

# Floods in Uttarakhand: A New Relief Deal



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*The views expressed in this publication are those of the author.*

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# Floods in Uttarakhand: A New Relief Deal

The loss of life and assets in Uttarakhand after the sudden floods is most heart wrenching. At least 16 lakh people in four districts of Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Rudraprayag and Garhwal were affected by the June 16 rains and floods<sup>1</sup>. The death toll, according to the state's disaster management minister, Yashpal Arya, is estimated to have crossed 5,000. Tens of thousands of people have lost homes and livelihood<sup>2</sup> and losses estimated to be above Rs. 3,000 crore<sup>3</sup>. With potable water almost non-existent, hundreds of people from neighbouring villages have complained of fever and diarrhoea<sup>4</sup>. Heroic efforts of India Armed Forces and members of National Disaster Management Force to rescue lives by reaching out continues to seem not adequate. It is therefore not too early to start thinking about the nature and extent of relief and political economy around it.

The Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's Rs. 1000 crore relief package to Uttarakhand is indeed timely and decisive: gone are the days when the central team from Delhi would visit the victim state to assess the loss and damage over weeks and the victim states' humble team would repeatedly run up to Delhi with inflated and revised memorandum of demand for relief. Negotiations and the party politics around it would go on over months due to the political



Image: sim01.in.com

and economic interests of the politicians, thus dragging out the supply of materials and relief which in turn causes more damage and loss to victims, their lives and their livelihoods. However, the Uttarakhand flood relief announcement seems to have changed this pattern. If that is so, it is now possible to think of a new deal in terms of relief package but sadly it has opened another area for political action around media visibility. Disasters attract media, and media attracts politicians. This claim to media visibility reached its height with the visits of Narendra Modi and Rahul Gandhi. But what this cost was time, and took time away from thinking about relief for India's citizens. What can be the key features of such a new deal? Let us draw from India's own experience.

Cash transfers to poor households is now on our national agenda. The rural development ministry as well as the Planning Commission is making best efforts to pilot cash transfers as an anti poverty measure. Cash transfer has not only worked as development agenda but has also worked in disaster situations in India. But cash transfers is not on relief agenda. The All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI) has made cash transfers to disaster victims since the 2001 Gujarat earthquake relief, and has done so for over nine disasters in the last twelve years, reaching upto 26000 families. This decade long experience shows that if planned well and independently monitored, relief as cash transfer is time and cost effective. Cash transfer as relief can still be misused but the misuse is easy to spot

1 Govt to focus on locals affected by Uttarakhand floods, Press Trust of India | New Delhi June 27, 2013 Last Updated at 17:42 IST, Business Standards, Friday, June 28, 2013 | 09:48 AM IST, [http://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/govt-to-focus-on-locals-affected-by-uttarakhand-floods-113062700702\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/govt-to-focus-on-locals-affected-by-uttarakhand-floods-113062700702_1.html)

2 We must learn from the Uttarakhand disaster, By Business Standard, Last Updated: Tue, Jun 25, 2013 02:05 hrs, <http://www.sify.com/news/we-must-learn-from-the-uttarakhand-disaster-news-columns-ngzcfhefafa.html>

3 Don't blame nature for the Uttarakhand flood disaster, G. Sampath, Thu, Jun 27 2013. 02 44 PM IST, Livemint, <http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/hzKmWekwYOOtYKv8N6dZIN/Dont-blame-nature-for-the-Uttarakhand-flood-disaster.html?facet=print>

4 Uttarakhand floods: Threat of an epidemic looms large as people complain of fever, diarrhoea, Yahoo! India News - Wed 26 Jun, 2013, <http://in.news.yahoo.com/uttarakhand-floods-threat-of-an-epidemic-looms-large-as-people-complain-of-fever-diarrhoea-064803467.html>

and misusers are easier to track down. Cash transfer takes cash directly to the victim and cuts out the cost of time and money that relief material businesses cause.

### Encouraging Response

The international NGOs such as Save the Children, Plan, CARE and others have used cash transfer in Odisha after the 2011 floods with ECHO (European Union) funds. The experience of these longstanding international humanitarian players suggest that cash transfer as relief reduces time, transaction costs, and increases household impact on recovery. In addition as Ray Kancharla of Save the Children noted at the review workshop of the 2011 floods, the impact of cash transfer on children and mothers is most encouraging. Indeed these organizations have found that women are, upon receiving cash transfers, more likely to spend the money on their children's basic needs and use it for establishing new enterprises. Cash transfer has successfully been used in Sri Lanka after the 2004 tsunami. In Pakistan, US\$325 million were disbursed for flood damage compensation to over one million families in Punjab by issuing debit cards. Cash transfers can be a key feature of the new deal of relief in Uttarakhand. The national objective of financial inclusion will be even better served by such a change in the relief package.

The utilization of central relief by the states is not always time bound. The utilization decisions of central relief are often taken without enough transparency. This is often not because of corruption or lack of understanding but because officials in the national and state authorities do not have time and space for learning from others so that they can

make system wide improvement such as using cash transfers for relief and recovery. The Uttarakhand flood is an opportunity to find ways of offering time and space to national and state authority officials for learning from others so that they can make system wide improvements. Exceptions are important but system wide changes are even more important for widespread impact.

The relief can replace what is lost, or relief can also be a starting point for new ways of development, development that is protected from disaster risk, development that is climate smart—green and clean—in the long run. No other region needs such "green development" more than our Himalayas. The work of Chandiprasad Bhatt in Uttarakhand has pointed this need now for almost half-a-century. Though half-a-century is not a long time to point out an urgent change in our Indian context. The use of solar and other forms of renewable energy in building community-level energy security cannot now be left behind. New homes and public buildings—schools and hospitals included—must use solar and renewable energy. I-Set, an international think tank with leading NGO SEEDS in Gorakhpur has shown ways to build "green shelter" that has smaller carbon foot print in its construction as well as sustenance. Ashok Khosla and his team at Development Alternatives has made a case for use of eco-materials across almost every geo-agro-climatic zones of India. The Uttarakhand government has also been constructing a number of hydro-electricity power plants, but caution must be exercised to ensure that this does not cause environment degradation and exacerbates existing flood risks. Work of Practical Action in Nepal inspired by E.F. Schomacker

has found smaller, safer, and sustainable hydro-power units for Himalayas.

