Saihjee; 2000, p.9 quoting Sushmaben Iyengar)

3. BEST PRACTICE

Aside from ensuring that aid was provided on a universal, impartial basis, in accordance with need and irrespective of political or religious standpoints, KMVS has performed particularly well in terms of building its response on local capacities, involving beneficiaries in program management, reducing future vulnerability, avoiding assistentialism (aid-dependence), promoting accountability, and supporting the crucial role played by women in disaster prone communities, *all* of which KMVS considers non-negotiable.

3.1 Rapid Relief

KMVS recognised the importance of rapid relief, for instance the medical unit in Khawda set to work immediately in the surrounding villages, whilst other staff manned the *setus* formulated by Abhiyan to distribute relief to remote villages, and conducted rapid assessments and surveys. Out of the surveys two needs emerged as priority: to provide affected families with shelter and also to start proving income generating activities to the affected women in the Khadir region of Kutch, although KMVS had not worked in this region before.

3.1.2 Shelter

It was necessary to protect people from extreme temperatures, the forthcoming monsoon rains and restore the working capital of artisans such as embroiders. Work sheds and toolkits alone are inadequate for embroiderers who choose to embroider despite the low wages because they can work from home. Since ‘Government packages for semi-permanent shelter were inappropriate and since few international organisations recognised the need for cheap, semi-permanent structures where people continue with their home based crafts,’ (Vaux; 2001, p.17) Abhiyan with the deepest local roots led the initiative in semi-permanent shelter

reconstruction. As a part of this effort KMVS distributed material kits and helped 5,796 families to build interim shelter to mitigate further hardship.

Capacity building and skills development is the main focus of KMVS so that the *Sangathan* leaders can prepare for and manage disasters effectively.²⁸ Engineers deputed by UNDP who had designed earthquake resistant homes in Latur, trained masons from local communities in new and innovative seismic safe and cyclone resistant technologies, such as the manufacturing of precast-ferro cement roof channels, cement stabilized mud blocks and roof top water harvesting features to mitigate the effects of drought and cyclones. Architects improved upon the traditional circular kutchi house the *bhoonga*, built with a conical roof, mud, sticks and a wooden support, many of which withstood the earthquake while modern structures gave way. People welcomed these new designs because they protected their traditional lifestyles and reflected the local concept of housing as a function of both shelter and livelihood. 'The home is not simply a source of protection from the elements but also a safe storage area, a pen for the animals, a place to process agricultural products and a base for self-employment in crafts and services. In many ways, the house is more a centre for cottage industry than a shelter.' (DMI/H1/Mango; 2001, p.34) (See Annex 5)

3.1.3 Handicrafts

KMVS is working with 1,200 artisans organised in producer groups with independent business management responsibilities. Each artisan in the group must earn no less than \$6.50-\$28 each month in keeping with their productivity and skills. Regular training workshops are held to upgrade skills. The women make adequate profits to cover the administrative costs of the organisation and are no longer dependent on external assistance. The ultimate goal of

²⁸ 251 youth were trained in four batches in the Pachcham area of Kutch by the technical team of Abhiyan. As part of the semi-permanent shelter program, 40 *samiti* members of the *Taluka Sangathans* were trained to manage material and monitor the technical aspect of the construction of these shelters, 308 members men and women were trained for the formation of the village *samitis* inclusive of *mahila mandal agewans* as part of the rehabilitation process. (KMVS; 2001)

KMVS is set up an artisan collective that independently manages production and decision making while preserving the art with higher productivity and higher income. KMVS would like to see at least 100 artisans develop into master craftswomen. (UNDP; 2001, p.22)

The artisans of Kutch suffered huge losses during the earthquake – of crafts people, materials, equipment and markets-that can be potentially devastating to the ancient and invaluable craft traditions. KMVS is therefore training more women to become part of the producer groups. UNDP is supporting KMVS in its efforts to set up village committees; upgrade leadership and skills; provide inputs for quality and design; set up a mechanism for quality control in each group; and finally identify artisans who have developed the skills to produce marketable crafts and link them to producer groups.. (UNDP; 2001, p.22)

3.1.4 A Multi-pronged approach in a multi hazard environment

KMVS has employed a multi-hazard approach to its livelihood risk mitigation activities. While handicrafts provided the entry point for KMVS to work with women artisan's, handicrafts are not the main income source for women. A recent impact assessment survey revealed that only 5% of families are totally dependent on handicrafts for their livelihood; 50% of families depend on agriculture and animal husbandry and 30% on wage labour. (KMVS; 2001, p.37) Handicrafts have always provided a supplementary income. *Sangathan* women explain that their long-term survival is dependent upon regeneration of the environment and the availability of water and fodder.

