



National Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction (NADRR)

**Proceedings of
"PEOPLE, POLICY, AND PARTNERSHIP FOR
DISASTER RESILIENT DEVELOPMENT"**

**3rd & 4th November 2007
India Habitat Center, New Delhi**

Organising Partners



SEEDS INDIA



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The NADRR launched with the mission to link people's efforts with policies and to create positive synergies through alliance and partnerships.



In the first NADRR workshop more than 150 participants representing government NGO's, CBO's and International humanitarian organization shared lessons to scale up community led Disaster Risk Reduction initiatives.

"PEOPLE, POLICY, AND PARTNERSHIP FOR DISASTER RESILIENT DEVELOPMENT"

The National Alliance of Disaster Risk Reduction (NADRR) was launched at a two-day workshop held in New Delhi on November 3rd and 4th, 2007. The workshop brought together over 150 participants representing disaster-affected communities, civil society organizations, networks, international humanitarian organizations, academics, research and training institutions and policymakers. In addition to the Indian participants, there were also civil society representatives from other South Asian countries Nepal, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bangladesh. The two day event, "People, Policy and Partnerships for Disaster Resilient Development," focused on sharing lessons and building partnerships to scale up community-led disaster reduction initiatives.

The key objectives of the workshop were to :

- Create visibility and recognition for grassroots initiatives
- Provide opportunities for community leaders to engage with government and other institutional actors
- Identify strategies to strengthen and scale up community initiatives through partnerships

The workshop proceedings were centered on a wide range of community level risk reduction efforts that are effectively reducing vulnerabilities as well as influencing development processes and policies. Community leaders from drought, cyclone, earthquake and tsunami affected areas stressed the need for their efforts to be recognized, the importance of protecting their development gains and livelihoods, and halting of programs that leave the poor more vulnerable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the key recommendations of the workshop. These recommendations were presented at the 2nd Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Reduction, held at New Delhi closely after the NADRR workshop.

1. Establish institutional mechanisms that enable affected communities to access resources for disaster risk reduction and critically engage policymakers at local, regional and national levels to scale up effective community-led solutions, recognizing that those most acutely affected by natural disasters do not have a voice in agenda-setting and planning for disaster risk reduction.
2. Ensure that infrastructure development programs do not increase disaster risk as it is evident that existing development investments have caused irreversible ecological damage, increasing the vulnerability of the poor to natural disasters and climate change stresses.
3. Development professionals, scientists and government should recognize and validate local knowledge and capacities, providing technical assistance to build on existing experiences of reducing disaster risk.

COMMUNITY RESILIENCE STRATEGIES

N. Muthyalappa, Sarpanch from Mushtikovila Village, Anantpur district, Andhra Pradesh made a presentation highlighting the need to include communities and local Panchayats in decision making processes. He said, “Gram Panchayats need to be involved in planning for disaster resilience and their plans need to be resourced.” The arid zones of Andhra Pradesh are dependant on rain fed agriculture for their livelihoods. Whereas years ago communities experienced droughts in this region only once every seven years, lately farmers in the region are experiencing droughts every year. Crop failures have led to the suicides of 4,000 farmers in this area and 500 farmers in Anantpur district alone. The government has promoted the cultivation of groundnut in the area but this year 23 lakh hectares where groundnuts were growing have been destroyed by the heavy rains. Gram Panchayats are left out of planning processes. They know the solutions that communities have been using to cope with drought and to sustain livelihoods. Yet they are not involved in decision making.

Surjan Ram a leader of Bunkar Samiti (Organization of Weavers) working in drought-affected Rajasthan presented the example of the Bunkar Samiti supported by Urmul Trust. Eight of the last ten years have been drought years in Rajasthan. The Bunkar Samiti was established to create a common platform for sustainable livelihoods. Rang sutra, a company promoted by Urmul Trust, supports the artisans and other community actors to let them develop and revive their own solutions to cope with drought. The common platform to collaborate on sustainable livelihoods has also played a role in bringing together communities across different castes. Rang Sutra also supports the weavers by exporting their products.

