

**“The Challenges of Conducting a Humanitarian Response: A Report on the
Post-Floods Situation in Mahbubnagar District”**

Composite Report on the Pilot Visit to Severely Affected Areas of

Mahbubnagar District of Andhra Pradesh

Report Submitted

by

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1. Introduction:

The unprecedented floods in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka have posed severe challenges to those engaging with the humanitarian response in the affected districts of the two states. Based on preliminary reports from the affected regions, it was decided that the Jamsetji Tata Centre for Disaster Management (JTCDM)-Tata Institute of Social Sciences would dispatch a study team to region, to analyze the feasibility of TISS in contributing to the response. The pilot visit was conducted in two phases, in order to enable a thorough understanding of the field situation, and to facilitate the planning process. It is currently proposed that a team comprising of the students of the MA/MSc. Program of Disaster Management (and other Departments) be based in the severely affected areas of Mahbubnagar District (and possibly in Kurnool district as well). It is also hoped that this report serves as a 'process documentation,' which will assist in planning of any intended humanitarian response in the near future by JTCDM and other departments of TISS. Hence the report has several components: it first describes the methodology of the pilot visit; second, it provides preliminary findings arising out of observations and interviews in the different field visits; third it identifies the possible areas of intervention; and fourth, it provides conclusions and a preliminary assessment (data is interspersed in different parts of the report).

2. Methodology and Objectives of the Pilot Visit:

There were four major objectives for conducting the visit:

- First, to carry out a preliminary assessment of the situation in the severely affected districts based on the format utilized by JTCDM in the Sunderban's study.
- Second, to collect primary sources of damage assessments from governmental and non-governmental agencies, in order to enable the translation of this data into GIS based platforms.

- Third, to identify concrete tasks that can be fulfilled by JTCDM as part of a larger response of the humanitarian sector to the emergency. These identifiable tasks being dependent on field observations, interviews with the full spectrum of stakeholders involved in the response, both governmental and non-governmental, as well as the current capabilities of the Centre.

The study utilized multiple methodologies to arrive at the analyses that are being presented. The most important of these was the actual visit to the most severely affected villages within the district itself. In addition, unstructured interviews were conducted with individuals affected by the flood both directly and indirectly, around certain thematic areas.² Attempts were also made to track local newspapers as they provide contextual insights as well as continuous documentation of the current crisis. Lastly, attempts were made to revisit the field sites, where potential work will be conducted.

3. Nature of the Field Visit:

The schedule of the visit in the first phase was the following:

Phase I:

20th October: Gaddabasvapuram, Aiwarapalli (Displaced persons camp), Aiwarapalli (abandoned village), Manchala Katta, Kollapur, Somashila.

21st October: Rajoli main town, Rajoli Displaced Persons Camp (mainly of the Scheduled Caste Community located outside the main town), Rajoli relief camp, P.Garalapadu, Maddur.

22nd October: Koirikonda and Office of the District Magistrate (Mahbubnagar).

² In the Cyclone Aila study we utilized questionnaires grouped around thematic clusters such as: quality and quantity of relief material, type of distribution processes, public health, and early warning. In the present study, livelihoods was one of the central themes around which questions were asked to respondents.

23rd October: Observed Training by Save the Children on Child Friendly Spaces (A rehabilitation measure) at Dalit Samkhya office and visited Navapet.

Phase II

25th October: Mahbubnagar

26th October: Shantinagar (proposed field office for JTCDM-TISS team), Rajoli, Kurnool

27th: Kurnool, Rajoli, follow-up work and Planning Process for TISS team.

4. Analysis of Situation:

In order to contextualize the situation it is extremely important to have a brief idea of the scale of damage that has occurred in the district of Mahbubnagar. Conventionally understood, the data being presented below (on crop damage) will seem to indicate large scale damage which was a direct consequence of the flood. However, it must be pointed out that the region is necessarily facing a much more complex crisis that goes well beyond the immediate emergency situation. In other words, the region which was already facing a severe drought situation, is now reeling under vast crop damage as a result of the flood, and also a developing health and food crisis.³ A combination of these factors, are even further compounded by the large scale destitute migration and export of bonded labor that is occurring in the region, and which shapes the very fabric of social life in many of the rural parts of the district. In other words, the challenge for responders is to actually navigate through the distinction between the provision of immediate relief, post-emergency rehabilitation, and development.