Despite the huge financial commitment to drought relief on the part of the Government the effects of drought have scarcely been mitigated. Drought relief work only provides manual wage employment for the period of scarcity without making the village self-sustaining in its

water and fodder needs. (UNDP; 2001, p.20) To reduce vulnerability to drought and the tedious dependency on drought relief dole outs, drought proofing activities through eco-generation has taken centre stage. ‘The eco-restoration work undertaken at Vyar village in the Nakhatrana *Taluka* of Kutch by the *Sangathans* jointly with the village community²⁹ (without any aid from the Government) is a milestone in the history of drought proofing in Kutch.’ (KMVS; 2001, p.32)

The community welcomed for the first the time the idea of collective contribution, active initiative, and responsibility. They gained the opportunity to work for themselves and their own village on a long term basis for a fair wage. CARE TODAY provided the financial support, KMVS led the social mobilisation and Sahjeeven extended their technical support. The *Sangathan* organised interactive sessions with the villagers to give them a meaningful perspective on the task ahead of them, a village committee comprised of 11 members both men and women, delegated tasks and the village communities shouldered the responsibility of the construction work, agreeing to contribute one day’s labour to develop a common fund that could later be drawn upon for the upkeep of the dams constructed, thus creating a great sense of ownership.

The long term catchment treatment that the village has planned for, is expected to enable villagers to meet their entire fodder needs independently and permit the development of fodder banks for drought years and treatment of the Mitiyyajar chella (a rivulet flowing through the area surrounding Vyar) through the construction of percolation tanks will allow

²⁹ The Rabri communities settled in Vyar village taking into consideration the rich eco-system that was conducive to animal husbandry and embracing the prospect that the weavers from the Vankar community that lived there would weave woollen fabric for their attire, facilitating a mutually beneficial existence. Over the years the extensive exploitation of natural resources has destroyed the village economy. The drought proofing was triggered by the communities themselves with the aim of returning to their traditional livelihoods and was the first attempt at watershed work undertaken with nomads trying to settle as opposed to cattle breeders or dry land farmers.

the Harijan and Rabari communities to plant two crops a year. (KMVS; 2001, p.31) Working in collaboration with UNDP and the Ministry of Rural Development, KMVS together with Abhiyan used the Vyar eco-regeneration as a model to start long term drought mitigation activities in late 2000. Now in the post earthquake scenario the Prime Ministers office, and the District Administration have come to appreciate the importance of drought proofing and other such schemes are underway.

3.1.5 Accountability

‘Only by being transparent in its undertakings and accountable to those whose lives it most affects can humanitarian action truly meet its objective to safeguard and uphold the dignity and well-being of those who have been affected by disasters.’ (IFRC; 2002) In this spirit UNDP and the Ministry of Rural Development are supporting a community radio program initiated by KMVS in 1999 aimed at raising awareness of developmental issues pertaining to rural Kutch. It is an effective information dissemination mechanism in a district so large and highly illiterate.³⁰ The discussions delineating programs undertaken by Governmental and non-governmental actors and the opportunity to question these constituencies has fostered a degree of accountability. In the post earthquake scenario there is an even greater urgency for strong communication between local communities and the structures of power. It is very important that people do not feel alienated and have a sense of belonging to their rehabilitation. ‘Radio plays a crucial role in bonding people all around, culturally as well as in providing the right information to people, so that the rehabilitation effort is smooth and so that trust is created amongst the people allowing them to stand up again forgetting the shock.’ (KMVS; 2001, p.14) The KMVS newsletter – *Behanono Ujjas* also disseminates information

³⁰ ‘Literacy levels are as low as 0.5% and can be viewed as a consequence of the political economy of drought which demands child and female labour for survival. The pitiful lack of an educational infrastructure compounded by an emphasis on Gujarati rather than Kutchi the oral dialect has resulted in the lack of ‘functional schools and the complete neglect of the educational process.’ (Ramachandran and Saijhee; June 2000, p.7)

relating to rehabilitation in remote villages, it features interviews with important functionaries such as the District Development Officer and is an effective mouthpiece and advocacy tool for the *Sangathan* women.

