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Stories from Rural Sindh

BUILDING RESILIENCE THROUGH COMMUNITY BASED DISASTER
RISK MANAGEMENT IN THE SINDH PROVINCE OF PAKISTAN



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FROM LEARNING TO ACTION

STORIES OF DISASTER
PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE BY
VULNERABLE RURAL COMMUNITIES
OF SINDH PROVINCE

October 2016

ABOUT THE REPORT

The document provides an insight of disastrous situations and the factors responsible for increasing number of disasters. For addressing challenges posed by various types of disasters, Pakistan introduced the disaster management system. In connection with its establishment and current situation, a brief overview is presented in this report along with the background details and various endeavors of the project. More importantly, the report aims to bring work of the rural communities into limelight to enlighten relevant stakeholders about potential of the communities, since they are playing a pivotal role in reducing the risks of disasters.



ABOUT RSPN

Rural Support Programmes (RSPs) are a national asset of Pakistan. The first RSP - the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) - was established in 1982 by the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF). Its success and widespread recognition led to the establishment of several other RSPs across the country.

In July 2000, the Rural Support Programmes Network (RSPN) was established with the efforts of the RSPs. Today, RSPN serves as a strategic platform for 11 member RSPs, bringing together over 30 years of knowledge in Community-Driven Development (CDD). RSPN is now the largest development network of Pakistan.

Its outreach through the member RSPs is over 6 million rural households, representing a population of over 39 million in 125 out of 131 districts of Pakistan including Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK) and 5 Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Frontier Regions (FRs).

ACRONYMS

A&N	Advocacy & Networking
CBDRM	Community Based Disaster Risk Management
CCI	Community Critical Infrastructure
CRP	Community Resource Person
DDMA	District Disaster Management Authority
DRMP	Disaster Risk Management Plan
DRM&P	Disaster Risk Management & Planning
DRO	Documentation and Reporting Officer
LSO	Local Support Organization
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
NRSP	National Rural Support Programme
OFDA	Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance
OM&D	Organizational Management & Development
PDRA	Participatory Disaster Risk Assessment
PDMA	Provincial Disaster Management Authority
RSP	Rural Support Programme
RSPN	Rural Support Programmes Network
TRDP	Thardeep Rural Development Programme
UDMC	Union Disaster Management Committee
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VDMC	Village Disaster Management Committee

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1. Overview

“Previously we had no idea on what to do if there was a disaster,” said Ms. Kaniz Fatima of village Fateh Muhammad Soomro while talking to visiting team from USAID- RSPN Tahafuz project. She said that they have faced many natural disasters but the 2010 floods will be remembered for widespread destruction. Recalling the incidence, she said, “Now when I look back at that time I cannot believe that anyone could have escaped that disaster. But Allah saved our lives. Assets can be created but not life.” She further said that the government officials and other non-governmental organizations reached out to help them but most of these efforts were unorganized. Some influential or stronger households fetched undue share and others were left with minimum or no support.

There was a felt need of getting organized to resist any similar situation in the future. But no one was coming forward to take lead. Then the villagers were invited to a meeting where staff from Tahafuz project presented the idea of getting organized at village level. The entire population welcomed the idea and after a few meetings decided to form a Village Disaster Management Committee-VDMC. This was a new experience for them as Ms. Kaniz said, “We were very excited when asked for selecting our representatives. The committee was formed with equal representation of women. This was so exciting that women voice could have been heard now.”

According to her the real story started after formation of VDMC when the selected members received training in Community

Based Disaster Risk Management. These trainings were given by the staff from Tahafuz. She said that this was a learning experience and they learnt about different types of disasters and how to deal with them effectively. After receiving this training, they selected one male and one female member as Community Resource Persons for transferring the DRR knowledge to household level.

Ms. Farzana and Mr. Rajab Ali are now conducting sessions at settlement level where community members gather and learn about disasters. Members from all age groups come to take part in these sessions and learn about disaster management. The community is hopeful to manage any untoward situation in more organized and efficient manner.

1.1 Disaster Management in Pakistan

Following the devastating earthquake of 2005, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) was established in 2010 through unanimous resolutions passed from all four provincial assemblies. The purpose of NDMA was to develop a national level plan and serve as an implementing, coordinating and monitoring body for disaster management. Similarly for implementation of the national plan and policies at the regional and district level, the Provincial Disaster Management and District Disaster Management Authorities have also been established subsequently. Presently, this agency has yet to prove its credibility, strategy and efficiency of infrastructure that lie at the very heart of these critical situations. Other factor that

hampers the smooth functioning of disaster management process is duplication of efforts which arises due to the lack of coordination and integration between various agencies and organizations. Consequently, these multiple factors make management process weak, and, therefore, people bear the brunt.

Disaster Situation in Sindh Province

Floods and rains of 2010 and 2011 wreaked havoc in Sindh. According to the September 10, 2011 report, 984,333 houses were damaged and 199 people died in 22 districts in Sindh. Total of 1,5945,052 acres of crops area had been affected . This damage was devastating for the people of the province who had a pure rural economic base, and they were not likely to have recovered from these losses for a long time afterwards.

Sindh province has a diverse topography and climate ranging from coastal strips, alluvial plains, mountains to arid deserts. It lies in a semi-arid region with an average annual rainfall of 177 mm (approximately 7 inches). The coastal belt of Thatta and Badin districts and the arid terrain of districts Umerkot and Tharparkar are at the two extremes of

vulnerability index. At one end, coastal areas are frequently inundated and affected by hydro-meteorological disasters while at the other end, areas of Thar region face extreme scarcity of water, drought and famine. Both of these two regions periodically suffer from different hydro-meteorological disasters.

Moreover, the infrastructure of the province is also very fragile; this fact only aggravates the vulnerability of people, who easily succumb to the hazards posed by these disasters. Due to the absence of safety and precautionary measures, people suffer not only physically but also psychologically. Women, children and elderly people, due to their greater vulnerability, are among the worst affected sections of society.

Despite facing an increased risk of natural disasters and climatic hazards, not much attention has ever been paid to equipping communities with necessary information, knowledge and skills to cope with any kind of disaster related situation.

2 Introduction to Project

After the floods of 2011, it was crucial to extend support to the flood affected communities and chalk out a strategy enabling people to encounter such natural hazards in the future through enhancing their capacities, knowledge and skills. It was this backdrop in which RSPN with the support of USAID/OFDA launched a project named Tahafuz in the four most disaster prone districts of Sindh including Thatta/Sujawal, Badin, Tharparkar and Umerkot. To fulfill implementation obligations, RSPN partnered with the National Rural Support Programme for execution of project activities in Thatta/Sujawal and Badin and Thardeep Rural Development Programme for Tharparkar and Umerkot.

2.1 Project Objectives

- a) To develop the capacity of community in disaster preparedness, management and mitigation
- b) Develop hazard risk reduction plans, policies or curriculum
- c) Increase preparedness of local community from proposed hydro meteorological activities (flood, cyclone & drought)

2.2 Project Component

The project aims to engage selected community members under following four project components:

- a) Social Mobilization
- b) Capacity Building
- c) Mitigation Measures
- d) Linkages Development

2.2.1 Social Mobilization

The centre-piece of the RSPN approach is social mobilization of the poor in order to enable them to participate directly in decisions that affect their lives and prospects. The concept is to build capacities of people specially focusing poor and women to organize, manage their own organizations, and increase the outreach of government and other development actors for effective supply and genuine demand.