### Imaginative Relief Work

Environmentalists say that the disaster in Uttarakhand was inevitable due to rampant construction, felling of trees and building of dams in the name of development. They warned that it will continue if the state doesn't change track<sup>5</sup>. May be this relief is not only an opportunity to change track but change the direction and the pace too. From more growth to green growth and higher rate to wider spread of growth. Imaginative relief in Uttarakhand must reverse this by using solar and wind power in its villages and towns. By doing so Uttarakhand can be a model to the rest of hilly India on how to go about a different—greener and cleaner—development path. Rs. 1000 crore is not a small sum to pilot creating a "green economy" through relief and recovery. Initial steps may include additional forestry plantations with MGNREGA resources as a part of the relief, recovery planning, and reconstruction processes. Such large amounts offer an opportunity to invest in long term economic growth of victim citizens and sustainable development.

The recent disaster of floods in Uttarkhand should also be considered an opportunity to implement the suggested actions in the State Action Plan on Climate Change of the Government of Uttarakhand<sup>6</sup>. The Statement on the Uttarakhand Catastrophe by India Climate Justice<sup>7</sup>, endorsed by number of organisations, demand action on a number of grounds and offers valuable suggestions for integrating adaptation measures into relief and risk reduction agendas. It demands:

5 Uttarakhand floods: Deconstructing a disaster, Mayank Aggrawal, DNA, Tuesday, Jun 25, 2013, 10:11 IST | Place: New Delhi | Agency: DNA, <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/1852688/report-uttarakhand-floods-deconstructing-a-disaster>

6 Available at [http://www.uttarakhandforest.org/Data/SC\\_Revised\\_UAPCC\\_27june12.pdf](http://www.uttarakhandforest.org/Data/SC_Revised_UAPCC_27june12.pdf)

7 Statement on Uttarakhand Catastrophe by India Climate Justice, Greg Laden's Blog, Posted by Greg Laden on June 25, 2013. <http://scienceblogs.com/gregladen/2013/06/25/statement-on-uttarakhand-catastrophe-by-india-climate-justice/>

- That the governments at the central and state level retreat to a low carbon pathway of development that has equity, decent employment, and sustainability at its core.
- That the planning and construction of dams in the entire Indian Himalayas be reviewed, and that all construction be halted until such a review is carried out.
- That the use of explosives in all such infrastructure development works is completely stopped.
- That, given the likelihood of extreme rainfall events and other climate extremes in the future, extensive and sub-regional warning systems are put in place urgently across all the Himalayan states, the coastal areas and beyond.
- That a proper assessment of the carrying capacity of specific ecosystems is carried out.
- That the stretch from Gaumukh to Uttarkashi be declared an eco-sensitive zone without further delay.
- That a river regulation zone be enforced such that no permanent structures are allowed to be constructed within 100 metres of any river.
- That the residents and their organizations are thoroughly consulted in a democratic plan on climate change, in the revival of the local hill economy, and the generation of decent employment.
- That all working people be compensated for the loss of life and livelihood, and that urgent plans are put in place for the revival of local livelihoods and agriculture.
- That the central government learn from the Uttarakhand catastrophe and put in place prior adaptation measures not just for

the mountainous regions but beyond, the coastal and the drought-prone interiors as well.

The above ten points throw light on key areas that must be discussed and debated by the citizens of Uttarakhand to plan their own recovery as well as shape ongoing development. The opportunity to discuss should benefit not this or that group but all citizens. The recent announcement by Uttarakhand Chief Minister to start tabulating gross environment product (GEP), a measure of the health of the state's natural resources is welcome step. Provision of relief cannot be confined to the government. Relief can leverage on private sector investment such as in insurance or risk transfer pools and enterprise development. The companies who operate from the region of Uttarakhand, directly or indirectly, can come forward to work with small and medium enterprises and develop new deal relief measures. In addition to providing shelter relief and compensation for loss of assets the corporations can offer economic stabilization funds to small business and the building up of business environment and local markets. They can also assist in cluster development, providing training, offer employment and mentor the business owner. In this process businesses owned by women cannot receive low or limited priority.

#### **Review Tourism Sector**

The tourism sector in Uttarakhand needs a review now more than ever before. Tourism officials have pointed out that floods in Uttarakhand have brought down business to 20-30 per cent<sup>8</sup>, and this number will only increase in coming months. It will take years to rebuild these small and micro enterprises. The losses to informal sector enterprises and its workers could be far greater and

more devastating. UNDP's ongoing global study in Japan, Mexico and India indicates that small and medium enterprises are not only good local decentralized engines of economic growth and markets but are also builders of social capital after a disaster. The study results also show that disasters affect them more disproportionately and therefore relief and compensation need to pay more attention to their capital skills, and market needs. Agencies such as the World Bank who are invited by the Finance Minister to help rebuild economy can start with the small and medium enterprise livelihoods.

Similarly, there cannot be any better opportunity than this to offer affordable and suitable multi-hazard insurance coverage to the victims and the vulnerable citizen in Uttarakhand. Priority insurance coverage for women and children, schools and education buildings, health centres and local roads, and jobs and income for women are invariably left out in the relief and preparedness efforts. Insurance coverage to these sections of citizens and sectors of economy is overdue. Tour operators may have to leave rescue of their clients to public authorities but at least own up the responsibility to protect the local economy and ecology it has used by offering insurance protection.

The ongoing study of the potential of micro-insurance to reduce risk by MicroSave in five Asian countries with the support of the UK based Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) shows that the months after a disaster are one of the most suitable times to introduce new and structural changes in risk transfer practices and institutions. Universal insurance coverage of the poor in Uttarakhand is now possible to achieve if we start

8 ShishirPrashant | Dehradun June 24, 2013 Last Updated at 20:42 IST, Tourism sector bears brunt of Uttarakhand disaster, [http://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/tourism-sector-bears-brunt-of-uttarakhand-disaster-113062400626\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/companies/tourism-sector-bears-brunt-of-uttarakhand-disaster-113062400626_1.html)

thinking about a new deal of relief package. Thanks to the intervention by the Finance Minister who asked the LIC to do away with the usual seven years waiting period for the settlement of claims in cases of missing persons, the LIC will now make it easier from Uttarakhand calamity victims to obtain payment<sup>9</sup>. But this is not enough; the state of Uttarakhand need to do more to cover more people and losses as may God forbid similar catastrophic events with even more severe consequences could occur. In any case, as the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is trying to come up with something concrete on risk transfers for India, it can consider piloting an initiative in Uttarakhand. AIDMI has demanded universal disaster risk coverage of all poor among citizens who hold MGNREGA card. Relief in Uttarakhand can be a first step towards this. The General Insurance Corporation can accelerate the process.

Such a new deal relief will help to improve the picture of what seems to be a mixed performance in rescue and response after the floods. The heroic efforts of local citizens and army have become blurred with stories after stories of neglect and delay. The spreading anger and frustration will ebb and attention will turn towards the constructive challenge of designing and implementing relief. Such a new deal will also address the growing feeling among the local

citizens that too much government attention is given to the rescue of tourists at the cost of attention to the loss of local lives and the future of local citizens.