KMVS has also established a mechanism to resolve complaints, presenting the opportunity to seek, redress and resolve concerns. It is worth noting that while a merit of the core Government program is that it builds on local capacities, the compensation policy was socially inequitable. The amount of compensation was proportional to the value of the damaged property and so the rich got more. KMVS' created a separate legal cell to help poor individuals secure their rights. 'Land entitlements, Government compensation and possible discrimination are areas of concern in addition to the regular work. The village *Panchayats* (council) comprising of the leaders and elders of the community in the district *Talukas* have been reactivated to handle equitable distribution of relief supplies and to ensure caste/gender non-discrimination in the rehabilitation period.' (KMVS; 2001, p.21)

On the issue of upward accountability KMVS has chosen to opt out of the foreign donor market except during violent rapid onset disasters. In the first five years KMVS received an open ended grant from the Border Area Development Program of GOI (Ministry of Human Resource Development). This gave KMVS the opportunity to concentrate on its work without devoting time to fundraising and targets. 'While regular reports had to be submitted to the government, the very fact that there wasn't anyone breathing down their neck gave the pioneering team space to 'learn by doing' and also to 'learn from their own mistakes.'³¹ (KMVS; 2001, p.32)

³¹ 'The acceptance of large volumes of foreign aid involves entering into agreement about what is to be done and how it is to be accounted for. This fosters an emphasis on certain forms of activity at the expense of others, an upward accountability (rather than downward accountability to members), and on particular techniques and donor definitions of achievement throughout the organisation.' (Edwards and Hulme; 1997, p.8)

‘There is no shortage of funds in India, the problem is that the poor are unaware of the various Government schemes that they are eligible for and how to access the funding. If you are a credible NGO the Government will come forward. Our autonomous stance has enabled KMVS to secure its legitimacy and credibility among our own constituencies and act as a pressure group in relation to the state. Rural women also gain the confidence to bargain with local officials so that with or without KMVS they are in a position to meet their requirements locally.’³² During the earthquake KMVS received funding from Abhiyan which in turn received funding from the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC). When asked whether the SDC called the tune Susmaben replied ‘we will only accept funding if it is on our terms.’³³

3.1.6 Women and Disasters

KMVS owes the success of its response to its members who undertook all relief and rehabilitation work. There are certain tendencies amongst poor working women which make them exceptionally good at disaster management, namely they experience disasters all the time in their lives, are sensitive and think about others especially their children, think long-term, laterally and strategically, are able to co-ordinate multiple activities simultaneously, are prepared to save for the future and their central concern is their livelihood.³⁴ (Vaux; 2002, p.2) Much can be gained from observing the response of NGOs with a focus on poor working women and drawing from one of the ‘most excluded’ perspectives in disaster theory and practice. (Enarson; 1998, p.158 quoting Hewitt; 1995)

³²A significant proportion of KMVS funds come from the Government it also access grants from private Indian Trusts and other support NGOs. KMVS has tried to maintain a balanced relationship with the government. It recognises the Government as an important actor in the development process and believes in the importance of dialogue, liaison, lobby and where necessary collaboration or distancing. (Interview with Alkaben Jani and Lataben Sachde; July 2nd 2001)

³³ Interview with Sushmaben Iyengar; July 5th 2001

³⁴ Interview with Sushmaben Iyengar; July 5th 2002

4. LOOKING AHEAD

4.1. Multiple Accountabilities

KMVS has focused on building local leadership at both village and organisational levels and developing a cadre of workers who are critically conscious of local realities. Dialogue between staff, KMVS members and other stakeholders is characterised by informal, creative and interactive processes. However ‘donors are demanding greater professionalism in carrying out base line surveys, maintaining databases, preparing periodic reports in English and interaction in an academic mode.’³⁵