Table 1: Statement Showing Estimated Crop Wise Damage and Approximate Loss in Lakhs (Mahbubnagar District)⁴

³ See “ Dengue Cases on the Rise” The *Deccan Chronicle*, 23rd October 2009 and “Crops hit hard in Konaseema” *The Deccan Chronicle* 23rd October 2009.

⁴ Source, Control Room, Office of the District Magistrate, Mahbubnagar.

Serial No.	Crop	Crop Damage Area in Hectares	Approximate Loss in Lakhs
1.	Rice	16076	2776.16
2.	Jowar	978	35.31
3.	Bajra	2	0.07
4.	Maize	4600	403.13
5.	Bengal Gram	320	28.83
6.	Horsegram	1	0.09
7.	Greengram	1126	43.55
8.	Redgram	3529	149.72
9.	Groundnut	2308	266.55
10.	Sunflower	6725	563.72
11.	Castor	3672	277.12
12.	Chillies	857	381.36
13.	Onion	320	374.97
14.	Cotton	3499	360.03
15.	Other Crops	1715	176.45
16.	Total	45728	5837

In terms of physically measurable infrastructure, the estimates given below highlight the damage in certain select administrative departments.

Table 2: From ‘Floods Loss at a Glance’⁵

Srl. Number	Department	Loss in terms of Rupees in Lakhs
1.	Rural Water Supply	1284.35
2.	Roads and Buildings	18187.2
3.	Electricity	1339.42
4.	Revenue Department (Estimated Houses Lost: 59618)	38402

The data below indicates losses suffered by select government departments that were engaging in developing livelihood options for communities in the district.

Table 3: From ‘Floods Loss at a Glance’⁶

Srl. Number	Department	Loss in terms of Rupees in Lakhs
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⁵ Source, Control Room, Office of the District Magistrate, Mahbubnagar.

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1.	Agriculture	5837.65
2.	Animal Husbandry	1237.00
3.	Fisheries	445.4
4.	Handlooms and Textiles	400 (with 4500 families affected)

4.1. Thematic Analysis:

4.1.1 Relief

In terms of the relief materials being to both affected and displaced persons, it was observed that both the response of the government and non-governmental agencies did focus on providing appropriate relief material in the aftermath for the emergency. For instance, in Gaddabasvapuram where 175 houses have been destroyed, and approximately 185 families been rendered destitute, a distribution by volunteers from a religious group, were engaging in relief distribution. Most importantly, they included stoves, lanterns, new sheets, new shirts and sarees, as well as food items. The initial government response of giving Eight Thousand Rupees in immediate relief along with food and non-food items was appropriate to the situation at hand. However, a certain observation needs to be added. The fundamental change of circumstances, for those reduced to destitution as a consequence of the disaster, is an inherently traumatic one. A common problem that has been observed across cases (especially drawing on experience in Bihar and post-Cyclone Aila) is the manner in which individuals who were relatively self-sufficient (and could somewhat plan for the future) prior to the disaster, now become necessarily dependent on governmental and non-governmental relief schedules over which they have no control. The episodic nature of relief aid from agencies, with short notice, is a hugely problematic aspect of disaster response. In the most severely affected sites, respondents continually stated that they do not receive adequate notice, nor do they actually know when the next consignment will arrive. This particular problem was especially seen in the displaced persons camp outside Rajoli, where individuals are living under temporary shelters and are not living in the designated relief camp in the town because of a perceived risk of re-flooding.

In this situation of uncertainty, it is critical that long term planning and coordination by agencies, to provide for some degree of psychological and physical surety for affected individuals in the short and long term are developed. In other words some notification must be made to affected people that certain basic food/non-food items are assured for a minimum time

period and that designated governmental and non-profit organizations will provide these items to them. This becomes especially critical, because of the nature of the displacement that has arisen, and which will be addressed in the subsequent section.