According to media reports, when the floods struck, about 28 million tourists were visiting the state, while the local population is close to half that number<sup>10</sup>. While most media reports only reported about the tragic state of pilgrims and tourists, the extent of the damage and loss to the local population was ignored and at present is still unclear<sup>11</sup>. The region will face harsh winters in a few months time and all are concerned that people may not have enough shelter, warm clothing and food if relief and rehabilitation work do not proceed at a fast pace<sup>12</sup>. But urgency must not kill the need to better plan and ponder strategic actions in Uttarakhand.

#### **Long-term Relief Needed**

Relief is often confined to short-term measures and used to serve short-lived purposes. Such interpretation often aggravates or leaves existing vulnerabilities unaddressed. The State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) constituted in 2007 needs immediate support to successfully manage the current surge in demand for relief and linking the relief with rehabilitation and long-term development so that it emerges as a strong and credible agency in the state. In the end performance of NDMA is dependent on what the State

Disaster Management Authorities are capable of doing. In its performance audit report of 2013<sup>13</sup>, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) had highlighted that the Uttarakhand SDMA had not formulated any rules, regulations, policies or guidelines for disaster management in the state. The report also highlighted that the Geological Survey of India had identified 101 of the 233 Uttarakhand villages affected by the disaster of 2008 as vulnerable, but the state did not make any arrangements for the relocation of these villages in the past five years<sup>14</sup>. "While we have identified 101 villages in Uttarakhand which are at high risk for land-slides, but we have neither money nor land to resettle them" Suneel Muttou, Secretary, Dept. of Disaster Management admitted in September 2010<sup>15</sup>. Can current relief measures effectively pave path for addressing long-term risk reduction issues such as those faced by these 101 villages in the state?

Leaders for a new humanitarian action that builds on the past but takes a leap onto the future must be found. Let relief to Uttarakhand define the new generation relief package in India, one that helps victims recover faster and better, and which puts India in the leadership position for defining the future of humanitarian action in the Asia-Pacific. ■

- **Mihir R. Bhatt** with  
**Mehul Pandya** and **Hui Chi Goh**,  
All India Disaster Mitigation Institute

9 Uttarakhand disaster: LIC asked to relax claim norms, PTI New Delhi Last Updated: June 25, 2013 | 23:01 IST, <http://business.today.intoday.in/story/uttarakhand-disaster-lic-asked-to-relax-claim-norms/1/196168.html>

10 Don't blame nature for the Uttarakhand flood disaster, G. Sampath, Thu, Jun 27 2013. 02 44 PM IST, Livemint, <http://www.livemint.com/Opinion/hzKmWekwYOOtYKv8N6dZIN/Dont-blame-nature-for-the-Uttarakhand-flood-disaster.html?facet=print>

11 'Children Need Priority' Says World Vision India Responding to the Uttarakhand Floods, SRINAGAR, Uttarakhand, India, June 25, 2013 / PRNewswire, [http://www.telegraphindia.com/pressrelease/prnw/enin201306256297\\_indiapublic.html](http://www.telegraphindia.com/pressrelease/prnw/enin201306256297_indiapublic.html)

12 Uttarakhand Flood Situation is Catastrophic; Large Dams Partially to Blame Says ActionAid, [http://www.webwire.com/ViewPressRel.asp?aId=176347#.Uc0QR\\_Wqnp](http://www.webwire.com/ViewPressRel.asp?aId=176347#.Uc0QR_Wqnp)

13 Report no.-5 of 2013-Union Government (Ministry of Home Affairs) - Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India on performance Audit of Disaster Preparedness in India, [http://saiindia.gov.in/english/home/Our\\_Products/Audit\\_Report/Government\\_Wise/union\\_audit/recent\\_reports/union\\_performance/2013/Civil/Report\\_5/Report\\_5.html](http://saiindia.gov.in/english/home/Our_Products/Audit_Report/Government_Wise/union_audit/recent_reports/union_performance/2013/Civil/Report_5/Report_5.html)

14 CAG report: No disaster management in Uttarakhand, Posted by: Anisha, Published: Monday, June 24, 2013, 18:17 [IST], <http://news.oneindia.in/2013/06/24/u-khand-tragedy-cag-submits-report-1244367.html>

15 Dealing with Disasters in Uttarakhand, Understanding how the Government does and does not work Dr NitinPandey, 16-Sept-2010, <http://www.pandeyji.com/uttarakhand/114.cfm>

# Floods in Uttarakhand: Opportunities to Reduce Risk in Recovery

For resilient recovery, which reduces both existing and future risk, it is important to invest in key risk reduction measures and institutions. These investments are best before a disaster, and the following frameworks and tools exist for investing.

**1. Recovery and development frameworks must be flexible to allow the space and time** for resilient recovery to take place. Short-term projects will lead to short-term gains. Recovery is not only 20 years of development accelerated to but a few but also needs to incorporate existing risk from all hazards and future risk from a changing climate. Despite the stresses of a post-disaster situation, one should step back and plan a resilient recovery based on local capacity and the pace and needs of the affected population. Because of the stresses of a post-disaster situation, one should invest in ex-ante assessment and recovery frameworks.

**2. Invest in progress against the Hyogo framework for action** and mainstreaming risk reduction into development for a deeper, faster and more resilient recovery. The HFA provides the framework to develop capacity to reduce the risk from multiple existing hazards and future hazards, including from climate change. Although recovery is only one of the indicators in the HFA's priority five, the capacity required for recovery is inherent in all priorities and crosscutting

issues. The instruments associated with the HFA allow the existence of a multi-hazard recovery framework embedded within the governance and the development of the area. The existence of these capacities, in government, professional organisations, private sector and civil society, provides the linkage between recovery and development. These same capacities are critical in reducing risk to multiple future disasters including from climate change.

**3. Invest in planning** based on assessments, monitoring, evaluation and learning mechanisms. These provide the foundation for action. Ideally, these investments should be ex-ante, to solidify partnership and strategies and reduce the stresses involved in a post-disaster system. This will allow for a deeper, faster and more resilient recovery. Both ex-ante planning and post disaster needs assessments and monitoring systems need to clearly identify, understand and address underlying risk factors. These include multiple hazards and changes to future risk factors from climate change and urbanisation. The plans should recognise the and use the inherent resilience of people and communities as well as identify, understand and use existing governance capacity and support structures, linking risk reduction and development. Both ex-ante and post disaster assessments and planning tools exist and continue to evolve.