Social Mobilization plays an important role in community development and smooth implementation of project activities. Community organizations help in direct and firsthand interaction with the community on regular basis.

To be able to promulgate disaster relevant information down to communities, a structure of Village and Union Disaster Management Committees was fostered under the project at the revenue village and union council level. These organizations are acting as a core community group with an equal representation of community members. Each VDMC comprised of minimum of ten members, whereas, for establishing UDMCs, two members from each VDMC of any target union councils were made members of that UDMC. Based on the design, combining both the interventions a total of 741 VDMCs and 68 UDMCs were established. These community institutions play a vital role in disaster preparedness, mitigation emergency response and linkage development with relevant government departments in order to channelize social capital and get support of communities in

reducing aftermaths of disasters through efficient dissemination of threat alerts and allowing people ample time for taking preventive measures.

2.2.2 Capacity Building

The members of these V/UDMCs were imparted skills on how to conduct Participatory Disaster Risk Assessment (PDRA) using tools like hazard and resource map, and seasonal and historical calendars. Using the information, every VDMC evaluated and prioritized risks which they found were the most recurring and threatening to their villages. VDMCs then developed a Disaster Risk Management Plan (DRMP) and assigned the responsibilities for undertaking specific tasks during or before the occurrence of a disaster. Additionally, under the Disaster Risk Management and Planning (DRM&P) members are equipped with skills like, search and rescue operations, firefighting, first aid etc. Also, keeping in view the distinctive role of UDMCs like support to VDMCs, coordination with government line departments and dissemination of hazard related information down to community, members of UDMCs were provided training on Organizational Management and Development (OM&D), as well as Advocacy and Networking (A&N).

2.2.3 Community Critical Infrastructures (CCI)

During the development of DRMPs, variety of critical mitigation needs involving dug wells, water reservoirs, raised platforms,

earthen roads, public building and culverts were identified by VDMCs. In order to cater to community needs during disastrous situations, each VDMC was supported for rehabilitation of one Community Critical Infrastructure (CCI). Under the rehabilitation of schemes, each VDMC was given the responsibility of overall management of rehabilitation activities of their respective scheme. This mainly involved procurement of material, identification of skilled/unskilled labor, payments to vendors and reporting progress to their respective VDMCs in locally held meetings in addition to carrying out monitoring as well as maintenance activities. During both the phases, a total of 915 schemes were rehabilitated in all four project districts.

2.2.4 Linkages Development

To promulgate significance of CBDRM at local level, different stakeholders involving representatives from CSOs, LSOs, V/UDMCs, media as well as relevant government officials were engaged through various workshops. In this regard, 16 district level advocacy and networking workshops were conducted. To ensure that the UDMCs remain intact and functional after the completion of the interventions, these were integrated with the RSPs mainstream structure called Local Support Organization (LSO). Since inception of project in 2012, a total of 51 UDMCs have been integrated into the LSOs as their subcommittees under the title of Disaster Management Committees.

3 Success Stories

Throughout the project cycle, there have been occasions when V/UDMCs undertook early preparedness and mitigation measures during as well as before the occurrence of emergency situations. Many of these success stories relate to the application of life saving techniques, planning and coordination with government line departments and the way communities have been benefiting with the

rehabilitation of schemes. Also, it is worth to note that the incidental stories covered in this publication mainly revolve around dealing with emergencies rather giving an exposition of the community's response to a disaster as none of the project communities from target districts encountered a major disaster during recent years.

Stories of Resilience from Rural Sindh

3.1 We are prepared to protect ourselves!

Village Kherar is located some 7 kilometers away from city of Sujawal. The village consists of 357 households and 2499 individuals. The village is prone to floods, heavy rains, and cyclones. The 2010 floods severely affected this area. Tahafuz project interventions were started in this village in 2014 and Village Disaster Management Committee (VDMC) was formed at revenue village level which is responsible for disaster preparedness and mitigation efforts.

Mr. Usman, VDMC member says, “We are very happy with the formation of this organization.” VDMC members of Kherar were trained on CBDRM approach by Tahafuz NRSP team. This training enabled them to understand disaster risk assessment, planning and management. They were also trained on emergency response skills like search and rescue, first aid and firefighting. “Now we are in better position to deal with disaster,” says Mr. Habib Ullah, another VDMC member. VDMC Kherar conducted Participatory Disaster Risk Assessment (Hazard, Capacity and Vulnerability), analyzed risks and developed Disaster Risk Management Plan (DRMP). Ms. Farzana, Community Resource Person (CRP), said that women also participated actively in hazard mapping. VDMC is playing very important role on DRR awareness in the village. Ms. Farzana is conducting DRR sessions to transfer DRR knowledge to grassroots level. She states, “Tahafuz project gave me confidence of public speaking. Before Tahafuz project, we used to practice unhygienic and dangerous local interventions to cure wounds and to control bleeding, but now we are not doing



Community members from revenue village Kherar, district Thatta sharing their efforts in response to untoward situation.

those practices.” In the heavy rainfall of 2015, VDMC members played vital role in reducing losses. Mr. Usman, VDMC member recalls, “We were monitoring water level in irrigation canal on regular bases to update the people on flood situation.” VDMC members also hired a house at safe location near Gharo to accommodate pregnant women during flood.

They told that VDMC members shifted the people to safer places during heavy rains and undertook relief work. They were in regular contact with Deputy Commissioner, NRSP team and media persons to share the flood situation. Mr. Habib, “In 2010 flood, there was panic situation but in current heavy rain they were more prepared and were not terrified of the situation.” VDMC members said, “We collected Rs 2000 as joint saving that could be used in any emergency and we are encouraging people to contribute according to their capacity with an objective to use fund for the collective benefit of the people.” VDMC Kherar is better prepared now. Members are committed to continue disaster risk reduction interventions.

3.2 Harnessing the opportunity: Rehabilitation of rain water harvesting pond in Tharparkar

Tharparkar district, with a population of 914,000 stands amongst the poorest districts of Pakistan. Majority of inhabitants depend on livestock and arid agriculture depending on rain only. Water scarcity is the common problem faced by communities in desert areas. According to available data, during past 30 years the region faced 11 acute drought years. Continuous drought over past few years has further worsened the situation, making communities desperately look for some serious efforts that can resolve the underlying problem.

Government and other organizations have supported the communities in construction of rain water harvesting structures, dug wells and hand pumps. One similar pond was constructed through local government in revenue village Vjiheto in Union Council Moharano. This pond was constructed back in 1975.

Mr. Qamar-ud-Din, the president of VDMC Vjiheto, says, "Our village comprised of around 1200 individuals with 175 Households". In addition to the pond, there are three dug wells and one Tarai in the village. After receiving training on Community Based Disaster Risk Management our VDMC developed a disaster risk management plan for our village. This plan included details about risks, vulnerabilities, resources and possible mitigation measures. We identified rehabilitation of our water structures as a way of mitigating drought. We got one old dug well repaired as Critical Community Infrastructure during initial interventions under Tahafuz-II.



Rehabilitation of rain water harvesting pond at revenue village Vjiheto, district Tharparkar helped in reducing vulnerabilities of residing communities during drought situations.

However, these structures are not sufficient to cater the needs of the villagers." The pond identified for rehabilitation has deteriorated over decades and could not retain water because of broken floor.