4.1.2 The nature of displacement

The nature of the displacement observed in the severely affected villages is itself closely linked to the larger developmental questions that were raised earlier. Given the prolonged nature of the drought and the existing land distribution patterns, the manner in which affected individuals perceive risk and uncertainty has become a major hurdle to any equitable relief and rehabilitation program. For instance, in the case of Aiwaripalli (in the displaced persons camp) respondents were actually living in the Schedule Caste colony of the village prior to relocation to the current camp (which was approximately 5-7 kilometers away). All 100 families (all landless) had moved to the camp, due to severe structural damage to their homes. Most importantly, the respondents clearly stated that they are not willing to return to their homes because of the perceived risk of flooding (as was subsequently seen in Rajoli as well). Compounding the problem is the fact that the displaced families have sought to occupy a plot of land based on assurances of allotments, while an adjacent village also claims ownership of the same plot. Similarly, respondents at the displaced persons camp at Rajoli, also stated that they seek to remain in their currently location indefinitely.

The point of mentioning these cases, is that persuading individuals to return to their original locations is becoming a serious problem, which can have long-term effects on any rehabilitation package. For instance, it is now difficult to estimate the scale of displacement, in addition to determining which families have relocated where. Moreover, it still remains to be seen whether there will be an increase in migration both destitute and forced, as a consequence of the flood. Indeed, as these post-emergency living conditions continue to persist the vulnerability to unlicensed labor contractors is continually present. There are other challenges that have arisen as well. Individuals living in Gaddbasavapuram, prior to its complete destruction, were originally displaced to the current location due to the Srisailem Project. Subsequently the current crisis itself has resulted in a proposed relocation of the entire village to another site, with its attendant consequences: the non-assurance of some form of livelihood, shelter and food security for the affected population (who are right now completely dependent on relief).

Given the nature of the displacement, there is an interconnected livelihood crisis that is looming in the most severely affected regions. This will be addressed in the next section.

4.1.3. The Livelihood and Shelter Questions

The livelihood and shelter questions have become fundamental to the implementation of any long-term rehabilitation plan. Grouping together these thematic clusters arose out of certain insights made by certain field workers. As is seen, complete structural damage to shelter and displacement are deeply related. So are the questions of shelter and livelihood. Certain problems according to them make the situation very difficult to assess: in their words there is damage that is physically verifiable and that which is not. For instance, individuals have become destitute due to crop loss and loss of homes; at the same time, there are individuals whose homes are not damaged, but have lost all their cattle as well as the means to carry out their livelihoods.⁷ Yet, they would be excluded from relief from agencies, as only those who have lost their shelters were eligible in certain cases.

There are also other contextual problems to be considered as well. For instance in Rajoli, which has seen full structural and livelihood damage (with 1715 handlooms and 1400 homes destroyed) relief and reconstruction efforts need to begin. In addition to direct assistance, there are certain cases of special assistance that occur as well. For instance, during interviews, it was also found that several families whose children were studying in institutions of higher learning such as engineering colleges and business schools (which charge a high fees) were no longer able to support their wards, with severe consequences. Also, the handloom industry has now suffered unprecedented damage, the reconstruction of which is uncertain. Critical to reconstruction efforts is the understanding that livelihoods in the region, are further embedded in wider social and economic linkages (that facilitated the demand and supply chain); not only do handloom units have to be rebuilt, but some effort must be made to examine how capacities and networks can be rebuilt.

As was seen in the data presented earlier, providing livelihood alternatives will be central to the reconstruction effort and it is here that the question is left open ended. When will relief stop?

⁷ For instance fishing implements, nets and boats have been lost as seen in Kollapur Mandal (Machalla Kata and Somashila) although there is no structural damage. Also interconnected is the fact that schools have stopped functioning in the most severely affected areas as they have either been damaged or have been converted to relief camps or distribution points.

When will rehabilitation begin? And what will happen to the affected population in between?
The next series of pictures taken during the field visit (from Rajoli and Maddur) seek to convey some sense of the kind of damage that was witnessed in the district.

Photos from Rajoli and Maddur: Shelter, Infrastructure Damage







Crop Loss and Agricultural Damage in the Rajoli Area





4.1.4. The Challenges faced by Organizations during the response

Having witnessed the planning process of organizations that were responding to the disaster very closely, two critical observations can be made. The nature and scale of the emergency has posed serious challenges to the kind of long term work that was being conducted to uplift the conditions in the region. As mentioned earlier, the structural factors underpinning development in the region have been greatly compounded by the emergency and have challenged the organizational capacity of the responders: not only must they fulfill their developmental mandates; they have also become the primary channel through which disaster response and relief are being conducted. Despite being placed in roles that were not envisaged in their original mandates, several organizations such as the Commitments' network were able to quickly mobilize their local activists who began performing some of the essential tasks of emergency response. Also it must be important to consider the role of the district administration as well for tackling the serious logistical problems in providing relief and other support for a devastating flood situation, which was completely unexpected in this drought prone region.

