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Some thoughts on Rebuilding Kerala Initiative submitted to the Working Group Meeting
organised by Communication with Communities
25th January 2019

Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR):

DRR needs to be an active component of the Rebuild Kerala Initiative. The State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) has to be further energised and capacitated to understand and undertake studies to assess the potential for likely occurrences of various disasters to which the State is vulnerable and formulate and implement corresponding disaster mitigation and management plans. For example, following the lessons learned from the recent devasting floods, the SDMA may, among other things, ensure that appropriate administrative and institutional mechanisms are in place to:

    (a) formulate and implement an integrated water management plan and scientific system of dam and reservoir management

    (b) regulate and control quarrying, mining and constructions in vulnerable areas as well as deforestation

    (c) periodic maintenance and quality assurance of roads, bridges and other public sector assets vulnerable to flooding

    (d) develop contemporary forecasting methods and early warning systems backed by cutting-edge technology, particularly IT, ensuring responsive and fail-safe communication. To cite an example:

Government of India through the Central Water Commission has partnered with Google to develop flood forecasting models. Google, a global leader in Artificial Intelligence, develops complex algorithms and generates hundreds of thousands of simulations to study the occurrence and pattern of flooding with a view to predicting its coverage and intensity. Based on analysis of historical event data, rain fall, river level readings, terrain and elevation measurements, and other relevant data for a region(s), complex models are applied to provide early warning signs as well as the likely severity of floods. The results are disseminated through mass communication media including mobile phones sufficiently in advance to prepare the people of impending floods, the likely areas to be affected and their intensity. With Google maps and Google Earth, such predictions can be made not only for large areas like districts, panchayats or wards, but has the potential to make predictions even at the level of households and individual public infrastructure assets. In developed world, models of less complexity are selectively used to assess the impact of disasters at macro and micro-level, especially to estimate damages and to pay insurance claims. Kerala with its vast scientific and research institutional capacity along with skilled human resources could avail such opportunities to assume a leadership role in this area provided pro-active, concerted and consistent efforts are made.

Rebuild Kerala Initiative (RKI) – Issues of Governance

Financial Envelop:
It is not clear whether the government has a final estimate of the resources needed to undertake and implement the plan and the likely spatial, temporal and sector time-frame

supported by log-frame analysis to implement such a plan. As per the RKI, Kerala will need about Rs.26,000 crores for recovery and reconstruction which was further revised by adding the cost of restoring livelihoods.

Sectoral classification:	*(Rs. Crores)*	
1. Roads and transportation	10,046	
2. Housing	5,443	
3. Agriculture, fisheries and livestock		4,498
4. Employment and livelihood		3,896
5. Other infrastructure	2,446	
6. Irrigation	1,483	
7. Water and sanitation	1,331	
Total	**29,143**	

The estimates made by various agencies based on expert assessments, sample surveys and to some extent perceptions are justified as part of their initial dimensional analysis of the range of damages caused by floods. But they should be converging to a realistic estimate following the detailed grassroot level assessments currently undertaken and completed or under completion. Such statistics may include methodological details, coverage and limitations highlighting the type and magnitudes of the damage, resources locally or otherwise available and additional resources needed. The household and community level damages under sectors 2, 3 and 4 may be suitably classified by socially disadvantaged and marginalized groups and made public by disseminating them at the level of ward and panchayat/municipality aggregating upwards to districts and state. This would bring better transparency and greater credibility to need assessments and resources needed to address them.

Local governance: The Rebuilding Kerala Initiative provides immense opportunities to strengthen local governance in terms of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and community based organizations. The grassroot level assessments need to be demand driven with the active participation of communities and PRIs and to some extent at least the processes should encompass their ownership to utilize, maintain and sustain the assets and facilities being restored at household and community level. These institutions would have to assume a leadership role in the implementation of projects and programmes arising from the needs assessment and consistent with the RKI strategy.

Accountability: Broad accountability goes beyond the financial accountability to the affected population (AAPs). While AAPs is of paramount importance, broad accountability promotes an organisational and institutional culture that brings financial and results-based accounting at all levels including accountability to donors. Social auditing is globally accepted as a good practice for transparency and accountability.

Good Governance: Broadly speaking, RKI is an opportunity to promote good governance for PRIs and the state government. Transparency, accountability, integrity, results orientation, objectivity, cost-effectiveness, inbuilt checks-and-balances are the major pillars of Good Governance. These pillars are mutually reinforcing and as such weakening any one or more will gradually erode the rest.

Prioritization: *"Don't let the perfect to be the enemy of good"*. With a disaster of this magnitude, it is unrealistic to wait for the cash box to be filled instantaneously or in the immediate future and then o start the rebuilding efforts on a large scale and holistically. Such a strategy may have some merits in terms of economies of scale, efficiency and effectiveness.

However, under the current scenario, it seems prudent to formulate realistic and fundable projects and programmes consistent with RKI strategy and submit them to targeted donors for financing and/or implementation following formal procedures. Some of them could also be published (for example through websites) for potential donors who may like to finance and/undertake the implementation of some of them according to their area of interest. Some of the NGOs and CSOs might also pursue and seek funding for projects and programmes of their interest from donors they are acquainted with. Meanwhile, currently available resources and the resources in the pipeline and potential resources such as the Corporate Responsibility Fund could be effectively and progressively utilized to implement projects and programmes following established priorities.

Re-establishment of livelihoods

A glaring omission seems to be the absence of published data on the damages and losses of individual households and their sources such as houses and household amenities, agriculture, livestock, small business, tools and appliances at the grassroot level. Ideally, such an assessment would have followed a participatory approach placing the communities and the LSG institutions at the forefront with the active participation of Gram Sabha, CSOs and community volunteers leading to a transparent and accountable process with adequate checks and balances in place. They should take into account the degree of vulnerability of the affected households, particularly damages to their assets and losses to their livelihood and classify them accordingly for priority intervention in a timebound manner, especially by interested development partners.

The first and the foremost concern may be to restore the assets and properties of the most vulnerable households and sustain their livelihoods with minimum interruptions.

A financial model to address natural disasters:
CRED is currently working on the basic components of a financing model to address and respond to disasters. We hope to come out with a concept paper soon.

<p align="center">Prepared by Dr. KNS Nair</p>

Comments and suggestions may be forwarded to:

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