Kasthuri Chandrasekhar, Mahakalasang Federation leader and board member of Gram Moolika Company Limited, Tamil Nadu: After tsunami, Kasthuri Chandrasekhar- a federation leader and board member of Gram Moolika Company Limited (GMCL) a herbal medicine initiative from Madurai - was supported by the Covenant Center for Development to identify local women leaders and form self-help groups. These women's groups have been able to revive and improve their economic activities which include agriculture, fish-vending, and shell crafts. Kasthuri specified that the purpose of the groups was not only to restore incomes after the tsunami but also to motivate women to work collectively on long term development and natural resource conservation. In this context, she talked about the fact that members of the self-help groups (SHGs), rather than NGO staff, are now empowered to take all their decisions themselves. In addition to learning how to produce and market high quality products, SHGs have helped women to learn about and access government programs. “This is how they were able to do away with the fear and survive after the tsunami. They are now much better prepared for any unforeseen disasters. What we need today is that women be trained to organize and manage more initiatives and organizations such as this.”

Chitra from the tsunami affected Keelamookerai village in Tamil Nadu highlighted the role of self-help groups in disaster recovery and resilient development. After the tsunami, she organized women to access relief from the government and succeeded in getting the government to cancel debts inherited by tsunami survivors. Chitra is also part of the ASHAA women's group who focus on improving community health and sanitation. A community survey undertaken by women leaders revealed

“ It clearly demonstrates the gap between people and government in framing disaster management policies, the National Alliance can bridge these gaps and find ways to create convergence between the priorities of people and Government.”

M.P. Sajjani, ADPC



“ During the relief phase thrust should be on supporting NGOs to travel at the time of disasters, because they are the people who have the right capacities to help people. The need is to provide training to local people at local level.”

Deepak Chaurasia, Aaj Tak



ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY PRACTICES

- Empowering communities who organize themselves to identify priorities, to revive traditional knowledge and practices and develop their own solutions
- Using community based organizations to sustain community efforts. Organizations moved from relief to recovery via people's institutions
- Utilizing disaster related solutions as an opportunity to upgrade livelihoods, improve access to basic services, increase accountability, revive natural resource base and reduce environmental degradation
- Taking sustained action during relief processes to adapt to climate change.
- Involving Gram Panchayats to shape programs
- Including marginalized groups within the community
- Mixing technology and local knowledge
- Focusing on livelihoods
- Linking disaster related efforts to development
- Making community based decisions

that communities had high health expenditures. To improve health and reduce expenditures, women organize regular health camps and collaborate with private and government healthcare providers to improve community access to healthcare. In addition, these women have also initiated a community health mutual fund to help them cope with health expenses.

Janki Pegu, a community leader from the flood-prone areas around the Brahmaputra river in Assam

described ways in which the community was trying to create self-help strategies for managing and preventing disasters with the help of Rural Volunteer Service. At least a thousand people in the community are part of disaster prevention committees. The organization is also introducing Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) concepts and strategies to organized children's clubs through awareness camps. Women are organized around developing and protecting their livelihoods. The Rural Volunteer Service has trained at least 100 women as health workers who can provide certain health services in the community during a disaster as doctors and nurses cannot reach flood affected villages. Janki also explained that even though some areas suffer from drought, the government has never declared these as drought affected areas thus people are once again left to develop their own strategies to cope with drought. However, leaders with the support of the NGO have been using the Right to Information Act to ensure that communities know how to access supplies from the Public Distribution System and other Government programs.