4.1.4 The Nature of the possible JTCDM-TISS response⁸

There are three short-term goals we seek to achieve within the period of one-month assigned for the response work. Certain long-term goals are being developed as well, and the formulation of which greatly depends on the effectiveness of the response.

- First, to conduct detailed damage assessment in the most severely affected villages of Mahbubnagar district (that have been identified in the preliminary field visits).
- Second, conducting a detailed livelihood assessment of the severely affected villages, and gathering of information, in order to contribute to the planning of alternative long-term livelihood options (which can be provided by governmental and non-governmental organizations).
- Third, integrating Geographical Information System capabilities into the assessments conducted, in order to facilitate the planning of post-disaster response. The aim being to generate assessments on damage to livelihoods, changes in land-use, and infrastructural damage, through up to date and usable maps.
- Fourth, to conduct needs assessments in affected villages.
- Fifth, creating an information sharing platform, through dissemination of findings of field visits, which would allow NGOs to coordinate relief and rehabilitation in the region.
- Sixth, providing a platform through which members of the various departments of TISS can conduct field work pertaining to the disaster response (including relief/ counseling work).

⁸ All these goals have been arrived at after the first phase of the visit and after considering the viewpoints of several stakeholders as well understanding our own limitations in terms of manpower and other factors. The sixth goal in particular is essentially logistical. For instance, due to limitations in the number of individuals in the team, we are not able to completely expand to Kurnool or Raichur (Karnataka). By locating our field office/staying area in Shantinagar, we gain proximity to Kurnool, and can also further explore damaged areas in Karnataka. Already communications regarding logistical arrangements are being forwarded to various governmental and non-governmental agencies, to facilitate field stay. Although there are linguistic challenges, these can be overcome.

5. Conclusions and Current Status of Field Visit:

It is crucial to indicate that this particular calamity is not simply an episodic one. What we observe is the confluence of several developmental crises that have been further aggravated due to the onset of the floods. In such a context, any effective response must be carefully thought out and conducted. There are several unknowable elements in planning a response to the disaster (however limited the scope of the response may be, especially in view of the magnitude of this calamity). Most importantly, several competing demands and questions arise which must be addressed in some manner: primarily among them is what is the kind of impact the response will have on the communities that have been affected by the disaster, and whether it will actually mitigate the negative consequences on the affected communities or worsen the already existing conditions. In addition, will the response have a visible or an invisible impact? For instance, should not a team of student volunteers who are coming to conducting an assessment, also bring in relief material, which will actually have a visible impact, as opposed to simply doing the assessment which will have an invisible impact. In the context of the current calamity, the planning process must pay intricate attention to the multiple components of the response, if any effective outcomes are to be achieved. Moreover, the objectives of the response must incorporate the nature of the linguistic and logistical challenges that will be faced in working in the region. In considering the complexity of the problems posed in this report, it must be indicated that a unified response and detailed planning towards that aim, will contribute immensely towards an effective response.

Appendix: Case Study 1: Damage to Housing and Livelihoods, Handloom Industry⁹

Handlooms and Textiles Department: Mahabubnagar District

Sl.	Name of location	No. of	Handloom Weavers
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⁹ Source Dalit Samakhya Office, Mahbubnagar. Original Report from Assistant Director, Handlooms and Textiles (Mahbubnagar).

No		Weavers affected	No. of Loom Equipments and accessories Require repairs		No. of Loom Equipments and accessories Require replacement		Yarn & Other Material like Dyes & Chemicals and Finished Stocks	
			No	Value of Damage	No	Value of Damage in lakhs	No	Value of Damage in lakhs
1	Rajoli	1715	-	-	1715	208.00	1715	274.00
2	Alampur	150	-	-	150	18.00	150	37.50
3	Korvipadu	50	-	-	50	6.00	50	6.86
4	Macherla	100	-	-	100	12.00	100	13.75
5	G.K.Doddy	100	-	-	100	12.00	100	13.75
6	Ghattu	20	-	-	20	2.39	20	2.75
7	Gadwal	50	-	-	50	6.00	50	6.86
8	Ieeza	50	-	-	50	6.00	50	6.86
9	Eklaspur	50	-	-	50	6.00	50	6.86
10	Pragatoor	50	-	-	50	6.00	150	12.50
11	Chinnaporla	50	-	-	50	6.00	50	4.10
12	Tippadampally	20	-	-	20	2.00	20	1.50
13	Nasaloor	8	-	-	8		8	
14	Aragidda	85	-	-	85		85	
15	Baligera	11	-	-	11		11	
16	Mallampally	18	-	-	18		18	
	TOTAL	2527	-	-	2527	290.39	2627	387.29

