

DST Response: Western India Floods:

DST flood relief support Program in Nagthane village. Palus block, Sangli district

Background: Development Support Team has long experience of planning, executing and supporting disaster management programs with special reference to relief, livelihood restoration/rehabilitation, capacity building and financial assistance. It worked on large disasters such as 1993 Marathwada/Maharashtra earthquake, 2001 Gujarat Earthquake, 2005 Maharashtra Floods, etc. during which it provided non-financial and financial support to Oxfam CAA/Oxfam Australia partners in the affected states.

With unprecedented rains, floods and flash floods during 2019 monsoon in Western Maharashtra, the Kolhapur and Sangli districts are worst affected, especially during July last week and August first week heavy rains. The state government responded quickly on many fronts with the help NDRF, SDRF, Army and Navy and saved precious life but it still cost 46 lives and huge damage to private and public properties and infrastructure which accounts for thousands of crores. The floods left 84 thousand ha of agriculture land and standing crops completely eroded which alone can explain the magnitude of loss suffered by people on which major economy of two districts is dependent on. The disaster is so large that government or NGOs alone cannot rebuild the impacted life which demands efficient coordination and collaboration between the NG-NGOs.

Number of NGOs and civil society groups responded to immediate needs of affected people and took up the relief distribution. The government machinery was busy rescuing people and also providing food, medicines and safe shelter. It was herculean task to reach out to everyone who was affected but with the help of DM machinery government could minimize the loss to life. Responding to the flood impact, one of DST members and head of Shramik Janata Vikas Sanstha, Medha, district Satara did some relief work of distribution of food grains in some of the villages in Palus block of Sangli district. During his participation in DST AGM in August in third week of August he shared about his relief experience and also informed the need of much more to help people restart their life. This was essential due to large extent of damage caused to productive assets,, houses and livelihoods of people and that it will take long time to restart the affected life. DST members reviewed the situation during AGM and decided to do its bit by supporting SJVS for helping them to undertake some relief work. DST staff (Jayant and Suresh) were deputed to coordinate with Shri Ombale and plan the relief work.

DST and SJVS Relief Activity: After the first hand assessment of the area jointly by SJVS and DST teams on 3rd September, it was decided to work in Nagthane village of Palus block (Sangli district) where poor households in low laying areas on the bank of river Krishana had suffered most. Assessment revealed that people are in need of food grains and blankets due to loss of these items. SJVS was requested to submit a budget request to DST for relief material. After

completing formalities of internal DST approvals, SJVS was sanctioned an amount of Rs. 163,615 for purchase of food grains and meet some of their transport and travel costs to and from Medha while blankets were purchased in Pune owing to availability of material in bulk. DST arranged to purchase blankets from one wholesaler (trader) for identified 210 families. The relief activity was undertaken on 6th September giving out food grains with a view to help them support their staple food for 10 to 15 days and a blanket. After visit, DST's Shri Jayant Navale (Finance Manager) submitted a brief report on relief distribution with expenditure statement. Two hundred and ten (210) households were given the relief material of food grains and one blanket to each household. It was decided to distribute one more blanket during a monitoring visit activity in the near future. Transport of all blankets in one trip from Pune was difficult due to its huge quantity.

Field Observations: The monitoring visit was undertaken on 24th September 2019 by DST and SJVS to target village Nagthane to understand usefulness of distributed material and also giving out one more blanket to beneficiary families. During the visit a transect walk was undertaken to about 20 – 25 households for this purpose. Interactions with beneficiary families revealed that the benefitted families have true appreciation for received support in the form of food grains and blanket which lasted for about 2 to 3 weeks (depends on family size) during most needy days and blanket due to prevailing cold and fog during rainy season. DST and SJVS teams also visited almost all households where DST had given tarpaulin sheets which were seen used to cover damaged parts of houses. There are about 20 houses which are damaged partially or fully. The families from these houses are temporary shifted to Samaj Mandir (community halls) or some of them have shifted to relatives in nearby villages. Day time they stay at home trying to set up life once again to normalcy. Government has promised to resettle them but in other villages as per new housing norms/schemes. People are not sure about the government resettlement policy but there appears to be hesitation in migrating from their present village to some other places permanently. Although this was not part of our monitoring visit the people shared their issues and efforts that they are making in getting appropriate rehabilitation from state administration.

During blanket distribution activity at Samaj Mandir, large number of women and men turned out to whom the DST and SJVS teams distributed the same. Local youth were very cooperative and distribution was very smooth. Blankets were given to all those who were given foods grains and one blankets during earlier distribution visit on 6th Sept. SJVS team led by Shri Ombale ji had prepared the list during last visit with the help of local youth. Material was mostly distributed through women, youth and old men. I endorse Jayant's report of 6th Sept visit and brief financial report included by him. DST now need to seek a progress report from SJVS and financial statements as per an understanding letter issued to them. Number of photographs and video clips were taken of monitoring visit and distribution and they are available on DST records.

Conclusion: Overall, although this was a small relief activity (due to limited resources available) comparing to DST's earlier vast experience of responding to huge disaster situations in India in

past but it proved very useful in reaching out to most needy people in flood hit western Maharashtra. State government has handled the rescue, relief and temporary shelter satisfactorily although it still has long way to go in reconstruction of houses, rural and urban infrastructure and livelihood restoration of thousands of people who lost their means of earnings. NGOs too have done excellent relief work in reaching out to most interior and difficult areas during worst times helping people in getting food timely and giving them much needed support to restart life. With number of major tasks ahead of housing reconstruction, infrastructure reconstruction, livelihood restoration, agriculture land restoration, restoring basic property and other identify documents and importantly compensation distribution the government has huge task ahead and NGOs will have to play very constructive role in facilitating and strengthening government programs and policies and do their bits as and where possible.

DST may try and explore possibility of raising some resources for providing support to 20 odd families who have lost their houses during floods and subsequent rains in Nagthane. That will give a huge relief to people in their own village as government support is going to take long time.

Shirish Kulkarni, DST,
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