P. Malleswari, community leader from Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh, Sanghamitra Service Society

is a trainer for disaster management task forces. She travels to other villages to train men and women on organizing task forces for disaster preparedness. She explained that over the last thirty years the development programs and policies promoted in this area have led to more and more agricultural lands areas being turned into fishponds. Initially the fishponds were a good source of income but gradually as the fish stocks decreased, communities had to move to nearby lands to find other means of survival. After the 2004 tsunami, women organized themselves into groups with the help of Sanghamitra Service Society and slowly began working to rejuvenate their lands. First they removed the hardened level of the land and leveled it. Initially they got a produce of 30 bags of paddy. Over time, the yield increased. Today they have been able to go back to farming. The women's groups who worked on these processes have organized and are now active on social and economic issues that affect their communities.

Banamalalik, community leader working with Gram Vikas, Orissa:

It is important to learn how deforestation affects the livelihoods of the village and how they got together to sustain their livelihoods. With deforestation, the community decided that they will revive their lost forests, with support from Gram Vikas, they took up these initiatives and then spoke to the neighboring villages because the latter used to send their cattle to their village. Seeing their initiatives, other villages also started the process deforestation. The trees are growing big after 25 years of initiative, seeing the advantage in the form of the water resources. Recognizing their success, the state government decided to give them additional land for agriculture micro climate by addressing deforestation. Earlier the temperatures would go really high but now there is a change at least at the village level.



BARRIERS TO SCALING UP COMMUNITY DRR PRACTICES

Workshop participants discussed some of the major barriers in scaling up resilience building practices by communities:

- Hostility and distrust between NGOs and government
- Corruption and lack of accountability to communities
- Government and NGO interventions bypassing traditional wisdom.
- Low understanding of climate change issues, and agendas being driven by northern concepts and context.
- Communities often have solutions but no resources to implement them. Professionals both NGOs and government do not trust communities enough to resource their efforts.
- Competition among civil society organizations
- NGOs and Government tend to impose their own analysis of problems on communities
- Development projects and policies leave communities more vulnerable to natural disasters
- Government, bilateral, multilateral organizations, and international financial institutions who initiate good practices in DRR often do not assess their development projects in terms of risks and vulnerabilities they may create
- Local markets are disappearing
- Damage and vulnerability assessments are not owned by communities
- DRR has mostly meant emergency response and early warning and has not been extended to mitigation and preparedness at the community level
- Maximum effort and resource goes into relief. There is no adequate attention to address the long term issues

UNDERSTANDING VULNERABILITIES

Discussions on vulnerabilities provided the following insights

- Overemphasis on technology masks social, political, and economic issues that underline vulnerabilities
- Disaster risk is about both vulnerability and capacity
- Many development policies and programs create or increase vulnerabilities
- Reconstruction and development policies sometimes increase vulnerability which leaves disaster struck communities worse off
- Community knowledge and solutions are getting lost due to non recognition
- Local markets which poor communities depend on for their livelihoods are disappearing

“ Disaster has become more unpredictable and intensity of this has increased many folds. Hence it's important to advocate people on accessibility of available information, and realize their rights and increase their adaptability. **”**

Khurshid Alam, Freelance Consultant



“ Institutions tend to define the problem or vulnerability from their own area of specialization and expertise. How do we step back and let people define their own problem and vulnerability? **”**

Sarabjit Singh, Red R India



LOOKING AHEAD: INTERESTS AND EXPECTATIONS

»» **Recognizing people's knowledge**

Bablu Ganguly made a strong statement emphasizing the need to recognize and build on community knowledge and practices to build resilient communities. “The embankments on the Kosi River and the promotion of groundnut oil in Anantapur where groundnut oil costs more than palm oil that is imported are all disasters because they don't pay attention to eco-systems. The Alliance should point out what kinds of development mistakes are being made and what kind of development we need to reduce vulnerabilities...to present alternatives we have to know what people knew and how they functioned before their practices were distorted ... we need scientists to ratify the wisdom of the people. 1850s gazetteers say sand mining should not be done because the local communities believe it. But this is now forgotten... We need to unlearn a lot of things and respect Need scientists to spend time understanding people's science ratify the wisdom of the people.”