Appendix Case Study 1: Damage to Households¹⁰

SI. No	Name of the District	No. of Weavers affected	Others (specified)					Total Damage (Value)
			Damage to Houses				Wage loss	
			Phy		In Lakhs	Final in Lakhs	In Lakhs	In Lakhs
1	Rajoli	1715	1400	@	0.50	700.00	12.00	1182.00
2	Alampur	150	100	@	0.50	50.00	1.20	203.20
3	Korvipadu	50	50	@	0.50	25.00	0.40	78.40
4	Macherla	100	0	@	0.00	0.00	0.80	104.80
5	G.K.Doddy	100	0	@	0.00	0.00	0.80	105.80
6	Ghattu	20	0	@	0.00	0.00	0.16	26.16
7	Gadwal	50	10	@	0.55	5.50	0.40	62.90
8	Ieeza	50	10	@	0.55	5.50	0.40	63.90
9	Eklaspur	50	0	@	0.00	0.00	0.40	59.40
10	Pragatoor	50	50	@	0.50	25.00	0.40	85.40
11	Chinnaporla	50	10	@	0.50	5.00	0.40	66.40
12	Tippadampally	20	0	@	0.00	0.00	0.16	32.16
13	Nasaloor	8						
14	Aragidda	85						
15	Baligera	11						
16	Mallampally	18						
	TOTAL	2527		@		816	17.52	2070.52

¹⁰ Ibid.

Appendix: Note on Lessons Learned for future JTCDM-TISS responses

Given the grave situations that exist, especially in the post-disaster context, certain factors have to be taken into account prior to departure of any group of volunteers being sent into such situations. First and foremost, a clear distinction must be made between the emergency and post-emergency phase. Because the nature of the disaster constantly evolves, careful attention must be paid to the kind of work that will be conducted and in what phase. For instance, response time is extremely short in the emergency phase and requires pre-determined procedures that will be followed. Also should responding groups engage immediately in relief, and if so, then what are the channels through which procurement of supplies, transportation of goods, and distribution will occur. If the form of relief is in the provision of psychosocial support, a completely different set of challenges occur. The reason, why a part of the report has focused intermittently on the challenges of planning, is primarily because of the following reasons:

- First, with situations of vast devastation, there is very little room for even partial failure in the conduct of relief or rehabilitation especially by volunteers from teaching/research institutions; inadvertently, seeds of future conflict in communities are sown through non-equitable relief provision by responders. In addition, badly conducted relief work can severely damage the feeling of self-worth among affected people who are still reeling under the trauma of losing their familiar and normal way of life, and who have been reduced to extreme destitution through events outside their control.¹¹
- Second, it is very important to work in coordination (especially when it comes to knowledge sharing) with local organizations, especially community based organizations, primarily because of their expertise and familiarity with the actual context. This is especially critical in monitoring the impact of relief work. Also, the “Do No Harm” principles must be upheld very strictly.
- Third, a student body with diverse academic backgrounds, with the willingness to work in such a situation is the best resource available to overcome any seemingly intractable problem. Great care must be taken to provide as complete a picture about the situation, prior to any group being sent and some form of pre-decided contingency procedures must be developed.

¹¹ This has been observed in distinct field settings ranging from the Bihar floods, to Cyclone Aila and the Post-Floods situation in Andhra Pradesh.

- Fourth, arrangements must be created when JTCDM-students are working in these areas, which facilitate the accommodation of volunteers from the larger TISS community (and other civil society actors) who are interested in conducting direct relief work.¹² Lastly, the pilot-study must be part of the continuum of the response and not a distinct component.

¹² For instance groups from Maharashtra who are keen on doing relief distributions or rehabilitation can draw on the assessments done by JTCDM or TISS volunteers who are already in the region or involve them directly in the planning process.