KMVS can only gain from complementing its informal approach by building on firmer foundations not merely to strengthen its accountability systems but because fresh research will inform training, effective evaluations will help to shape strategy and good publications will influence policy and practice. However relying on ‘outside’ professionals who cannot make long-term commitments is not the answer, rather it will thwart continuity and institutional memory. Therefore, that exiting staff receive the relevant professional training and exposure is crucial. Encouraging Gujarati speaking volunteers from within India and abroad to share their expertise and skills is also a viable option.³⁶

As regards downward accountability to primary stakeholders and performance standards, the Red Cross Code, while it enjoys universal acceptance, has evolved in the West at senior management level and has not been negotiated with local NGOs or the people in need

³⁵ Interview with Alkaben Jani: July 3rd 2002

³⁶ Volunteers however long their stay can make a valuable contribution to the organisation fostering creativity and innovation, imparting technical and other skills to their local counterparts and exposing them to new ideas. At the same time it presents young people interested in gaining hands on experience in the field a rare opportunity to learn and grow. KMVS should consider building links with organisations such as Learning with India for Development based in the UK. Formerly known as Student Action India the NGO provides young people in the UK the opportunity to provide their voluntary services to well established and credible NGOs in India. Summer and year out placements are offered, for more details see: www.gn.apc.org/sai or e mail stud_act_india@hotmail.com.

(DMI/HI/Mango; 2001, p.6) and the minimum standards promoted by the Sphere Project,³⁷ are not necessarily consonant with Gujarat's development trajectory and cultural context.(Christoplos, Mitchell & Liljelund; 2001, p.193) KMVS should therefore encourage its members to develop their own yardstick for evaluation through a set of standards and indicators to monitor compliance with standards using internal and external mechanisms. Reporting back completes the accountability circle of informing, listening and responding.

4.1.2 Complete decentralisation and beneficiary participation

Involving programme beneficiaries in the management of relief aid was not firmly on the agenda of DEC members: 'No one asked us how we wanted to participate or if we wanted to.' 'We were consulted so that agencies could get the information to complete their paperwork only.' (Vaux; 2001, p.36 quoting DEC survey) In contrast designing structures for meaningful participation and creating opportunities for continued participation is the essence of KMVS' strategy. The adoption of the management approach – village level *mahila mandals*, *Taluka Sangathan* and issue based committees provide a structure for both the supply of physical energies in implementation, by the affected population to programs both in the pre and post earthquake scenarios, as well as involvement of the community mind (i.e. social involvement) in agenda setting, decision making and prioritisation. (Ntata; 1999)

However 'complete decentralisation of responsibility and collective consultation and decision making can create substantial delays in decision making and implementation resulting in the failure to meet targets on time.'³⁸ This apparent trade-off between entertaining a truly participatory, democratic and collective decision making process on the one hand, and ensuring that timely, decisive and representative decision are also reached on the other is an

³⁷ See www.sphereproject.org

³⁸ Interview with Alkaben Jani; July 4th 2002

area in need of further empirical study in the future. Can the trade-off be reconciled or is it an inevitable opportunity cost?

4.1.3 Enlarging the Scope for Risk Reduction

Given that local communities are the first respondents to a disaster KMVS must ensure that disaster mitigation and preparedness (DMP) is an integral part of its development programs. In education for instance the extensive teacher training module must include issues related to disasters such as promoting an understanding of the vulnerability of the area in which the students live, discussing how to behave in the event of an earthquake or cyclone and encouraging students to prepare plans for disaster prevention. Training in first aid and counselling for patients suffering from shock and trauma should also be an essential component of the health programs. It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of savings that can be drawn upon in times of hardship after a violent disaster. While KMVS already operates savings schemes an insurance program should be created so that claims can be processed and compensation allocated in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, boosting confidence as members cope with disasters using their own resources.