**4. Invest in understanding and building on the inherent resilience of communities.** To build resilient communities one must understand existing resilience and inherent vulnerabilities, especially gender. Tools exist and continue to evolve to provide communities with a mechanism to voice their opinions, be involved in decision-making and understand their capacities and vulnerabilities in a multi-hazard and climate change context. These tools, and participation in decision making by communities including the most vulnerable and marginalised are critical in ensuring resilient development and reducing risk during recovery and in the face of a changing climate. The challenges of future risk from climate change and future adaption place further urgency on the need for the central protagonist in development and recovery to be involved in decision-making and actions – people, communities and especially women and the marginalised.

Disaster risk reduction is an investment not a cost. Recovery offers the opportunity to invest in addressing the underlying risk factors from multiple hazards and a changing climate on an accelerated basis for resilient development with an emphasis on "build back better." ■

– Sanjaya Bhatia,  
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# Real-time Capacity Building in Uttarakhand

Traditionally, capacity building for disaster response is seen as a 'peace-time' activity, to be undertaken in preparation of disaster events. However, many disasters, like the recent flash floods and landslides in Uttarakhand witness a surge of new responders whose efficiency and effectiveness can be improved through essential technical inputs and humanitarian perspectives. RedR India's experience of real-time capacity building in Uttarakhand is discussed below.

As the State Government and non-governmental agencies launched their relief work after the flash floods and landslides in Uttarakhand, 26 RedR India members were deployed to support their operations. This included a 2-member team deployed with ACC Cement, 23 members as a part of the rapid needs assessment team with the State Government and UNDMT and a communications specialist to document and report the developing humanitarian scenario from the state.

Based on experiences of deployed members, it emerged that the disruption of connectivity was one of the key challenges in the mountainous terrain, hampering access to information, essential services and relief items. The efforts of local youth, district administration and organisations were notable in

overcoming this hurdle, whereby their knowledge of the terrain, mountaineering skills<sup>1</sup> and commitment was instrumental in reaching out to cut-off villages. From the assessments, inputs from the field, and operations in which RedR India members were involved along with on-going SITREPs and IAG updates; it was noticeable that there had been a major surge with a host of volunteers, non-traditional actors and local actors involved in responding to the post-disaster situation. It was felt that the motivation of the actors should be complemented with knowhow and technical skills for more effective and efficient results, in addition to an understanding of Humanitarian Standards and the Code of Conduct. A key challenge that was observable was the need to assess the changing needs of the affected population and targeting of population for relief distribution. With the scale of recovery and reconstruction work to be undertaken, provision of essential skills relating to WASH, project management and targeting of vulnerable groups was perceived to be critical.

It was against this background that RedR India launched a series of field-based training programmes across the affected districts of Uttarakhand, with support from UNICEF. These need based training courses are 1-day long and aim to develop the capacities

of government officials from relevant departments involved in Relief and Rehabilitation work, frontline workers and aid workers on key concepts and issues involved across various sectors. The programme also aims to sensitize them on key concepts of humanitarian work along with cross-cutting issues like gender considerations, needs of the elderly, children and the disabled and, disaster risk reduction.

139 people have undergone real-time capacity building so far in 3 districts, namely, Chamoli, Rudraprayag and Uttarkashi, on Multi-sector Needs Assessment, Safe Drinking Water and Environmental Sanitation in Emergencies, Hygiene Promotion in Emergencies, Managing People and Projects in Emergencies, Children in Emergencies and Logistics in Emergencies. This has included ASHA and AWW workers, Village Pradhans, Teachers, School Principals, Block Level Officials, NGO workers, volunteers and medical officers, amongst others who are playing an active role in the relief and response efforts. ■

- Sheena Arora

Coordinator - Knowledge Management and Learning RedR India

1 For example, the Nehru Institute of Mountaineering has mobilized its local climbers in Uttarkashi to reach out to remote and cut-off villages in a bid to gather information about immediate needs of people.



RedR India member introducing hygiene promotion IEC material to the participants in Guptakashi, Rudraprayag.



Participants carrying out turbidity test during a WaSH training in Augustyamuni, Rudraprayag.

Courtesy: Red R India.

# The Uttarakhand Disaster:

## A wake call to stop the rape of our fragile Himalaya

The Uttarakhand disaster we have witnessed at the beginning of the 2013 monsoon season is a consequence of ignorance and greed-ignorance of the ecological systems that hold up the fragile Himalaya, and greed to profit from the exploitation of the rich natural and cultural heritage of our region.

Uttarakhand is the source of the sacred Ganga and its tributaries, the lifeline of India. The sources of these rivers were made sacred sites in order to protect the Ganga Himalaya, and hence India. The yatra to the four pilgrimage centres of Gangotri, Yamunotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath-the Char Dham, was meant to both connect us culturally and spiritually to these "Bhuthirths" -sacred sites of the Earth- and to connect us ecologically to the sources of life, the sources of our rivers.

Our sacred mountains have sustained local communities and pilgrims for thousands of years because they have been treated with reverence and respect. Today the ecologically fragile Himalaya, and our sacred rivers are being raped.

The disaster which has led to five thousand deaths on current estimates and the disappearance of nearly 100000 people is a wake up call to stop the rape. We need to learn once again to have reverence for our sacred mountains and rivers. We need to be informed by the latest of ecological sciences, not by an obsolete "development" model which is nothing more than a greed and exploitation model which has led to the tragic disaster in Uttarakhand. Contrary to what the politicians are saying, the disaster is clearly manmade, not a natural disaster.

Politicians, decision makers, corporations responsible for causing the disaster through their ignorance and greed, their blindness and shortsightedness, need to take responsibility for the disaster their policies and actions have caused. The "polluter pays principle" needs to be expanded to cover the scale of ecological devastation we are witnessing.

The Chief Minister has said the damage will cost Rs 3000 Crore (Rs 30 billion), and it has undone 3 years of "development". He obviously is only looking at profits from concrete and construction. He cannot see the soil that has been washed away and the 500 years it will take to build one inch of the protective layer of top soil, the skin of the mountains. He cannot see the thousands of years it took for rivers to shape the landscape and the communities to create their settlements in river valleys. He cannot see the millions of years it took the Himalaya to form. He cannot see the sustainable economies and cultures built by local communities over thousands of years of hard work to coexist with the fragile mountains, their home. He cannot see that the destruction of their lives and livelihoods cannot be reversed in 3 years. In many cases the damage is irreversible and immeasurable.

Today, driven by greed and corruption, the government has become blind to nature and people, it has become ignorant of the culture of the sacred, and the ecological fragility of the Himalaya. The sacred sets limits. Ecological fragility sets limits. Today these limits are being violated, as rivers are dammed and diverted for electricity, and the pilgrimage to the Char Dhams is

being turned into crass consumerist mass tourism.