The compound wall was also broken and needed repair. During USAID RSPN Tahafuz Project No-Cost Extension period, the community approached the project team and requested for support in repair and rehabilitation of this critical scheme. After analyzing the situation and genuine need of the community, Tahafuz team approved their request and work initiated on repair and rehabilitation of the damaged pond.

The community members are very happy and appreciate the support from USAID in resolving one of their major issues.

3.3 A prepared, resilient neighborhood

Parveen is a Community Resource Person (CRP) of village Naukot in District Tharparkar. She says that distant geographical location and missing infrastructure in their area make them more vulnerable to natural or manmade disasters. “Lack of awareness, limited knowledge and our inability to deal with any emergency increases our plight during disasters,” she opines.

Parveen was shortlisted to become CRP and started attending the training sessions organized by RSPN to transfer Disaster Risk Reduction knowledge at grassroots level and enable the deprived community members to effectively respond during emergencies. After her selection as CRP, she delivered DRR sessions at various target settlements of her revenue village. These sessions encompassed training on familiarizing community members with Disaster Risk Assessment, Disaster Risk Management & Planning, First Aid and Search & Rescue. The CRP initiative brought significant changes in the mindset of target members for handling untoward situations. Members’ experiences suggested that communities could play a role to reduce risks if they are well prepared.

Maghan, a resident of settlement Ishque Chandio Kolhi, attended all sessions delivered by the CRP. Before this intervention he had no idea of how to conduct disaster risk assessment. The DRR awareness sessions enabled him to understand and develop risk management plans using different tools. He said, “These plans not only made him resilient but also enabled him to prepare and deal with any sort of disaster”. Sajid, another resident of the area, shared his experience that once his cousin’s house caught fire and it was feared that it would also affect the neighboring houses. However, we did not panic and extinguished fire employing the



Ms. Parveen CRP from VDMC Naukot, describing the importance of DRR awareness session and its effects on communities in dealing with alarming situations.

techniques learnt during CRP sessions. He said that if they had not attended the CRP sessions, they would have failed to control fire properly. Nabi Bux, another trained community member narrated his story saying, “One of his relative’s sons — aged 7 — fell down from the rooftop while flying kite and became unconscious. Nabi Bux was approached for help and he performed Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) a couple of times which brought the child into senses. The child was later shifted to a hospital for further treatment. The locals, who earlier were not interested in CRP sessions, decided to participate in the sessions to learn first aid skills to deal with unpleasant incidents.

Parveen said DRR sessions at settlement level helped thousands of members in minimizing losses during disasters and accidents. “Earlier when they had no awareness, they endured heavy losses during hazardous situations,” she recalled. “Now the community members are in a better position to withstand any disaster,” she firmly asserted. “We are thankful to USAID, RSPN and TRDP for making our lives better.”

3.4 Disaster preparedness and mitigation: A VDMC's story

Revenue Village Dolo Sholani is located in one of the far off union council of Kharochan in District Thatta. The UC lies along the coastline, a significant part of which comprises the delta of the River Indus. Despite having close proximity to the coastal belt, no significant measures were taken by the government or any other organization to minimize risks for local communities," said Sakina, a member of Village Disaster Management Committee (VDMC) of Dolo Sholani.

Sakina further narrates, "When RSPN field team shared project's objectives, most of the community members agreed to get benefitted from CBDRM approach. Earlier we used to deal with such situations in an unorganized, self-centered manner and these often caused more losses during untoward situations. Now using the platform of VDMC, we not only discuss village level issues during community meetings but also do planning and coordinate with departments concerned for their appropriate solutions. We are glad to be organized into local community institutions at village and union council level," she said.

Allah Bux another VDMC member said, "We live near coastal belt, thus we are always at the risk of floods and high tides during monsoon season. Broken passages make it more difficult to move towards safer points during these alarming situations. When we were given a choice for rehabilitation of a Community Critical Infrastructure after conducting risk assessment, we opted for rehabilitation of the earthen road in our revenue village."



This rehabilitated connecting path in VDMC Dolo Sholani will facilitate villagers in safe evacuation during emergency situations.

He continued that he still remembered the floods of 2010, when he along with other villagers was trapped in the floodwater. It was quite a horrifying situation as he found no way out of water. The passages were mostly inundated. Now after rehabilitation of the earthen road, Allah Bux is confident to handle any similar situation more efficiently than 2010. He is now able to evacuate to safer points avoiding any harm to his family and livestock. He says, "This intervention will also improve socioeconomic conditions of villagers. Mostly dependent on fishing, the earthen road will provide a durable access for the villagers to fish markets and hence living standards of poor community would be improved."

3.5 Being organized reduces risks!

"Floods are quite common in our area and we have been facing them since ages", said Mr. Rafique Korejo President VDMC Sujawal, Union Council Ali Bahr while briefing about the performance of their VDMC. He said that prior to formation of VDMC and getting trained they handled these situations in an unorganized manner. "We acted in a manner where everyone wanted to save his or her own assets without lending a helping hand to fellow villagers." He said that during the 2010 floods they were unorganized with no idea of handling the havoc.



Mr. Rafiq Korejo President VDMC Sujawal explaining benefits of VDMC in handling disasters.

NRSP team came to their village and shared with them initiation of a USAID supported project for building resilience so that the vulnerable communities can better face such situation and come back to their feet more efficiently after such incidences. He said, "We sat together and decided to join hands with NRSP and form a VDMC."

Some fellow villagers opposed the idea saying that this is just a time pass activity as there would be no solid action. But NRSP has repute in the community and majority of the villagers decided in favor of getting organized and form a VDMC. He said, "Soon after formation of VDMC, the project team asked for nomination of members for

training. We nominated 10 members for the proposed training. Out of these half were women. I was also one of the members who benefitted from this training." These trainings provided us with an opportunity of understanding different types of disasters and ways to handle them more effectively. He said that after receiving training we are more organized, with more awareness about emergency incidences and feel ourselves more secure than before. The community has established an early warning system at their village and assigned responsibilities to individuals. They are grateful to USAID, RSPN and NRSP for enabling them to withstand disasters.

3.6 A resilient girl out to serve her community

Musarat Shaheen is a young educated girl living in village Akor of Union Council Dei Jarkas, located at some 40 km distance from district Badin. Natively from Pashtun tribe of Dera Ghazi Khan and settled in Badin, her family is agriculturist like majority of the area. In 2010, flashfloods destroyed their crops of cotton and chili pepper. Due to heavy rain and overflowing of Left Bank Outfall Drain (LBOD) their area was badly affected. Musarat's house was also damaged. Her family shifted to a safe location where they lived for three months and returned back to their home after the water receded. In 2012 USAID's funded Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) project titled Tahafuz started its interventions in village Akor.

Musarat, with an ambition to make her flood hit communities resilient, became member of VDMC of her village. She received training on CBDRM approach. She was very active and remained fully involved in the participatory disaster risk assessment and planning of her village. Her active involvement in community development initiatives especially in Disaster Risk Reduction work qualified her to become the president of UDMC, an extended arm of VDMCs. After the integration of UDMC into Local Support Organization (LSO) as special committee, she became Joint Secretary of the LSO. She has been involved in various DRR activities. In 2013, a Provincial Workshop was held at Karachi under Tahafuz project in which she presented her VDMC/UDMC DRR initiatives. She was also actively involved in fundraising for UDMC/LSO that could be used



A former CRP under Tahafuz project, Ms. Musarat is now working as Community Mobilizer in DIU Umerkot.

during emergencies. Under her leadership the UDMC collected a sum of Rs. 43, 230 for the Earthquake affected communities of Awaran, Baluchistan. Due to her DRR knowledge, good communication and leadership skills, she was selected as Community Resource Person (CRP) to conduct DRR awareness sessions in the community. She conducted DRR awareness sessions in an effective way. She played vital role in transferring DRR knowledge to grassroots level.