Finally KMVS and other NGOs can use computer programs such as the simplified Earthquake Damage Estimation software developed by the OYO group (OYO Corporation and OYO International). It is a practical tool developed as part of the Risk Assessment Tools for Diagnosis of Urban areas Against Seismic Disasters (RADIUS)³⁹ Initiative to aid users in understanding the seismic vulnerability of the cities they are working in. The program

³⁹ The United Nations General Assembly designated the 1990s as the 'International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR)' to reduce loss of life, property damage and social and economic disruption caused by natural disasters. The IDNDR secretariat launched the RADIUS initiative in 1996. It aimed to promote world wide activities for the reduction of urban seismic risk. The primary goal of the initiative is to help people understand their seismic risk and raise awareness as the first step towards risk reduction. Direct objectives of the RADIUS exercise were to develop tools for effective management of earthquake risk in cities. For this earthquake damage scenarios and action plans for selected cities around the world were taken up. (Askwith; 1994, p.107)

requires input of a simple data set and provides results with user friendly prompts and help functions. Input data are population, building types, ground types, and lifeline facilities. Outputs are seismic intensity (MMI), building damage, lifeline damage, and casualties which are shown with tables and maps. Users can apply a historical earthquake such as Kobe (1995) or Turkey (1999) as a hypothetical scenario earthquake. The program is available on CD-ROM and can be downloaded from the RADIUS homepage. (Okazaki; 2000, p.7)

5. AN INTEGRATED DISASTER MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR GUJARAT

5.1 Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness

The need to address risk, and with that the motivation to improve DMP, has tended to fall between the cracks of grander frameworks of development co-operation and humanitarian assistance because DMP have neither the allure of ‘directly saving lives’ nor of ‘providing an escape from poverty.’⁴⁰ (Christoplos, Mitchell & Liljelund; 2001, p.185) The case of India epitomises this unfortunate scenario. As was noted earlier, Gujarat was not prepared for the earthquake because ‘hitherto the approach of coping with the management of disasters has been conceived of in terms of the emergency relief and post-disaster rehabilitation, involving many problems such as search and rescue, communication, evacuation, warnings, law and order, provision of relief and sheltering and so on.’ (HPC; 2001, p.184) Simple common sense suggests that the immediate post-disaster period is an obvious time for opening the window of opportunity to promote risk reduction, in conjunction with rehabilitation, when hazards are still fresh in people’s minds and there is consensus on the inappropriateness of early models of infrastructure and land use. (Parker; 2000) However as the HPC observes, ‘after the initial trauma of the occurrence of the natural disaster is over, it is relegated to historic memory until the next one occurs’ (HPC; 2001, p.154) and the window of opportunity is left closed. This is because development policies displace concerns about risk and the haste to move money discourage careful risk analysis and its integration into reconstruction planning.

⁴⁰ Until very recently the international aid community was largely uninterested in disaster prevention and mitigation. ‘Donors dedicate far few resources to risk reduction than to relief, the European Community’s Humanitarian Office (ECHO), for example spent just 1.5% of its aid budget on disaster preparedness last year.’ (IFRC; 2002)

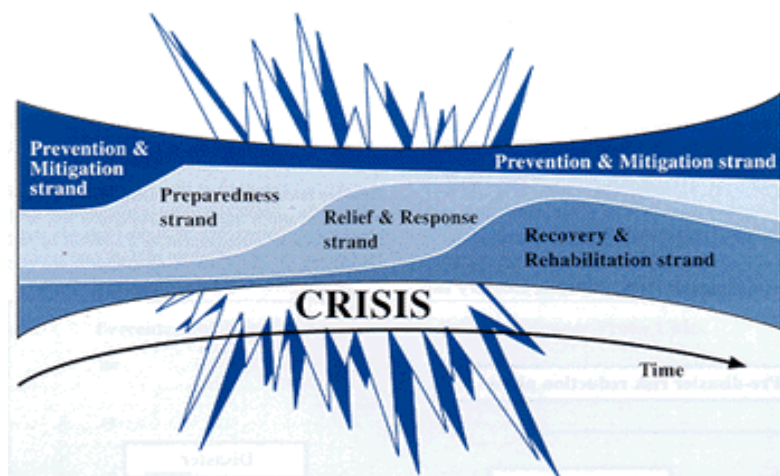
Encouragingly however, the challenge of reducing risk has a clear chance of emerging from the shadows of development and humanitarianism as the Government crosses the threshold of intolerance: 'The loss of life and property which took place in Gujarat on 26th January this year should really be unacceptable to a modern day society and equally to our country.' (HPC; 2001) The Government of India constituted in August 1999, a High Powered Committee (HPC) on Disaster Management under the Chairmanship of Shri J.C. Pant to suggest measure to bring about institutional reforms in the field and planning of disaster management. It was the first attempt in India towards a systematic, comprehensive and holistic look at all disasters. As the deliberations of the HPC unfolded, it was realised that the focus of planning must shift to taking a look at the whole cycle of disasters rather than only the post-disaster rehabilitation.