»» **Respecting traditional knowledge and practices**

Arvind Ojha from Urmul Trust pointed out that rural people have age old methods and technologies to handle their surroundings. They had traditional water resource management practices. , but when the government came with the concept of the welfare state and said that it would provide them with clean water, the people stopped the management of water. This is when the actual problem of shortage of water started.

»» **Global and national policies**

Prof. Vinod Sharma from Indian Institute of Public Administration said the rich knowledge and experiences of communities and NGOs were evident from the presentations in workshop. The next step was to address how best the National Alliance could use opportunities laid out in various global and national policies such as National Disaster Management Act (NDM) Act and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

»» **Work towards basic principles**

Mr. N. M. Prusty from Sphere India, emphasized on three basic issues for the consideration of the National Alliance:-

- (a) How are the member organizations going to come together?
- (b) What is the binding force, that is going to work towards achieving even a small amount of impact?
- (c) What has been done till now and hence there is no need to start from the scratch?

»» **Think global and act local**

Mr. Sushil Kumar, Asst. Resident Representative UNDP India, expressed the need to bring more people to this stage of NADRR at the national and state levels. “We should think global and act local”. He also advised the NADRR to undertake regional sharing, like UNDP is also sharing these ideas with the countries.



Rug Singh, community representative from Barmer, sharing his experience of 2006 Rajasthan Flood.



V.C.Nadarajan from CCD, Tamil Nadu, addressing the participants during the reducing vulnerability session.

ENDORSEMENT FROM THE NATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

- Prof. Vinod Menon endorsed NADRR on behalf of NDMA and Government of India saying, “Partner, learn, advocate, guide and share in that order can be the objectives of the NADRR...The National Alliance represents a great opportunity to scale up the work of organizations. The Alliance has the potential to touch a billion lives. The task of building resilience cannot be done by government or civil society alone. This is where people, policies, and partnerships become the key. We need multi-disciplinary insights.” He suggested that the National Alliance develop as a learning organization with a matrix structure rather than a hierarchical structure and consider undertaking the following activities
- Explore ways for early warnings to communities link modern science and technology to people, NGOs, communities, and Panchayats
- NADRR should come forward with knowledge products including case studies and a toolkit on disaster management
- Set up a corpus for learning support by community led DRR pilot project
- Identify and bring together the allies in the government, PRIs, community based organizations, private sector and academics
- Draw attention to local issues and priorities in global forums

WHAT CAN THE NATIONAL ALLIANCE ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION DO?

Grassroots initiatives need to be made visible and formally recognized. How can community actors engage with government and other institutions to inform government policy and practices?

- Bridge the gap between community priorities and aspirations and national policies
- Ensure that government policy reflects people's priorities, knowledge, and aspirations
- Identify clear roles for the different stakeholders Government, military, local government, technical institutes, NGOs, CBOs - involved in DRR, ensuring that communities have a strong voice
- Identify, scale up, and sustain effective community driven DRR practices
- Develop technologies that support and build on traditional knowledge and solutions
- Develop knowledge networks to respond to community needs during relief and recovery
- The Alliance will learn, share, guide, advocate and partner for disaster resilient programmes and policies to enhance capacities of vulnerable communities

WHAT WILL WORK...

- A strong and committed Core Group
- Reality checks, not the rhetoric
- Volunteering time & efforts for networking
- Action on the ground not just the talk shops
- Complementing, not competing each other's roles
- The regular communication, meetings, website etc.

“NADRR is a platform to come together, to synergize the initiatives at grassroots, which need not only to be supported, but also to be formally recognised.”

Prema Gopalan, SSP



“Civil society organizations have to rise to new challenges, to become more vigilant and aware of both natural and man-made changes. Now there is need to scale up practices through the multi stakeholder partnerships to empower communities.”

Manu Gupta, SEEDS

“We need the right mix of technology and local wisdom.”