In 2015, Musarat was selected as Community Mobilizer in Thardeep Rural Development Programme. Now she is working in the Tahafuz project in District Umerkot and is playing her role in social mobilization and capacity building. Musarat says, "Tahafuz project capacitated and enabled me to work for the vulnerable communities of Sindh." She is committed to transfer DRR knowledge to disaster prone and vulnerable communities.

3.7 The sole water source rehabilitated!

“Water is driving force of nature,” Mr. Ibrahim Junejo from UDMC Mohrano District Tharparkar, said while speaking on the significance of water. People of Thar have faced water issues for several years. Low rainfall intensity and climate change impact are main reasons for non-availability of water at low levels. Drinking sources of water are dug wells in Thar. Majority of them are very old having 100 plus feet depth and are either damaged or silted. Recent floods eroded away the rusted dug well. The villagers rehabilitated the well to an extent but it was not considered sufficient to last for long. Narrating his story, Ibrahim added, “Just like other wells, the one in our village is also very old where water table is low to almost 130 feet.

Through initiation of CBDRM Tahafuz Project, we unanimously identified restoration of this drinking water facility. He added, “Community particularly women of our village took a sigh of relief as they had to fetch water from neighboring village almost 3 – 4 km away in the desert.” He further added, “RSPN implemented a scheme through the involvement of VDMC members. This initiative gave employment opportunities to



The rehabilitated dug well in VDMC Moharano is source of water close to the settlements.

the community members including women as the scheme required services of skilled and unskilled labors.”

Everyone is happy these day. Women fetch water from well of their own village. They don't have to walk for miles in search of water. Men use well for minor irrigation activities and for their livestock. “I am grateful to USAID and RSPN who brought smiles back on worried faces of drought hit community, he concluded.

3.8 Creating resilience at grassroots – Community Resource Persons trickling down the knowledge!

Previously we had no idea on what to do if there was a disaster,” said Ms. Kaniz Fatima of village Fateh Muhammad Soomro while talking to visiting team from USAID- RSPN Tahafuz project. She said that they have faced many natural disasters but the 2010 floods will be remembered for widespread destruction. Recalling the incidence, she said, “Now when I look back at that time I cannot believe that anyone could have escaped that disaster. But Allah saved our lives. Assets can be created but not life.” She further said that the government officials and other non-governmental organizations reached out to help them but most of all these efforts were unorganized. Some influential or stronger households fetched undue share and others were left with minimum or no support.

There was a felt need of getting organized to resist any similar situation in the future. But no one was coming forward to take lead. Then the villagers were invited to a meeting where staff from Tahafuz project presented the idea of getting organized at village level. The entire population welcomed the idea and after a few meetings decided to form a VDMC. This was a new experience for them as Ms. Kaniz said, “ We were very excited when asked for selecting our representatives. The committee was formed with equal representation of women. This was so exciting that women voice could have been heard now.”

According to her the real story started after formation of VDMC when the selected



DRR awareness sessions are helping in disseminating knowledge at the grass roots level. Ms. Farana is among most active CRPs in Thatta district.

members received training in disaster management. These trainings were given by the staff from USAID-RSPN Tahafuz, and NRSP District Implementation Unit (DIU). She said that this was a learning experience and they learnt about different types of disasters and how to face them effectively. After receiving this training, they selected one male and one female member as Community Resource Persons for disseminating the learning down to household level.

Ms. Farzana and Mr. Rajab Ali are now conducting sessions at settlement level where community members gather and learn about disasters. Members from all age groups come to take part in these sessions and learn about disaster management. The community is hopeful to manage any untoward situation in more organized and efficient manner.

3.9 Rescue efforts of UDMC in a village engulfed in fire

Khursheed Arain is a small settlement of Jarar Kit of 16 households, located in Union Council Garho, district Thatta. In March 2013, a fire broke out in the settlement and was spread throughout the area within minutes, forcing people to leave their belongings and rush to safety.

The recently established UDMC had been quite active in the area. When the fire broke out, the UDMC immediately began rescue activities, from collecting and throwing water on the flames, calling the fire brigade, and rescuing children, women, elderly persons trapped in the burning houses.

According to eye witnesses, the fire brigade arrived very late, so people had no choice but to keep throwing water on the flames. Sadly, 16 houses of Khurseed Arain were completely burnt, destroying all the belongings of the residents. Even more tragic was the death of a five-year-old Hina, who was playing in her house before the incident. Though they could not save a precious life, and settlement Khursheed Arain, the UDMC member, reported that their efforts helped save other houses of the nearby settlement; which could also have burnt down.



Right after the incident UDMC Garho and Kati Bandar began working together to rehabilitate affected communities in the area. As the affected communities lost all of their belongings, a tent was erected to give them shelter. Members of both UDMCs collected and arranged food, water, blankets, and bed sheets. These were arranged with the communities' own funds and with the support of nearby villagers and individuals. Later, to help victims, members of the UDMC approached NRSP and requested to provide them some Non Food Items which after the approval were supplied by the LSO and UDMC members at Garho. The items included bed nets, buckets, first-aid boxes, aqua tabs and some other necessary items. According to members this was possible only because of training they received from Tahafuz.



Joint efforts of two UDMCs, Garho and Keti Bander helped the affected communities of village Khursheed Arain in district Thatta.

3.10 Community averts fire outbreak

'Jarkhari' is a small village, situated 80 kilometers from district headquarter Umerkot. The village consists of approximately 110 households. The local residents in the area prefer to build indigenous house structures called Chaunra, a thatched hut-style house, mainly because the structure is cost effective and it provides good ventilation during summer. However, the construction material involving straws and dry wooden sticks used in building roof tops of these Chaunras, makes them prone to fire eruption. Many fire incidents occur every year, of which majority involve burning of Chaunras.

Very recently, one of the Chaunra in village Jarkhari caught fire due to some unknown reasons. Upon realization, a local resident and a VDMC president Allah Dino, trained in combating fire accidents under the Tahafuz project took a lead role to control the situation. He said, he instantly gathered other



local residents and channelized their efforts to extinguish fire by throwing sand and water using buckets through a well-managed team effort. Meanwhile, they reported the incident to district government office and requested them to send a fire brigade for additional support. Resulting from the efforts, VDMC members successfully controlled the fire within an hour and managed to avoid loss to life and major assets.



VDMC assisted residents of village Jarkhari in combating fire and provided shelter to the affected families in district Umerkot.

3.11 A skillful control of fire saved village



Ms. Soomari (on right) narrating experience of extinguishing fire at her village Makhyaro in district Umerkot.

Ms. Soomari is a resident of village Makhyaro. The village is situated in Union council Kharoro Syed, situated at 18 kilometers away from district Umerkot. The village consists of 70 households with an approximated population of 560. The majority of local people rely on agricultural activities for income generation.

Ms. Soomari is a house wife who spends her day in her Chaunra (locally designed house) and looking after her family. Despite her commitment to her family she showed keen interest in becoming part of the Tahafuz project in order to be able to learn new techniques and skills. Ms. Soomari remained very active and participated in various training activities. She is also very committed

to share the knowledge with other members of her village.

