

# Developing Livelihood Resilience

Communicating with communities

**Leena Chakrabarti  
&  
Vijay P S Aditya**

FROM

“Nine tenths of the people in the world could not start a conversation if the weather didn’t change once in a while !!”

**Kin Hubbard**

TO

Weather variability is an unwanted reality

# Communicating change – lessons from the field

- Communities are not open to communication on change and impact of change – only initially
- Assessment indicates
  - Insecurity
    - Fear of failure
    - Fear of loss of status
    - Fear of the unknown
  - Pain/grief
    - Loss of familiar situations
    - Loss of usual ways of behaving
    - Loss of confidence in existing ability
    - Loss of comfort zone
  - Effort
    - Struggle to learn new skills
    - Learn new ways of working
    - Build new relationships and ways of getting on with people

# So what works?

A simple model probably!!

- **State the change – Clearly**
- **Explain - Why**
- **Discuss the change – Answer questions**
- **Initiate action**
- **Review progress**

**Given in small dosages - builds resilience in communities**

**Continuously provided in alarming packages – only overwhelms**

**Jumping from 1 to 4 leads to confusion, uncertainty and RESENTMENT**

# The Initiative – Risk Ranking

- Pilot initiatives in
  - Andaman and Nicobar Islands
  - Orissa
- The case of Orissa
  - 95 of the last 105 years in the state have been disaster affected
- Community perceptions consolidated across the state
  - Seasons shrunk from 6 to 2 (with a mild transition which is called winter)
  - Every season is abnormal now – rains erratic, winters have higher temperatures than expected, summers are longer than earlier
  - Traditional understanding shows that rains are spread across 120 days in a year under usual circumstances
  - Rains have now become restricted to 90 days
  - Till the 1930s floods occurred every 3 to 4 years
  - Post late 1960s floods have become an annual affair
  - Drought
    - 50s – 3 districts
    - 80s – 5 districts
    - 90s – 25 of the total 30 districts



## Orissa – the case continues

- Loss of life was intense earlier – reducing with time
- Livelihood loss increasing over time
- Economic loss - increased more than 30 times since 1975
- Orissa government continues to downplay that climate in Orissa is changing
- February
  - Earlier it was winters
  - Now

State government gets its emergency response machinery in action – heat wave

Schools and colleges have only morning shifts

Food for work and cash for work programme are carried out only during mornings

Hospitals across the state stock ice sheets in lieu of medicine stocks to certain extent

February to May - Auspicious time for marriages, rarely happens now. Shifted to the transition period called winters!!



# Consolidating lessons to communicate better

## I. Community Based Risk and Adaptation Profiling

- Integrates information on hazard, community perception and knowledge on reasons behind the same, consequence and frequency or likelihood of the event
- Profiles resources at hand to meet the eventualities
- Profiles Coping strategies available within the community
- Arrives at a ranking of the community in terms of its risk profile
- Continuously updated as the community gains skills and capacities as well as resources to improve their situation

## • II. Requisites

- A community level institutional mechanism that can hold fort
- Clear and patient communication

## • III. Information Repository – Communities of Practice

# Several Steps

- Identification of a committee
- Development of their work plan
- Training/development of capacities for improved understanding
- Collect risk, resource, coping strategy information
- Consolidate information to develop at a ranking
- Minor adaptation information needs to be recognised and incorporated (the most difficult part since this is easily missed out)
- Develop a risk profile and an adaptation profile of the community
- Consolidate information to develop a Risk – Adaptation information library and a Risk-Adaptation Human Resource Pool classified by location
- Available through a web portal
- Also delivered through Community Information Centres, helpline and SMS gateways
- Targeted messages are also being bundled to be aired through community radio (This is still part of the plan and has not been initiated as yet)

# Experiences - Learnings

- Learnings have only started to emerge from the initiative in the A&N Islands while information collection is on in Orissa
- Risk profiles are easier to develop than adaptation profiles
- Capacity building of the messengers to the community – the development agencies is a necessity
- Adaptation experiences are visible like minor fluctuations in a conversation – they erode fast without support from the external environment
- For instance:
  - Livelihood portfolio diversification is an adaptation strategy that is gradually becoming a reality for many communities in A&N islands
  - However local administration still resists such change
  - Result – forced dependence on single livelihood options
- Risk – Adaptation information was developed for the islands and the database that continues to be updated.
- Information kiosks installed that delivers the information. The first was set up in the administrative secretariat for the commissioner to keep track of the risks communities face and strategies they devise to cope.
- A toll free helpline provides relevant livelihood information
- Grown from 5 calls a week to about 25 calls per day on an average

# So what?

- Community pressure generated through information provision can get the administration to act
- Experimentation on new coastal livelihood options has been now allowed by the forest department (controls/manages the marine resources of the island)
- Seaweed cultivation for 3 – 6 months by fishing communities
- Use of saline ingression prone land for experimentation of salt tolerant varieties of crops
- Allocation of time to administrative response machinery personnel to develop capacities on disasters and impacts of events including climatic variability

# Voices from Orissa

- 5 years back my house was near the beach, today at times during low tide I can still see the foundation of the house
- In the last two years my land has totally become saline due to seepage of seawater – only 200kg of paddy in the last two years
- Where do I go, I don't have the money to get more land, if I encroach further I will be in the national park
- I don't know whether my constituency will last my tenure – I have three years left
- Our existence is doubtful. I know the sea is rising. Two villages have already gone inside the sea, But I should know why this is happening
- For the last 20 years we are fighting against the rising sea, I don't even remember now where my house is, it is somewhere in there
- I moved my house to my agricultural land which was no longer cultivable due to salinisation. I work as farm labour. It isn't much though – only about 6 months
- Villages started disappearing into the sea in 1980s in Orissa
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The Assembly in Orissa has debated twice on rehabilitation packages for these villages but no decision as yet has been arrived at

The struggle continues.....Information is now being provided albeit very gradually to catalyse action and influence administrative attention