In 1916, Rai Patiram Bahadur in his book "Garhwal, ancient and modern" wrote "We may say that there is no country in the world of the dimension of Garhwal which has so many rivers as a traveller will find in this land. The district has 60 rivers of different size, besides these; there are rivulets, rills, springs and fountains in hundreds, showing that nature has been especially bountiful to this land in the matter of its water supply." (quoted in Semwal, p21)

500 dams are planned in our region on the Ganga system. Swami Gyanswarup Sanand, (Formerly- Dr. G.D. Agrawal) (Ganga Sewa Abhiyanam) has been repeatedly going on fast to save the Ganga. His efforts forced the central government to declare the area from Uttarkashi to Gaumukh an ecologically fragile zone. The present Chief Minister has been blocking it the declaration of this area as an eco sensitive zone in the name of "development". I hope that the disaster of 2013 will make him realize the value of protection of the Ganga Himalaya as an ecologically fragile zones. And it is not just the stretch between Uttarkashi and Gaumukh. We need to protect the entire catchment of the Ganga system as a cultural heritage and ecologically fragile and sensitive ecosystem.

Blasting with dynamite recklessly for the construction of dams and tunnels has triggered thousands of landslides. When the first rain comes, these landslides fill the river bed with rubble. There is no space for the water to flow. We are literally stealing the ecological space from our rivers. And when they have no space to flow, they

will overflow, cut banks and cause flooding.

Local communities, who have been made invisible in the media and government reports of the disaster will never get back the lives of their loved ones that were extinguished, or the fields and homes that were washed away. But those that have caused the damage – the construction companies like JP, GVK, LANCO, L&T etc who are building dams by recklessly blasting the ecologically sensitive Himalaya – will not lose anything. They will be bailed out through our tax money, without our consent and approval.

It is time that projects were approved by local communities who bear the brunt of the ecological destruction caused by them, not by corrupt politicians who make money all the way, including from the relief and rehabilitation packages after disasters. It is time to stop and reassess the building of dams and hydel projects in the fragile Himalaya with an internalization of all social and ecological costs.

Added to the short sightedness of "development" in an old paradigm is the denial of the deepening vulnerability of the Himalaya with Climate Change. The Navdanya/ Research Foundation for Science Technology and Ecology on Climate change in the Third Pole had warned that climate extremes, untimely rains, melting glaciers created new challenges for us in the Himalaya. But the Government spun into denial mode in the lead up to the Copenhagen climate conference.

Usually floods come at the end of a heavy monsoon. This year they came with the first rain. The monsoon came early, and the rainfall was much more than normal. This is climate instability. Meantime, the ecological damage caused by maldevelopment has reduced the capacity of the mountain ecosystem to deal with heavy rain. Climate havoc adds to the vulnerability. Kedarnath, the 8th century Shiva shrine is located at the source of the Mandakini river. The damage at Kedarnath was caused by the breaking of the Kedar Dome glacier that led to the bursting of the

glacial Charbarilake. These are climate disasters. Yet just before the Copenhagen Climate Conference, the Government issued a report saying there was no impact on our Glaciers. The Kedarnath tragedy shows how heavy the cost of this denial is. We need to recognize that our glaciers are threatened, and melting glaciers will lead to disasters. Disaster preparedness is the duty of government. But disaster preparedness needs honest and robust ecological science, and honest and robust participatory democracy.

Mass tourism has led to construction on the fragile banks of the rivers. When rivers flood, more damage is caused.

In my childhood old people did the pilgrimage on foot. Along the main arteries we had roads for one way traffic. Today, there is an attempt to make 4 lane highways in the mountains. Highways means landslides as mountain slopes are dynamited, and the rubble is thrown down the slope. Landslides create slope instability, with more boulders



Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) personnel, in uniform, help stranded pilgrims on a makeshift bridge cross a stream of gushing floodwater at Govind Ghati, in Chamoli district, in northern Indian state of Uttarakhand, India, Friday, June 21, 2013. (Image: mnpprodpublic.s3.amazonaws.com)

and debris causing destruction of forests and fields. Less space is left for water, rivers flood more easily. And instead of reaching faster, pilgrims and local people face road blocks for days on end due to landslides. Pilgrim tourism needs to be "slow" tourism to respect the sacredness and fragility of the Himalaya, like there is Slow Food and Slow Money.

40 years ago I joined the Chipko movement as a volunteer.

The women led Chipko movement started after the 1972 Alaknanda disaster, caused by logging in the Alaknanda valley.

Women connected the deforestation to landslides and flooding. As they pointed out, the primary products of the forest were not timber and revenue, but soil and water. Forests left standing to protect the fragile Himalayan slopes, provide more to the economy than when they are extracted as dead timber.

It took the 1978 Uttarkashi disaster for the Government to recognize that the women were right. When the government had to spend on flood relief was much more than the revenues they were getting through timber extraction.

In 1981, in response to the Chipko movement, logging was banned above 1000 km in the Garhwal Himalaya. Today Government policy recognizes that forestry in the fragile Himalaya has to be Conservation forestry which maximizes the ecological services of the forest in protecting, not extractive forestry.

In 1983, the Supreme court stopped limestone mining in Doon Valley, recognizing that the limestone left in the mountains, contributed more to the economy than the lime toned extracted through mining.

The 2013 disaster should wake us up to the social, ecological and economic

costs of destructive policies that have devastated our fragile and beautiful mountain ecosystems. The Himalaya are the youngest mountain system in the world. They cannot bear the violence of deforestation and dam building. They need gentleness and respect.

Chipko shook our policy makers out of their slumber that allowed them to think of forests as timber mines, and woke them to the ecological functions of the forests in the catchments of our rivers. The current disaster should shake them out of the slumber that allows them to see rivers as 20,000 Mega watt of hydro power, and realize that when respected our rivers are rivers of life, and when violated, they can become rivers of death.