Recently, when she was busy in her household Chaunra she heard some disturbing noise from her neighborhood. She instantly went to learn about the situation and found out that her neighbor Ms. Motan's house "Chaunra" a round shaped structure of the house was on fire. She instantly mobilized other VDMC members and then worked jointly to put off fire through water and sand. Luckily, they managed to extinguish fire within 15 minutes, which eventually resulted in discontinuing fire spread to nearby houses.

3.12 An unconscious child recovered through CPR

This is a story of a little boy Nazir Ahmad, aged 4, who survived an unfortunate incident after he was rescued by a resident VDMC member, who not only happened to be his real uncle but was luckily available at his home when the incident occurred.

His sister, Saima narrated the incident that a couple of yards away from her home was a small water catchment, which usually remain dry in off-rain season but during heavy downpours water is gathered up to 5 feet, covering a small portion of the land. She said that couple of days before the incident occurred, the catchment filled up with water due to seasonal downpour. One day when her brother went missing all of the sudden, she went on to look for him outside her house. She said when she came close to the catchment area she found Nazir with face down in the water. .

Elaborating further, she said she wanted to pull him out of the water but she could not reach him. However, her loud cries got the attention of her family members who instantly came for rescue. Her uncle, Ameer Ali, a member of VDMC Jarkas, was also present in the house, who also rushed towards her. Upon realizing the situation, Ameer jumped into the water, pulled the unconscious boy out and then tried to resuscitate him on the ground surface.

Mr. Ameer remained an active participant during the VDMC's training held on PDRA



Mr. Ameer, a trained members from VDMC Jarkas district Badin with child whose life he saved using Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR).

and DRM&P. Under the training different techniques involving firefighting, first-aid, search and rescue operations were taught to the participants. Ameer Ali mentioned that he never expected that one day he would come across a situation where he would have to apply CPR skill for saving life of his own nephew.

Relating to his rescue efforts he mentioned that initially he began to rescue the child by tapping on his back but as the child remained unresponsive, he began to give him Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). He added that after giving heart compressions and ventilating child for couple of rounds the child began to breath. Ameer said soon after the child was resuscitated he was immediately transported to the nearby medical assistance, located at about 3 km from their home.

3.13 Water breach managed through efficient planning & coordination

The Embankment of VDMC Takar Khario in District Thatta was destroyed by sea water in the night of May 26, 2013. It affected almost 90 households of two adjacent settlements namely Mero Dablo (54 households) and Yousaf Dablo (36 households). Mr. Siddique Roonjho, member of VDMC, called president and focal person Muhammad Ilyas Samo of the UDMC Ketu Bander for help.



UDMC Ketu Bandar assisted VDMC Takar Khario in repairing embankments damaged by sea water at settlement Mero Dablo, district Thatta.

After shortly sharing the information with UDMC, they were able to gather other members in order to be able to rebuild the broken end of embankment with sand bags and stones. Meanwhile, the members of V/UDMC demanded of the government to supply them food items. Upon receiving the supplies, the VDMC president managed to distribute food items and drinking water among the affected household while maintaining a complete list of all the distributed items.

Later the V/UDMC members expressed their gratitude to USAID, RSPN and NRSP for launching Tahafuz project. They said the project helped in enhancing capacities of

communities and enabled them to respond to emergency situations in an optimal way.

The way community and VDMC members timely responded to the hazardous situation was a result of getting organized at grassroots level. They worked as a team, delegated duties among themselves, maintained list of all the distributed items as well as timely coordinated with the government departments to get their support and assistance.

3.14 Dug well helps in mitigating drought

The settlement Baheed Khan Khaskheli is located 50 km in the south of Umerkot. This settlement is situated in Revenue Village Nabisar Thar of Union Council Faqeer Abdullah. The settlement has nearly 400 households. The local residents belong to different communities including Jogi, Khaskheli, Bheel, Bughya and Kolhi. These communities have been living together since ages despite belonging to different castes and creed. In order to make their living, people either opt to work as labors or cultivate lands which mainly depend on the monsoon season.

Lack of water facilities is one of the major problems of the area mainly because of low water precipitation and rugged sandy terrain. It compels men, women and children to fetch water from distantly located dug-wells which are usually available at the distance of about 3 to 5 kilometers from their homes. Unfortunately, the water fetched is bitter in taste and unsafe for drinking.

During the implementation of Tahafuz project, the community members of the revenue village Nabisar Thar were approached by the project field staff. They were given orientation and consented to take part in implementation of various project activities mainly inspired to create community's ownership of the project.

To cater DRR needs of this revenue village, a VDMC was formed in consensus with the community. During the activities, the VDMC developed a revenue village level Disaster Risk Management Plan in which they proposed number of most needed disaster mitigation schemes. Given the scarcity of



A rehabilitated dug well at revenue village Nabisar Thar district Umerkot.

water resources as well as the limited water wells, VDMC in consensus with local residents prioritized the rehabilitation of a dug-well among all the schemes that were identified during DRMP activity. The community agreed to construct this dug-well in one of the settlements named Baheed Khan Khaskheli from the Revenue Village Nabisar Thar.

The VDMC was given the overall responsibility of the rehabilitation work of the dug-well. The scheme was completed within a period of 21 days with an amount of Rs 200,000.

The target community remained very fortunate as the scheme benefited them with sweet water yield contrary to other dug wells. The scheme resulted in reducing their suffering of fetching water from distant locations.

Villagers of Baheed Khan Khaskheli thanked TRDP, RSPN and USAID for their support in construction of this scheme. They also appreciated other project activities and hoped that this project will improve the capabilities of local people to cope with disasters.

3.15 A skilled VDMC member saved a child's life through CPR

Ms. Rasheeda, a 45 years old lady living in a small village named Kharoro Saeed from district Umerkot is a lady health worker and also president of a VDMC. She is an active social worker who spends most of her time in helping and supporting people facing problems. Under the project, she received training on Disaster Risk Reduction and Planning involving firefighting, first-aid, search and rescue operations.

Rasheeda explained that very recently she got the chance to save the lives of two girls by applying a lifesaving technique that she learnt under the Tahafuz CBDRM project. She said that two girls from her neighborhood suffered an unfortunate incident, when a shabby wall fell over them while they were playing around. She, after learning about the incident rushed towards the site of accident. She found one girl unconscious, while the other was crying with pain. At first, she immediately tried to pull them out of the wreckage and then after examining their condition, she instantly gave



Ms. Rasheeda, a CRP rescued a child by performing Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) at revenue village Kharoro Syed, district Umerkot.

CPR to the unconscious girl to help resuscitate her breath to normal. Rasheeda added with delight that she was much appreciated by the bystanders for having been able to perform CPR and saving somebody's life.

3.16 Communities are prepared for Nelofar

During the last week of October 2014, an alert concerning the development of a tropical cyclone “Nilofar” resulted in turbulent situation in the country. The pressure kept on mounting as on Tuesday, October 28, the cyclone which was expected to cause damage to parts of Oman, Pakistan and India was reported to have reached a devastating intensity of 215 km/hour.

It was believed that if the cyclone could have sustained its existing speed and or kept increasing its intensity while approaching the coastal line of Pakistani region, severe damages could have been inflicted on areas along the coastal line of district Karachi, Badin and Thatta. However, contrary to the above, heavy downpours were considered more imminent irrespective of the storm speed.