Biswas, PSI

NADRR Workshop, Session Details

DAY 1	3rd November, 2007
Session Title	Name of Speakers
Welcome address, Inaugural speech	Prema Gopalan, SSP Manu Gupta, SEEDS
Opening Session on Reducing Vulnerabilities	<p>Coordinator Nisheeth Kumar, Knowledge Links</p> <p>Chairpersons Tom Thomas, Praxis India Prof. Santosh Kumar, NIDM</p> <p>Speakers Bablu Ganguly, Timbuktu Collective Arvind Ojha, Urmul Trust V C Nadarajan, CCD</p> <p>Community Leaders Mr. N. Muthyalappa, Sarpanch, Mushtikovila Panchayat Kasthuri Chandrasekhar, GMCL Surjan Ram, Bunkar Samiti</p> <p>Panelists S. Sadananda, IDPMS Naeem, Coordinator of Afghan Relief</p>
Session - 2 Turning the Tide: After Tsunamis & Earthquakes	<p>Coordinator Mihir Bhatt, AIDMI</p> <p>Chairperson V. Vivekanandan, SIFFS</p> <p>Speakers Saravanan, DHAN Foundation Sobina Lama, LUMANTI Herman, National Fisheries Solidarity Movement Revathi, TOFarM</p> <p>Community Leaders G. Balakrishnan, DHAN Foundation Chitra, TOFarM Parimalam, TOFarM Gyani Maharjan, LUMANTI</p> <p>Panelist Amar Jyoti Nayak, ActionAid</p>

DAY 2	4th November, 2007
Session Title	Name of Speakers
Session - 3 THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY: Climate Change Adaptation and Asian floods	Coordinator Anshu Sharma, SEEDS Chairperson Khurshid Alam, Freelance Consultant-Climate change, adaptation and disaster reduction Speakers Chitra Lekha Chowdhary, Gram Vikas Rabindranath, Rural Volunteers Centre Parag, SEEDS Sivaji, Sanghamitra Community Leaders Banamalamalik, Gram Vikas Janki Pegu, KGBK Rug Singh, Shiv representative P.Malleswari, Sanghamitra Mauroof Mohammed, DIS Hamza Khaleel, SOS Panelists Eva Saroch, ISET Prof Vinod Sharma, IIPA Dr.R.R.Krishnamurthy, University of Madras
Session - 4 Partnerships for Scaling up	Coordinator Prema Gopalan, SSP Chairperson V.Suresh, Center for Law, Policy and Human Rights V.S.Prakash, Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Center Panelists Scot McCallum, Aidmatrix Deepak Chaurasia, Aajtak
Session - 5 Way Forward & Launch of Alliance	Session Coordinator Manu Gupta, SEEDS Chairperson Prof Vinod Menon, NDMA Panelists Sushil Kumar, UNDP Vinod Sharma, IIPA N.M. Prusty, Sphere Mihir Bhatt, AIDMI Bablu Ganguly, Timbaktu Chitra Lekha Chowdhary, Gram Vikas Manimekalai, Fisherwomen Federation