#### Appendix: Dams on the Ganga System

Among 37 hydroelectric projects on the Alaknanda power project on river Alaknanda in Srinagar being constructed by GVK, a South Indian Corporation other dams proposed on the Alaknanda - Mandakini rivers are:

1. Alaknanda (Badrinath) (300 MW)
2. Bagoli (72 MW)
3. Bowla Nandprayag (132 MW)
4. Chuni Senu (24 MW)
5. Deodi (60 MW)
6. Devsari (255 MW)
7. Gauribund (18.6 MW)
8. Gohana Tal (60 MW)
9. JalamTameh (60 MW)
10. Kalnaprayag (160 MW)
11. Lakshmganga (4.4 MW)
12. Lata Tapovan (310 MW)
13. Maleri Jalam (55 MW)
14. Nand Prayag Langasn (141 MW)
15. Padli dam (27 MW)
16. PhataBying (108 MW)
17. Rambara (24 MW)
18. Rishiganga I (70 MW)
19. Rishiganga II (35 MW)
20. Simgoli Bhatwari (99 MW)
21. TamakLata (280 MW)
22. Urgam II (3.8 MW)
23. Utyasu Dam (860 MW)
24. Vishnugad Pipalkata (444 MW)

(Ref. *Hydro electric projects on Alaknanda River Basin by South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People* [www.sandrp.in](http://www.sandrp.in))

The 99 MW power project at Singoli - Bhatwari near Augustmuni, being constructed by Larson & Toubro, which will affect 60 villages is one of the 12 Hydro electric projects all coming up on the Mandakini. My colleague and local coordinator of Navdanya Chandrashekhar Bhatt has been part of the movement resisting the 13 project. In 2008, our teacher and friend, Dr. G D. Aggarwal, a former Professor of I.I.T. Kanpur where I attended summer schools as a Physics student, undertook a fast into death at the age of 76 to stop the string of dams built on the Bkaguella including the 600 MW Loharinagpala being built by Natural Thermal Power Corporation.

The Ganga would be put into a 17 Km tunnel to generate electricity. Other dams on the Bhagirathi include the 480 MW Pala Maneri, 381 MW Bharan Ghati. (Ref. <http://www.asiantribune.com>)

Projects under construction on the Bhagirathi include:

1. Loharinag Pele (600 MW)
2. Kateshwar (400 MW)
3. Kotli Bhel IA (195 MW)
4. Kotli Bhel IB (320 MW)
5. Kotli Bhel II (530 MW)
6. Maneu Bheli II (304 MW)
7. Pala Maneri I (480 MW)

Projects planned on Bhagirathi and Bhulagana:

1. Bhaironghati I (380 MW)
2. Bhaironghati II (65 MW)
3. Bhilangana I (22.5 MW)
4. Bhilangana II (11 MW)
5. Gangotri (55 MW)
6. Harsil (210 MW)
7. Jadhganga (50 MW)
8. Karmoli (140 MW)
9. Tehri PSS (1000 MW)

Projects that are under operation are:

- Maneri Bhali I (90 MW)  
Tehri (1000 MW)

(Ref. "The Disappearing Ganga: Is there any hope for this River" in *Dams, Rivers, People SANDRP, August 2008.*) ■

- Dr. Vandana Shiva

Navdanya/Research Foundation for Science Technology and Ecology  
(written on June 24, 2013)

# Enterprise Development: And Safer Way in Uttarakhand?

More and more attention is being given to enterprise development in conflict and crisis areas worldwide. But is this development protected from disaster risks? And this is not always clear. The floods in Uttarakhand have destroyed large number of small and local enterprise – those related to tourism we hear in our media reports but those not related to tourism we do not. What will work in reviving these small and medium economic enterprise of the region? There are three areas available for action.



Image: www.asianlite.com

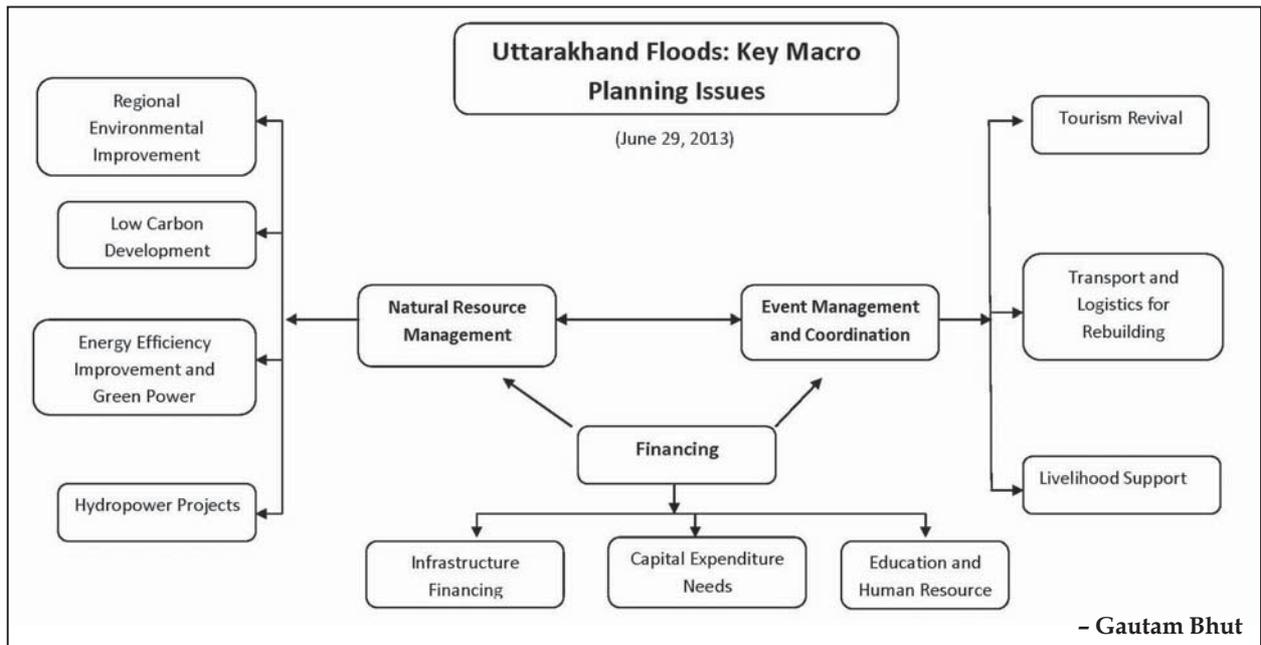
- a) It is found that cash transfer is one way to reach out to enterprise with cash incentives to take both, mitigation and preparedness measures. The need for cash can often be estimated with self assessment tools that are now available with organizations such as CDKN.
- b) The enterprise in food industry or food trade are more vulnerable to disaster risks but are also more likely to bounce

- back and restore food security in the local area. They not only offer food and food items but also revive and open up local food markets. Experience of Save the Children in Odisha in 2010 floods is encouraging.
- c) Role of Red Cross has been a key to responding to disasters in the past and in its response to Uttarakhand flood damage response Red Cross has made

effort to play an active role. This role is system wide and bottom up linking government and NGO at local level. Red Cross support to local enterprise development will be so timely and effective in Uttarakhand.