Considering the recurrence of cyclones/rain flooding threats and the distantly located population settled near the coastal line of Badin district, averting the impact of devastation had always been a great challenge for authorities due to poor planning and unavailability of basic resources. Resulting from the troublesome ground reality, during the project various community based village and union council level disaster management committees were established within the most vulnerable union councils of Badin district for providing immediate response and support to people during emergency situations.

During the uproar of the Nilofar threat, an old UDMC named Kadhan that had been capacitated on CBDRM during phase I of the Tahafuz project held an emergency meeting on October 27, 2014. The meeting aimed on discussing the role that their UDMC could play in helping out vulnerable communities from the neighboring areas since their location happened to be out of the danger zone. They decided to provide selected emergency toolkit items to a village named Mallah of VDMC Waryar from the union council Bhugra Memon based on its recognition as the most vulnerable village due to its close positioning to the sea shore and people's



UDMC Bhugra Memon shared items from emergency toolkit with UDMC Kadhan during possible threat of floods and rain.

dependence on fishing for living.

For transporting some items of the emergency toolkit to village Mallah, the UDMC Kadhan President Mr. Mithon along with the LSO Chairman Mr. Raza Mohammad Shah undertook a two-and-a-half-hour drive to reach the destination. They both were welcomed by Mr. Imtiaz Ahmed, Manager of the recipient UDMC Bhugra Memon that has been newly established under phase II of Tahafuz. While at village Mallah, the President of the UDMC Kadhan explained the purpose of their visit and afterwards distributed some items from the emergency toolkit. The kit items included four life jackets, a radio, a torch and a mega phone. Concerning the care of kit items, Mr. Imtiaz assured that items will be safely returned back to UDMC Kadhan as soon as the threat alert fizzles out safely. During the interaction, the UDMC President Mr. Mithon and the Chairman LSO also demonstrated the use of the emergency items that were temporarily provided to them.

Mr. Imtiaz Ahmed, while expressing his feelings, mentioned that he had been much surprised and overwhelmed by the support that had been shown by the UDMC President and the LSO Chairman. He added that following the same principles, their UDMC too will keep extending their support to other vulnerable communities.

3.17 Caring for livestock - A VDMC's story

Majority of the rural communities depend directly on livestock for food, income, transport, social status, cultural identification and financial security. If animals are saved, families can stay self-sufficient and be better prepared for future disasters.

Disaster does not discriminate, it equally affect human & livestock. In order to keep livestock safe during or pre disastrous situations, the members of Village Disaster Management Committees have been provided awareness on livestock management. They are given training on different diseases which can impact the livestock. These diseases mainly include Hemorrhagic Septicemia, Foot and Mouth diseases, Black quarter and Anthrax and importance of immunizations.

In response to upcoming monsoon season, members of VDMC Tobhan from union council Pahrrio Farm district Umerkot approached government department for vaccinating animals. The district Doctor for Veterinary (DVM) assisted VDMC members to vaccinate a total of 600 various kinds of animal including goats, sheep cows etc.

Taj Muhammad a VDMC member told that training on livestock management enabled him to understand the importance of immunizing animals. According to him, his village is more vulnerable to flood situations. Earlier he does not had idea that



VDMC Tobhan district Umerkot conducted pre monsoon vaccination of their livestock in collaboration with livestock department.

wet conditions after floods increase chances of infections in animals through internal parasites as well as many epidemic diseases. Now he vaccinates to protect his animals from seasonal diseases during monsoon.

Bhurgi another residing member told that VDMC provided a platform to identify and discuss multi hazards related to their revenue village. He told that the VDMC has also helped them to create linkages and coordination with government departments in case of emergencies. According to him such joint efforts of VDMC member and government department will mitigate losses to livestock during upcoming monsoon season. He thanked and appreciated RSPN/ RSPs approach of enhancing capacities of rural communities.

3.18 Organized villagers overcome water breach

There is a number of Sem-drains running through the length of coastal strip of Thatta and Badin. However, despite the chain of drains, there is neither a proper mechanism of desilting the drains nor is there any repairing system that is functionally operating in the country for ensuring sustainability of the banks. Lacking focus on reenactment of banks & drains usually fails to cope with the pressure exerted by the excessive amount of water during the monsoon. Eventually, when the banks break up they cause havoc to surrounding villages, affecting lives and livelihoods of thousands of poor villagers.

Mr. Muhamad Amin, president of the VDMC Lunda Machharo, lives in a small settlement of Haji Hussain Mallah in district Thatta. He narrated an incident from the year 2014, when a canal that passes nearby his village, broke out due to surmounting water pressure caused by the heavy rain. Within a short span of time, water spread out to neighboring villages and resulted in destroying fish ponds as well as causing damage to some houses. Having realized about the situation, the local villagers instantly gathered and rushed to block the seeping water using their farming tools. However, they failed in coping with the pressure of gushing water. Under the worrisome situation, the president of the VDMC, Muhammad Amin, called the president of the relevant UDMC (Gul Muhammad Baran) and requested him to extend support and necessary toolkit items, which they could use to block the leakage. Muhammed Amin,



Mr. Muhammad Amin President VDMC Lunda Machoro sharing story of repairing weak bank of one of sem drains at district Thatta.

consequently, arranged a number of sacks, wheel barrows, shovels, torches, ropes and jackets that were provided to the UDMC during the first phase of Tahafuz .

Muhammad Amin took lead in managing the whole exercise. At first, he created a team, of which some were tasked to fill up the breach where others to make announcement using the loud speakers to let people know of the situation and keep them out of the pathway. Muhammad Amin added that although overcoming the breach was a life risking and a strenuous task with limited resources, but after struggling for hours, they succeeded in avoiding a disaster situation owing to the timely utilization of emergency toolkit items and well-coordinated efforts of the UDMC members.

3.19 UDMC serves as a helping hand

In July 2014, a fire incident engulfed a house from village Jhummon Bhangoro, in the union council Kadhan from district Badin. During the incident, the family lost all their valuables including some cash which they had saved for buying cattle. The family was badly shattered and left with nothing to depend on. However, as soon as the incident was revealed to the local UDMC named Kadhan, they approached the bereaved family to offer their support. The UDMC members held a meeting at the local level and decided to raise fund for compensating the loss as much as possible. In an attempt to collect money, UDMC members went to local residents, shopkeepers & hotels and were able to raise a total of Rs 50,000. Later the funds were utilized for building a house for the family. The generous efforts of UDMC helped the poor family in getting a shelter for themselves.



UDMC Kadhan rebuilt the house affected by fire at settlement Jhummon Bhangoro, district Badin.

3.20 UDMC- Bridging the gaps

In year 2013, heavy rains caused massive damages to nearly 200 villages as well as to some of the urban areas of the Punjab province. The flooded water, which runs through the Indus River and also passes through the Sindh region before settling down in the sea has always posed a great threat for the community settled near the river side. Considering the situation, Sindh government held the consultative meetings at the local level and issued warnings to communities that were believed to have been under the threat, especially from district Badin and Thatta, which also included project union councils namely Keenjhar and Ali Bahar.

During the situation, the local UDMC members took part in all consultative meetings and offered their services for

gathering first-hand information from these vulnerable union councils. The district administration appreciated their offer and provided them with the transport facility for going from house to house for collection of data. These teams visited all endangered villages in union councils Ali Bahr, Bijora and Belo and came back with the information for developing emergency relief plans.