List of Participants

1. A. L. Rangarajan
Rejuvenate India Movement
2. Abha Mishra
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
3. Aditya K.Saini
Aga Khan Foundation Network
4. Alex Tuscano
Praxis India
5. Amar Jyoti Nayak
ActionAid
6. Amit Tuteja
SEEDS India
7. Annie George
NGO Coordination & Resource Centre (NCRC)
8. Anshu Sharma
SEEDS India
9. Anuradha Chaturvedi
Dept. of Architectural Conservation, SPA
10. Arvind Ojha
Urmul Trust
11. Aslam Parwaiz
Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC)
12. Atul Singh
Bharatiya Cattle Resource Foundation
13. Audrey Rothstein
DASRA
14. Avni Malhotra
Swedish Development Council (SDC)
15. Ayan Biswas
People's Science Institute (PSI)
16. B. B. Dinkar
Amar Ujala
17. B. S. Vanarajan
DASRA
18. Benjamin Laag
German Agro Action
19. Dr. Bernhard Hoeper
German Agro Action
20. Bhanu Prasad Mistry
Unnati
21. Bharat Patwal
Institute for Development Support
22. Bipul Kumar Borah
Catholic Relief Services (CRS)
23. C. K. Ganguly
Timbaktu Collective
24. C. K. Pathak
RedR India
25. Kasthuri Chandrasekhar
Gram Moolika Company Limited (GMCL)
26. Ch. Johnson
Coastal Environment Rehabilitation Program, CERP-AP
27. Chandan
National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET)
28. Chitralekha Choudhary
Gram Vikas
29. Colin Fernandes
ActionAid
30. D. S. Rawat
Geo- Environics IDS
31. Deepak Chaurasia
Aajtak
32. Divya Jacob
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
33. Durga Nand
Samarpan
34. Eva Saroch
Institute for Social & Environmental Transition, ISET-India
35. Firdaus
Indian Institute of Dalit Studies
36. Dr. Felix N. Sugirthanan
Coastal Poor Development Action Network (COPDANET)
37. G. Balakrishnan
DHAN Foundation
38. G. Padmanabhan
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
39. G. Parthiban
DASRA
40. Gyani Mahajan
LUMANTI
41. H. S Sharma
National Energy Consultant
42. H.S Virk
GND University
43. Hamja Khaleel
ICCS, Strength of Society
44. Harjeet Singh
ActionAid
45. Herman Kumar
National Fisheries Solidarity Movement (NAFSO)
46. Janki Pegu
Karpunpuli Gram Bikash Kendra (KGBK)
47. Jayakumar Gehalot
BLESS
48. Jeremiah Kairuki
Christian Aid
49. Jkalzang
Care Today Fund
50. Fr. Joseph Thoompanal
SUMANAHALLI

51. K. Kannadasan
Institute for Social Education and Development (ISED)
52. K. Karthik
Rose Trust
53. K. Loganathan
ISED, Tamizhaga Agricultural Labourers Union
54. Dr. K. M. Parivelan
Tamil Nadu Tsunami Resource Centre (TNTRC)
55. K. Murali
SUBIKSHA, Rural Development Society
56. K. Pooshnavathi
BLESS
57. Dr. Kalpana Gupta Chakaravarty
National Medical Organisation
58. Kalpana Mahopatra
Mimo Finance
59. Kameshwar Kamati
IAAD
60. Keith Thode
Aid Matrix
61. Khurshid Alam
Bangladesh
62. Kuldip Nar
Aid Matrix
63. L. Sivagami
Institute For Social Education and Development (ISED)
64. M. Bahl
Austrian Embassy
65. M. Hardiman
Hardiman Consulting
66. M. Kaliyaperul
Rejuvenate India Movement
67. M. P. Sajnani
Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC)
68. M. Revathi
Tamil Nadu Organic Farmers Movement
69. Malleswari
Sanghamitra Service Society
70. Manimekhalai
Fisherwomen Federation
71. Manjari Chandra
Knowledge links
72. Manoj Ram
Kisan Hit Manch
73. Manu Gupta
SEEDS India
74. Mauroof Mohamed
Dharavandhoo Islanders Society (DIS)
75. Mehul Pandya
All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI)
76. Michelle Baxter
ActionAid
77. Mihir R. Bhatt
All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI)
78. Miranda Bumni
UNI
79. Mohammad Naeem Salimee
Coordination of Afghan Relief (CoAR)
80. Mona Chhabra Anand
Hunnarshala
81. Mudur
Telegraph
82. Muralidharan
HIVOS
83. N. Muthyalappa
Mushtikovila Panchayat
84. N. R. Bheda
Human Settlements Environment and Youth Centre (HSEYC)
85. N. Vimal
Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP)
86. Naveen K.Roy
Bal Mahila Kalyan
87. Neeta Patel
Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA)
88. Nisha Shreshtha
National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET)
89. Nisheeth Kumar
Knowledge Links
90. Nupur Arora
United Nations Solution Exchange
91. P. B. Sanjeev
ActionAid
92. P. Chandran
Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP)
93. Dr. P. D. Bhahya
Human Settlements Environment and Youth Centre, HSEYC
94. P. Vinnarasi Mallika
DROPSS
95. Palwasha Zarifi
Skills Training and Rehabilitation Society (STARS)
96. Parag Talankar
SEEDS India
97. Parikshita Nayak
Gania Unnayan Committee (GUC)
98. Parma
RedR India
99. Peter Westman
Joblinks
100. Poonam Mehta
Dayal Singh College
101. Pradeep Mahapatra
UDYAMA
102. Pravin Kumar Kushwaha
Center for studies in science policy, JNU