The above three action areas are a starting point. What is needed is finding ways for safer enterprise development in Uttarakhand. ■

- Khyati Halani



- Gautam Bhut

# Early Warning and Alert Systems

During major incidents such as acts of terror, natural or man-made catastrophes, the population is exposed and vulnerable. In such situations, warning the citizens and alerting the first responders is of utmost importance to reduce the risk of people from being harmed, injured or killed. Through prompt, targeted and informative warnings – before, during and after emergency situations – people can take precautions and protect themselves and their loved ones.

"Warning and information are just as important as food and water before, during and after the occurrence of an emergency situation." (Red Cross, World Disaster Report).

A system designed for this purpose MUST WORK during emergency situations when human lives may be at risk. It should be able to try to alert the population through multiple

communication channels (mobile phones, TV, radio etc). The communication that needs to be sent out to all people in a selected area, should not get stuck in the congestion of communication channels.

#### Requirements:

- Alert all people in a certain area about situations, where they are in danger.
- Respond to requests for help from the people in a selected area, in times of crisis.
- Improve response time for emergency handling.
- Better co-ordination amongst first responder groups.
- Provide efficient tools to the emergency management personnel.

#### UMS Solution Overview

The UMS solution consists of four broad components. One can pick and

choose from these as per requirements of the specific scenario.

- **Population Alert System (PAS)** - Alert all people in a certain geographical area with customized messages.
- **Location Based Alert System (LBAS)** - Alert mobile subscribers in an area by prioritizing them over other telecom network traffic.
- **Group Alert System (GAS)** - Alert a pre-defined group of people (e.g. list of first responders) on their mobile or fixed phones thru voice/sms messages and other channels.
- **Traveler Alert System (TAS)** - Alert all travellers in one or several locations with customized alerts on their mobile devices.
- **Population Alert and Risk Management (PARM)** - Pre-define risk scenarios for



Figure 1 Emergency Warning System

triggering even faster emergency responses.

**PAS (Population Alert System)** of UMS, is a centralized & comprehensive emergency alert system with a GIS based user interface. This enables the emergency authorities to simply select or draw the area to be alerted on a digital map. The system will immediately identify all cell phones - including those of visitors - present within the affected area in real time and alert them thru SMS. This is made possible through some unique technologies developed by UMS AS.

PAS provides detailed logistic information as well to the user, such as number of people within the affected area. It can identify various nationalities and configures the emergency messages accordingly. The system can also monitor and locate those citizens who respond to the alert message and request help. It gives an immediate overview of affected population across multiple telecom operators, even before sending messages. This feature gives the authorities a real-time and

actionable summary of the situation.

**LBAS (Location Based Alert System):** In an emergency, LBAS is the only proven technology that ensures alert messages reach their intended mobile subscribers in an area by prioritizing them over any other communication traffic of the telecom provider. It has capabilities to even halt non-essential traffic, in/out of the affected area, thus preventing wireless network congestion.

**GAS (Group Alert System):** Web based system for alerting pre-identified individuals by simply iterating through a group database - irrespective of their geographical location - through different channels. Eg. a group of flood relief responders.

**TAS (Traveller Alert System)** is a system for localizing and communicating thru voice/SMS with national citizens traveling abroad, based on the same reliable, flexible and scalable platform as PAS and LBAS.

**PARM (Population Alert and Risk Management):** Through risk

assessment, risk objects and scenarios are identified. This makes planning for different kind of incidents and hazards possible.

#### **ABOUT UMS**

UMS was founded in 1997 and is a pioneer and leader in the development of advanced critical messaging systems. UMS is a member of the UNISDR (United Nations - International Strategy for Disaster Reduction) partnership program. UMS has several patents and patent applications for some innovative technologies to locate & alert people and also to handle congestion in telecom networks.

UMS is today the leading company of automated emergency warning and notification services in the Scandinavian countries. UMS has offices in Norway, Sweden, Denmark and India. It also has operations in other countries in Europe, Asia and Latin America. UMS has more real life implementations than any other organization worldwide. ■

- **Saket Jha**, Director,  
Special projects, Unified Messaging  
Systems and Services Pvt Ltd.,  
Bangalore

#### **EVENT**

## **Global South-South Development Expo 2013**

For the first time since its inception, this year's annual Global South-South Development Expo will be held in the South.

The Expo will bring together high-level policymakers, solution providers, solution seekers and solution supporters at UNEP's Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, from 28 October-1 November. It will showcase and exchange scalable, replicable and innovative South-South development solutions that have significant development impact on-the-ground.

Under the overarching theme, Building Inclusive Green Economies:

South-South Cooperation for Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication, the GSSD Expo 2013 will be an occasion to demonstrate the global collective response to relevant provisions of the Rio+20 Outcome and its capacity to facilitate South-South Cooperation and an exchange of experiences on green economies.

The five-day event includes a Leadership Round Table which will be an interactive dialogue on critical themes of development and a series of "Solution Exchange Forums" covering building inclusive green economies, clean technology and

green industry, agriculture and food security, sustainable development and decent work, ICT, environment, women and health, sustainable development and poverty eradication.

Throughout the Expo, a pavilion will host an exhibition space for a marketplace of solutions that will bring together the providers, seekers and supporters.

For more information about the Global South-South Development Expo: <http://ssc.undp.org/content/ssc/services/expo/2013.html> ■

(Source: <http://www.unep.org/south-south-cooperation/GSSD/>)

## NSET Completes 20 Years of Action

*We need to scale up and institutionalize our programs and approaches. We have to collectively decide about the simplification of technology and scientific approaches and this requires the academia and the implementers to work together. We have to have a conducive policy that is comprehensive and there should be a common vision of the government and all the stakeholders. Hence, promoting Partnership among stakeholders, getting everybody engaged, with a focus on the private sector businesses who have so far been somehow left out – should be the strategy, stressed Mr. Amod Mani Dixit, Executive Director, NSET.*

National Society for Earthquake Technology – Nepal (NSET) has completed 20 Years of Action towards enhancing the seismic safety of Nepal and the region. NSET celebrated its anniversary as 'A day to reaffirm the Commitments to Earthquake Safety' at its premises on Tuesday, June 18, 2013 amidst the gracious presence of distinguished personalities from various walks of life in Nepal and at large the representatives from various NSET partners: Government Agencies, NGOs, INGOs, Community Representatives, Academia, Professional Societies, Private Sectors Institutions, Media as well as NSET family members.

NSET was founded by a meeting of professionals on June 18, 1993 with the vision to make "Earthquake Safe Communities in Nepal by 2020". NSET is a multi-disciplinary professional society registered with the Government of Nepal as a Non-Government Organization in 1994. Membership of the Society comprises professional engineers, architects, scientists and others seriously interested in earthquake phenomena



NSET Group singing national anthem.

or in the reduction of the effects of earthquakes.