The terms of reference of the HPC included reviewing existing arrangements for preparedness and mitigation of natural and man made disasters, recommending measures for strengthening existing organisational structures and preparing modal plans for disaster management at the national, state and district levels. The HPC has laid the foundations for a new culture of preparedness and prevention. 'Disaster management and disaster preparedness and mitigation in particular, are issues that concern the cultural and attitudinal attributes of the Government, other organisations and the public at large. It was felt that a new culture of being prepared for and managing disasters that permeates all aspects-physical, social and economic of national life is needed.' (HPC; 2001, p.154)

5.1.2 A Model for Disaster Management

The HPC acknowledges the importance of a perceptible shift from relief to mitigation and preparedness, however, given that disasters cannot be assumed to be ‘bumps on the grand road to development, a special effort is required to ensure that risk-reduction is not left in an easily forgotten ‘pre-disaster phase.’ (Christoplos, Mitchell & Liljelund; 2001, p.186) A comprehensive disaster management strategy dealing with recurrent disasters should therefore integrate the package of structural and non-structural measures proposed by the HPC (See Annex 7) into an expand-contract model as depicted below which accommodate a blend of activity, with different groups of people working on different phases of recovery activity at the same time.

Figure 1



Source; GSPDM; 1998

In the expand-contract model - disaster management is seen as a continuous process.

Disasters are managed in a parallel series of activities rather than in a sequence of actions.

The different strands of activities or actions continue side by side, expanding or contracting as needed. For example, immediately after a disaster event - such as an earthquake - the ‘relief and response’ strand will expand to cope with the immediate effects of the disaster.

But as time passes, the ‘recovery and rehabilitation’ strand - including prevention to mitigate

against possible future disasters - will expand to address the rehabilitation needs of the affected community. The relative weighting of the different strands will also vary depending on the relationship between the hazard event and the vulnerability of the community involved. This approach acknowledges that disaster management usually includes a number of interventions and actions that may be occurring simultaneously and not always in phased succession. (GPSDM; 1998)

It would be premature to determine at this stage whether there will exist a gap between the recommendations of the HPC (concerning the reform of institutions and regulatory frameworks) and the political will and capacity to actually carry through these reforms. It can only be hoped that DMP will remain more than a current fad and will be systematically integrated into ongoing relief and development programming.

6. CONCLUSION

The dissertation has taken the author on a truly informative and exhilarating journey through the various phases of disaster management as depicted in theory and in practice, in the very real context of Gujarat. Beginning with the response. According to the HPC suffering due to disasters permeates all aspects of our lives and ‘people sitting in their homes can see live, through the media and information technology, as to how we respond to and manage disasters. Expectations of people have appropriately risen high, and therefore disaster management today defines the agenda of good governance.’ (HPC; 2001) Yet the response of the National and State Governments to the earthquake while astonishingly massive and rapid, was mediated by politics, susceptible to pressures from vested interests leading to inequitable relief distribution and the siphoning off of relief funds, and was impaired by the lack of trained personnel to manage relief works. This is clearly unacceptable and not merely should all levels of Government strive to minimise the response time and ensure that there exists a well trained, properly equipped, well coordinated and rapid search and rescue capability, but also ensure non-discrimination between recipients, the maintenance of minimum standards and norms and ensure that specific attention is paid to vulnerable sections of society.