The local administration appreciated the efforts of UDMCs and exchanged with them contact details locally as well as with the provincial authority upon their request. The Director Operations, PDMA Sindh, while commemorating the efforts of UDMC said that “in future the UDMC members will serve as our eyes and ears in the real field conditions and we will keep benefiting from their support in handling emergencies”.

3.21 Supporting struggle for survival

Bhagi Bheel is one of the settlements of VDMC Jarkas in district Badin. The village consists of around 140 households, of which the majority are Bheels (non-Muslims). Most of the people are landless tenants, daily laborers, cattle-herders. A few have small tracts of agricultural land. Generally, people are poor and have to struggle hard in order to make both ends meet.

Village Bhagi Bheel is situated on the left bank of LBOD and is very vulnerable to hydro-meteorological disasters. When villagers cross LBOD, they enter into areas of district Tharparkar. This is the shortest route to Thar and villagers take their cattle to the green pastures of Thar in rainy season. In the floods of 2010 and 2011, LBOD overflowed and resulted in cutting off the only nearest route of the villagers to district Tharparkar. The impasse made the life of the local villagers difficult as for reaching Thar they were left with the only option which comprised of a long and laborious route of 'Pangrio Road'. During that time, almost everyone was affected in one or other way, both socially and economically.

A member of the VDMC Dai Jarkas, Man Bai narrated that flood left permanent marks on the minds of people, and we decided to take some measures in order to avoid such losses in the future. Tahafuz project came as blessing for the residents.

The soring spot of the village was the adjoining place of two different locations. It was believed that with the construction of an



The communities at revenue village Jharkas district Badin are rehabilitating earthen road for ensuring safer evacuation during emergency.

elevated pathway at this location, villagers could be provided an escaping route to Thar. When VDMC members were asked to propose a CCI structure for their revenue village, they decided to build an elevated earthen road that would lead to the bridge on LBOD. Soon the work was started and the locals actively took part in the process. Within 20 days, earthen road was completed. Although, it was just a rudimentary, unpaved road, but as it had elevated the passage leading to the bridge, it provided a great relief for the residents of the entire area.

Ghaman Das, another VDMC member, said that all villagers are happy and contented now. It is very likely that the floods like previous years may come again, but, this time they would at least be able to move to safer places with the help of the elevated earthen road.

3.22 Empowered woman's improved response

Hajra is a member of VDMC Kharoro Pat, who lives in a settlement Kharoro Pat from district Umerkot. As a VDMC member Hajra has always been an active participant in the project activities and training sessions. She belongs to Bajeer caste, who are landless people and depend on labor or tending cattle for their livelihood.

While narrating the incident, Hajra said, "We live in a village where majority of the people are illiterate. Before the onset of Tahafuz project we were ignorant as we never used to bother extending help to anyone in trouble. Our lives were under a constant threat from various natural and manmade disasters. We faced immense problems during the floods of 2010 and 2011 as well as during times of drought. We also had many fire accidents, resulting in loss to cattle, property and sometimes even human lives. When I joined the VDMC and got selected for training under Tahafuz project, I practically learned different but very simple life saving techniques."

Relating to fire incident, she said, one day when she was busy in sewing clothes in her house, she saw flames and smoke arising from the back side of her house. She immediately rushed towards the site and upon reaching there saw some huts engulfed in fire. At the time of incident most of the men were out for work and it was only women who were around, who instead of putting out fire got panicked and started running around.

Hajra said that she took the lead and asked women to help her in extinguishing fire. "We



Ms. Hajra a VDMC member sharing story about the rescue efforts learnt under Tahafuz project district Umerkot.

made a queue, and every one of us held a bucket in hand. We asked a girl to fetch water from the storage tank; she passed that to the first woman standing in the queue, who afterwards passed it to the rest of the women, until it reached the last one, who sprinkled it on the flames. We repeated this procedure for twenty minutes, meanwhile the fire was extinguished," she recalled.

She said that with their efforts they protected the residents and their cattle, but the fences of the huts were completely destroyed. To help the affected families, they collectively gathered food, clothes and other provisions for them. Later, they also helped in repairing broken fences and huts. She believes that it was only Tahafuz project and its trainings which led her to brave the situation and respond quickly.

3.23 Organized efforts to put out fire, help affected villagers

Pancho is an active member of VDMC Aahori Chhor from district Umerkot. She is 30 years old and lives with her husband and children. She recalls the incident, when with the help of VDMC members she supported the people to extinguish fire.

Pancho describes that in the month of November, one day, men and women of the village were picking cotton in the fields away from the village. Some of the girls were cooking food for their parents in their huts. Somehow, some embers flew from fireplaces and ignited fire in the roof. Wind carried fire from one hut to another, quickly setting ten houses on fire. When the children saw flames, they ran towards fields to inform their elders. When the villagers returned from field, fire had partially burnt 8 to 9 houses and was moving forward.

“When I arrived at the site, I called other VDMC members of our area for rescue. Within next ten minutes, almost all VDMC members had arrived on the spot. They carried sand buckets and other equipment along with them. We also called Fire Brigade and requested them to come to our village. In the meantime, all of us tried to extinguish fire by sprinkling sand, mud and buckets of water on fire,” she said.

After struggling hard for couple of hours the fire finally died out. However, by the time fire got extinguished, it already had caused tremendous damage to people’s property. Ten families’ assets were completely destroyed including their utensils, CNICs, clothes, jewelry, quilts, bed sheets and cots. Later, fire brigade also arrived properly extinguished the remaining flames.

After the incident was over, VDMC held a meeting and decided to help the affected families. Thus, they jointly collected food,



Tents erected by VDMC Aahori Chhor district Umerkot for fire affected households.

clothes, quilts, cots and other household items. In addition, the VDMC president contacted the UDMC and borrowed some tents from the emergency toolkit that was provided to the UDMC under the Tahafuz project. The tents were later erected for the affected families with the help of villagers.

Affected people were grateful to Pancho and other VDMC members for their timely help and support in an organized manner. Relating to the incident a villager Sawai Bheel mentioned that I don’t know, what would have happened to us, if Adi (sister) Pancho had not called other people and put out the fire, we were totally helpless and didn’t know what to do. With her efforts, we saved a larger part of the village from fire.

Pancho also decided to arrange a training for other women of her village in order to build their capacities for dealing with disaster and especially the fire accidents that are more prevalent in their area.

3.24 Skills save life

Zareena, a 25 years old lady, is resident of settlement Bhalay Dino Jat from the revenue village Jhol 4 of district Badin. She has two daughters.

She said that instances of fire, people drowning in water, accidents, injuries and floods are very common in her area. "Before becoming a VDMC member, I didn't know about how to deal with such emergency situation. But, when I participated in CBDRM training under Tahafuz project, I started taking interest in life saving techniques, which I believe anybody can easily apply to save someone's life," she said.

While relating the incident she said that one day she heard the news that her sister's husband suffered an accident on the road. She said that when the news reached her sister, she fell down unconscious on the ground. She added that during such incidents, traditional women make use of the methods like splashing water on the face and massaging head with mustard oil for recovering the person. But this time, since she knew a skilled approach, she asked them to get aside so she could examine her condition first. She said, "I checked her pulse and looked for whether she was breathing or not, when she showed no response then before giving her chest compressions I asked



Ms. Zareena a VDMC member narrating benefits she received from CBDRM training.

another lady for supporting me in giving her rescue breaths. Later, I completed a round of compressions. We repeated the procedure for five times before she started to breath."