This year's celebration was started with the national anthem recited by NSET Cultural Group.

Mr. Shree Ram Singh Basnet, Chief Editor of National News Agency of Nepal and Executive Committee Member of NSET welcomed all the guests and highlighted that the gathering was mainly to review the past and get guidance for future endeavors. He further mentioned that NSET has been able to achieve much in terms of initiating and institutionalizing earthquake risk management efforts but the need is huge, those efforts need to be strengthened and for that collective and collaborative efforts are the very much desired.

Mr. Amod Mani Dixit, Executive Director of NSET in his statement highlighted the progress and ongoing activities of NSET. He further urged that without the participation of all

the stakeholders, including private sector, the overall disaster risk reduction process is not possible.

On the occasion "Safer Society", the Annual Report of NSET 2013 was revealed by Mr. Shiva Bahadur Pradhanang, President of NSET.

Further on the occasion, NSET honored the country's renowned Senior Musician Mr. Ambar Gurung for his precious contribution in composing music to the lyrics on Earthquake Resilience written by National Poet Mr. Madhav Prasad Ghimire upon request from NSET.

Mr. Amod Dixit, Executive Director of NSET felicitated him and handed over the 'Plaque of Appreciation'. The earthquake song recorded by his troupe has been instrumental in raising awareness on earthquake risk and need for preparedness in the schools as well as communities at large.

Later as an honor to the respected composer, NSET cultural group sang

Image: NSET, Nepal

the song in front of the guests gathered in the NSET Day Celebrations. NSET troupe also performed an earthquake preparedness dance act as the theme performance.

Among from the distinguished guests, Mr. Tulsi Diwas, Senior Poet Laureate; Mr. Umesh Dhakal, Executive Director of Nepal Red-Cross Society and Mr. Madhu Sudan

Acharya, First Vice President of NATTA gave their remarks appreciating the collaborative works done by NSET and their respective organizations towards earthquake risk reduction.

As a concluding remark of the formal program, Mr. Shiva B Pradhanang, President of NSET extended gratitude to all the national and international partners for their continuous support

in the quest to make communities safer. The program was concluded with an appeal to everybody for their guidance and support towards NSET's quest to serve the nation.

The formal program was facilitated by Mr. Surya Narayan Shrestha, Deputy Executive Director of NSET. ■

- **Khadga Sen Oli**, Advocacy and Outreach Manager, National Society for Earthquake Technology (NSET), Nepal

## MAN-MADE DISASTER

# Man-made Reasons for Uttarakhand Floods: An Epic Tragedy in the Land of the Gods

The Indian state of Uttarakhand, referred to as the Land of Gods has witnessed a great human tragedy. Struck hard by heavy torrential rains brought in the wake of the monsoons, the state of Uttarakhand has experienced massive flooding and concomitant landslides. These have caused death and destruction on an unprecedented scale. While the rescue work is still ongoing, media reports confirm that there have been 60 casualties and estimate that 60,000 people are still stranded.



Image: www.asianlite.com

The ostensible cause of this catastrophe may be attributed to nature but several experts and academicians from the fields of environmental sciences and disaster management hold man-made factors equally culpable. It has come to be recognized that the scale of devastation has been escalated by the indiscriminate construction of roads to accommodate ever increasing demands of religious tourism and the unabated expansion of hydro-power projects.

The local people too, claim that the increased frequency of landslides in

the state can be attributed to the sharp rise of roads being constructed and the intensity of traffic on these newly constructed roads. Data with the Uttarakhand State Transport Department confirms this. In 2005-06 there were 4000 vehicles registered in the state. This figure increased by more than 1000 percent when in 2012-13 the number of registered vehicles went up to 40,000.

This catastrophe has some very important lessons to offer to the authorities. Experts aver that the Himalayas are a young mountain

range and they can only remain stable (read not exposed to the risk of landslides) if they are not tampered with indiscriminate construction of roads. There is thus, an urgent need to evolve a better method of road construction that does not imperil the safety of the people in the hill state. It is only through the adoption of these measures that such disasters can be prevented in future. ■

- **Kshitij Gupta**

(Source: Man-made reasons for Uttarakhand disaster <http://www.downtoearth.org.in/content/man-made-reasons-uttarakhand-disaster>)

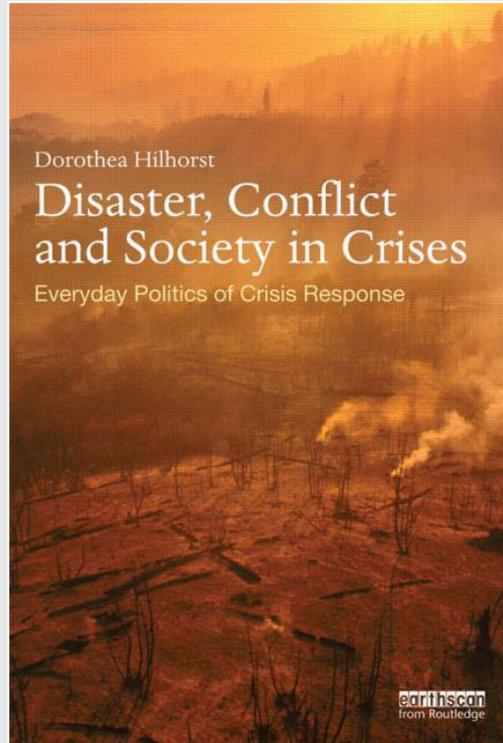
KNOWLEDGE PRODUCT

## Disaster, Conflict and Society in Crises: Everyday Politics of Crisis Response

**D**isaster, Conflict and Society in Crises: Everyday Politics of Crisis Response Consonance between policy and practice is imperative in the field of humanitarian action. Humanitarian crises that emanate from natural disasters, political anarchy or conflict need interventions on a war like footing to restore the normal order of things. There is an underlying need to have institutional responses to these emergencies that will help in mitigation of the damage caused. In this respect, there ought to be greater degree of alignment between policy and practice.

Dorothea Hilhorst in her new book called, 'Disaster, Conflict and Society in Crises: Everyday Politics of Crisis Response' provides an overview of the responses to disasters in terms of international policies and local responses. This book is a seminal work that gives rich insights into the ways structures and policies are framed to cope up with disaster and conflict situations.

This book gives students and researchers in humanitarian studies, disaster studies, conflict and peace studies as well as humanitarian and military practitioners an invaluable wealth of case studies and unique political science analysis of the humanitarian studies field. ■



For more: <http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415640824/>

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