Gujarat was overwhelmed with external assistance, despite 200 aftershocks in the first fortnight, including a massive 5.9 shock on 29th January. (DMI/HI/Mango: 2001, p.17) Important lessons have emerged for DEC members, most importantly the need to consider longer-term engagements. A more appropriate timescale could have allowed for: meaningful involvement of key stakeholders in projects and programs; a more profound understanding of social and environmental issues; the initiation of public awareness programs, especially about seismic safety; adjustment of plans for village adoption; closer collaboration with government; and strategising beyond issues of shelter and rebuilding. (DMI/HI/Mango; 2001, p.19) International aid agencies can draw from UNDP’s transition recovery approach,

essentially a developmental activity aimed at creating a bridge between relief assistance and long-term development programs. UNDP grasped opportunities effectively to support local recovery processes in the immediate aftermath of the disaster, and is factoring vulnerability considerations into recovery activities, thereby using the earthquake as a point of inflection in Gujarat's development path to reverse the downward spiral, rebuild sustainability and close the gap between relief and reconstruction.

Perhaps the most encouraging news from Gujarat is the innovative, collaborative effort between NGOs, UNDP and the government of Gujarat. Abhiyan is supporting the work of member organisations in 300 villages in shelter reconstruction, dam repairs, livelihood and community driven rehabilitation and UNDP is serving as an intermediate link between NGOs and the government. 'It is a new and creative experiment in socio-political organisation after disasters and a major step forward out of the political morass and NGO infighting that characterised the work in Latur.' (Salazar; 2001, p.5)

Of Abhiyan's members KMVS was one of the first NGOs to start work with rural women's collectives in 1989 with a process approach to development (Bond and Hulme: 1999) characterized by: field-focused,⁴¹ advocacy-related⁴² and possibility-creating learning,⁴³ experimentation, adaptation, organic expansion, and a focus on livelihoods. A fundamental belief in self-help, confidence-building and enabling local villagers to meet, organize and undertake their own needs assessment, and thereby handing over responsibility for the relief operation to the "beneficiaries" with minimum supervision, has enabled KMVS to achieve

⁴¹ It is a form of learning that gives priority to experiential learning among field workers, which forms the foundations for other forms of learning linked to good practice, policy and advocacy work. (Britton; 1998)

⁴² Lessons learnt by one organisation that can then be used to influence the policy and practice of other organisations. (Britton; 1998)

⁴³ Learning focussed on creating new visions or possibilities which are outside the normal parameters of NGO roles and agendas. (Britton; 1998)

best practice in many respects. For example the *in-situ* and relocation work being done with low-cost technologies, using mostly local materials and with an eye towards vernacular planning and house design patterns have yielded promising results. However, there remains scope for KMVS to incorporate DMP measures into more areas of its development programming.

The latter applies across the board because the vulnerability of a human community is determined by its exposure to disasters and a large part of the responsibility for the consequences of natural disasters can be borne by human activities, carried out ostensibly in the name of development. (HPC; 2001, p.155) ‘The mortality caused by earthquakes in India is not well recorded but seems to vary widely. Human factors, notably building methods, play a major role as well as security, timing, extent and population density. In California earthquakes of the magnitude experienced in Gujarat cause little or no mortality. Seismic safety costs money and preparedness saves lives.’ (DMI/HI/Mango; 2001, p.4)

The recommendations of the HPC are a positive step in guiding the national strategy towards bringing about a fundamental change in the mindset of all role players about hazard risks and energetic mitigation. Clearly timely prevention is more cost-effective than post disaster relief and rehabilitation. Much remains to be accomplished, however actors at all levels are endeavouring to ensure that potential losses from disasters are avoided and that rapid recovery processes are seized as developmental opportunities geared towards preventing a circularity of risk and vulnerability.

The field of emergency management is vast and many interesting questions that have inevitably remained unanswered or superficially discussed in the dissertation can be identified as areas of potential future research. As was mentioned earlier the resilience of the

Kutchi people astounds the world. Further research into the physical and material capacities (what productive resources exist), social/organisational capacities (what are the relations and organisations among the people?) and social/attitudinal capacities (how does the community view its ability to change?) (Longhurst; 1994, p.19) of this community could prevent the fallacies and limitations of development co-operation and humanitarian assistance, if it could be demonstrated that people are not passive pawns in the development model, but are resourceful even at the time of the emergency and that their resources should form the basis of the recovery. A comparative study of an NGO network with a lesser focus on poor working women with that of the response of SEWA or KMVS test whether women have a comparative advantage in disaster response. Finally the Abhiyan network should be evaluated for food for thought, analysis, action and further lessons.

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