103. Prema Gopalan
Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP)
104. Prof. Santosh Kumar
National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM)
105. Raman Mehta
ActionAid
106. Ramesh Pankaj
Muzaffarpur Vikas Mandal
107. Ravinder Singh
Innovative Technologies and Projects
108. Ravindranath
Rural Volunteers Centre
109. Ray Kancharla
Christian Aid
110. Rishabh Rath
Hindustan Times
111. Dr. R. R Krishnamurthy
University of Madras
112. Roy K. Alex
Emmanuel Hospitals Association
113. Rug Singh
Community representative, Barmer
114. S. Chitra
Tsunami Fishing Village Association
115. S. Jaya Kumar
BLESS
116. S. Parimalam
Tamil Nadu Organic Farmers Movement
117. S. Sadananda
IDPMS
118. Saravanan
DHAN Foundation
119. Sarbjit Singh Sahota
RedR India
120. Sasmita Swain
World Vision
121. Scot McCallum
Aid Matrix
122. Sebastian T.V
Concern worldwide
123. Shanthi Krishnamurthi
ActionAid
124. Shyamali Kapoor
National Medical Organization
125. Sivaji
Sanghamitra Service Society
126. Sobina Lama
LUMANTI Support Group for Shelter
127. Sonali Ojha
Dream catchers
128. Sri Devi
Sanghamitra Service Society
129. Subir Ghosh
CNES
130. Sudhanshu Singh
DanChurchAid
131. Suman Nag
SEEDS India
132. Suranjana Gupta
Groots International
133. Surjan Ram Jaipal
Urmul Samiti
134. Tom Thomas
Praxis India
135. U. M. Nair
Aishwarya Associates
136. Umesh Chandra Gaur
Confederation of Community Based Organizations of India
137. V. C. Nadarajan
Covenant Centre for Development (CCD)
138. V. K. Sawhney
CCBO
139. Prof. Vinod Menon
National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)
140. V. N. Raju
Hyderabad
141. V. S. Prakash
Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre
142. Dr. V. Suresh
Centre for Law, policy and Human Rights
143. V. Swarn P
DHAN Foundation
144. V. Vivekanandan
South Indian Federation of Fisheries Societies (SIFFS)
145. Vijay
ActionAid
146. Vikrant Mahajan
Sphere India
147. Vinod. K. Sharma
Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA)
148. Dr. Vinita Yadav
Praxis India
149. Viswat
ActionAid
150. Y. Siluvai Vaslttian
Human Education and Action for Liberation Movement (HEAL)
151. Yeeshu Shukla
Knowledge Links

To find out more, please contact:

NADRR Secretariat:

C/O SEEDS

D-11, Panchsheel Enclave

New Delhi -110 017

<http://www.disasterwatch.net/alliance.htm>

Email:- nadrinfo@gmail.com

Contact persons: Amit Tuteja (SEEDS), Tel: + 91-9899001468

P. Chandran (SSP), Tel: + 91-9341229702

This report along with presentations by speakers is available at <http://www.disasterwatch.net/alliance.htm>



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