She said. "The news of how I treated my sister spread to entire village. Neighboring women started coming to my house and kept on asking whether I had some Jinn (spirit), who taught me how to cure people. I only smiled and said that the only thing that made me capable of doing this was the CBDRM training, which I received under Tahafuz intervention."

3.25 Resilient community battling with fire outbreak

Traditional homes in Thar, called Chaunras are made of light wooden frame and are covered with straw and thatched roof, thus these structures easily catch fire. This is the reason why fire break outs are very common in the area. As the climate of the Thar region is arid; wind blows most of the times while water is rarely available. These factors make fire extinguishing process long and difficult.

Diwali is a festival of lights and Hindu communities express their joy on their religious festivals by throwing fire crackers in the air. During last week of October, in village Essar Bheel, children were throwing firecrackers and enjoying themselves when suddenly a strong gust of wind came and carried a cracker towards the roof of a nearby house.

In a very short span of time, flames engulfed a Chaunra. A man from the village called Raja Umer, a VDMC member and resident of a nearby village, and told him about the fire incident. Raja umar immediately summoned other VDMC members and men from his village also collected sand buckets and wheel barrows from the emergency toolkit and rushed to the village.

Upon reaching the location, they first got themselves organized in the form of a team and started putting off fire by throwing sand, mud and water on it. The fire eventually extinguished, but it had completely burnt four houses.



The Rescue Point built during Phase-I provided shelter to fire affected household in VDMC Saddori Sar.

Under the scenario, the main challenge for the villagers was to provide shelter to the families whose houses were destroyed in fire. VDMC members consulted each other and finally decided to move the families to the nearest rescue place provided by Tahafuz. The families were housed at Chaunra made at the village Sadori Thar. The VDMC members also arranged food, clothes and utensils for the affected families.

The affected families stayed at the rescue place for five to six days. Meanwhile, they constructed makeshift houses for them. The affected families paid gratitude and thanked VDMC members for their timely support and help. The young boy Raja Umer, who played an active role during the entire process, said, "I am very glad that I was helpful in trouble, the credit goes to VDMC's training and Tahafuz project."

3.26 Rehabilitated dug-well: A source of solace for villagers

Water is lifeline for the people of Thar Desert. In the absence of barrage water in the area, the only source of drinking water is the dug well facility. The same source of water is used by the people and their livestock. However, life of the residents, especially women becomes more difficult when the water facility lacks in the area, as it compels women to fetch water from far off areas in extreme weather conditions.

The story revolves around the issue of water scarcity faced by the residents of the settlement Dhuwaen of the revenue village Dhabro in district Tharparkar. The residents are very poor and their subsistence is based on cattle herding, wage labor and agriculture. Some thirty years back, villagers build a dug-well on their own to fulfill their water requirements. Though, water obtained from the well was not very good, it spared villagers of their daily travel for fetching water from distant areas.

However, in the year 1990, resulting from heavy rains the only water source they constructed was badly damaged. Its walls collapsed, leaving it as a shallow pool of bricks and muddy water. Villagers tried to rebuild it, but they failed to sustain it for the long run. Consequently, women again had to depend on fetching water from a neighboring village at about 3 km distance.

Mr. Mangal Meghwar, a member of the VDMC, said that when the Tahafuz project launched, he joined the VDMC and underwent training



Children taking water from a rehabilitated dug well in VDMC Dhabro district Tharparkar.

on DRR. However, the greatest thing that happened to him during all this time was when the project offered rehabilitation of one scheme for their revenue village. Mangal added that during the decision making, majority of the women demanded repair of the broken dug-well. Hence, based on demand of majority of the people and identified need, the scheme from the settlement 'Dhuwaen' was unanimously approved by all the members. When the construction process started, it also provided a source of income for the people of the village including women. Based on an old experience, the scheme was strengthened by using bricks and plastering it with cement in order to make it resilient to heavy rain.

With the completion of dug-well people were very happy, as it resolved a 20 years old problem. A female community person Bachan Meghwar said joyfully that women are very happy and excited as after the repair of dug well they now fetch water more frequently and conveniently.

3.27 A child rescued with basic life support

Naseema a 25 years old lady, is a resident of the settlement Chak No 153 of Hasaani revenue village of district Thatta. She has one daughter. From the platform of VDMC, she received training on DRR and was able to learn different lifesaving techniques.

While explaining her story she said that the people of her village are very poor. Women have to do labor; some support their husbands in farming besides fulfilling household chores. Talking about the 2010 floods, she said that the village was badly devastated as water entered their houses, paddy crop, sugar cane and cotton crops were destroyed. Moreover, their livestock ran away and some drowned in water. She said that her daughter was just a couple of months old when they had to leave their houses leaving all their belongings behind.



Ms. Naseema from VDMC Hassani, Thatta sharing her experiences after receiving training in CBDRM.

“The memories of flood and loss of assets were the main reasons for joining the VDMC and participated in CBDRM training. The training covered important topics; like basic life supporting techniques have been very essential, since we lacked health facility in the village.” She said, normally when a local villager suffers from a serious injury or illness, things get worse, as they end up transporting the patient to the hospital, which is located 25 km away in Taluka Jati. In the entire village, neither was there a first aid box nor did anyone know how to provide first aid in case of an injury.

One of the incidents she narrated saying that one day when she was busy at home, a girl from the neighboring house came, while crying aloud that Haami who is the wife of her cousin had fallen unconscious and was not recovering despite their efforts. She then went with the girl where she saw Haami was lying down unconscious on the cot. She checked her pulse and after realizing that she was not breathing, she started giving her CPR. She said that she repeated the CPR procedure for five minutes with short intervals after which Hammi opened her eyes and regained her consciousness.

3.28 Putting DRR learnings into action!

Village Disaster Management Committee, Chaar from union council Bustaan is located at a distance of almost 10km from main city. The villagers have been facing flood situations due to heavy rains as well as its close proximity to Mithrao canal, which sometimes over flows or breach occur in its weak banks. Similarly, poor infrastructures, damaged access to safer points and few numbers of rescue points are factors which further increase their vulnerabilities.

In response to expected flood situations regarding current monsoon season, members from VDMC Chaar conducted Mock Drill exercises to ascertain and check their level of preparedness to meet any challenge. The purpose of these exercises was to disseminate skills to those villagers who did not attend the training. Major focus was on shallow water crossing and rescuing drowning person. Shallow water crossing is a method where rescuer led the people in a straight line. The one leading the line holds a pole for assessing depth and direction. Those following him, hold each other's shoulders firmly and slowly pass through water. This technique can also be used for rescuing some drowning person.

Prem, a villager said that such early preparedness measures can help the community to effectively deal with any alarming situation. Previously having less knowledge about disaster risk reduction, they used traditional approaches. Sometimes this



Members of VDMC Chaar demonstrating mock rescue drill as part of disaster preparedness.

could put his life in danger while rescuing a person. After learning the technique, he is in better position to handle the situation much efficiently.

Ganesh, another residing villager, said that the Mock Drill helped him to learn how to perform the Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) to the victim. He told the CPR is lifesaving and very important technique while dealing with emergency situations.

Members of VDMC Chaar and other villagers were happy to be part of these exercises. It helped them to gauge their strength and weakness. These exercises were also source of motivation for those who did not directly participate in the trainings. They appreciated RSPN/RSPs approach of making the communities resilient with the support of United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

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