

# FLOODS IN UTTARAKHAND: A NEW RELIEF DEAL

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Disaster Management Community of  
UN Solution Exchange (India)



All India Disaster  
Mitigation Institute

*with*

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July 2013  
*Experience Learning Series 60*



# Floods in Uttarakhand: A New Relief Deal

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Title: Floods in Uttarakhand: A New Relief Deal

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Cover page photo source: The Deccan Chronicle with thanks

<http://www.deccanchronicle.com/130628/news-current-affairs/gallery/uttarakhand-odd-pics>

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## Acknowledgement

The overarching purpose of this Experience Learning Series (ELS) is to present a compelling case for a new deal in relief in the aftermath of disaster. This ELS has been the logical culmination of the work done by the All India Disaster Mitigation Institute (AIDMI) in the field of disaster risk reduction and the experiences gained from this work as well as the leading members of Solution Exchange who have remarkable insight and experience in reducing risk and humanitarian action in India.. Thus, the contribution of all the team members of AIDMI and the members of UN Solution Exchange in the completion of this has been immense. In particular, Mehul Pandya, Hui-Chi Goh, Kshitij Gupta and Manish Patel of AIDMI and Rani Sahay of Solution Exchange facilitated the Process. G. Padmanabhan of UNDP and Mihir R. Bhatt of AIDMI steered the facilitation.

This Experience Learning Series is a collective contribution to the ongoing efforts of:

1. World Bank
2. Asian Development Bank
3. Government of India
4. Government of Uttarakhand
5. United Nations System
6. Non-Government Organizations

The purpose of this ELS is to contribute to India's ongoing efforts to better reach out to its citizens and make their lives safer and accelerate their economic growth. Equally important is the purpose to draw from the collective wisdom and insights of individuals and institutions from a diverse background and context. This ELS also consists of an appendix which contains additional suggestions for making this "New Relief Deal" in Uttarakhand more robust. These comments and suggestions as said have come from very reputed and distinguished academics and practitioners in the sphere of disaster management. AIDMI would like to extend its gratitude to all these experts who were kind enough to enrich this ELS by providing their profound insights. The names of these academics/practitioners have been given in the following table:

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Apart from the contributors who have directly enriched this ELS, AIDMI and Solution Exchange also wishes to extend its gratitude to many people who have been kind enough to share their views on the Uttarakhand disaster and have thus shaped this ELS. They include:

1. Shashidhar Reddy, National Disaster Management Authority
2. Ram Chandra Guha, Prominent Historian
3. Dr. T. Nandkumar, National Disaster Management Authority
4. Ray Kancharla, Save the Children
5. Ambika Prasad, United Nations Development Programme
6. Dr. Sumana Bhattacharya, Intercooperation
7. Hina Lotia, Leadership for Environment and Development
8. Vishal Pathak, All India Disaster Mitigation Institute
9. Vandana Chauhan, All India Disaster Mitigation Institute
10. Anupam Mishra, Gandhi Peace Foundation
11. G. Padmanabhan, United Nations Development Programme
12. Rani Sahay, Solution Exchange
13. Omprakash Bhatt, Dasholi Gram Swarajya Mandal
14. Shri Sanjaya Agarwal, Ministry of Home Affairs
15. Amar Jyoti Nayak, Action Aid
16. Shri P. Dhar Chakrabarti
17. Dr. Krishna Vatsa, United Nations Development Programme

This Experience Learning Series (ELS) is dedicated to the enduring memory of the victims of the tragedy in Uttarakhand and their bereaved families.



## A. Introduction

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<sup>2</sup>. Tens of thousands of people have lost homes and livelihood<sup>3</sup> and losses estimated to be above Rs. 3,000 crore<sup>4</sup>. With potable water almost non-existent, hundreds of people from neighbouring villages have complained of fever and diarrhoea<sup>5</sup>. Heroic efforts of Indian Armed Forces and members of National Disaster Management Force to rescue lives by reaching out continue to seem inadequate. It is therefore not too early to start thinking about the nature and extent of relief and political economy surrounding it.

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 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 prominent and aspiring national and state leaders. 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.

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<sup>1</sup>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)

<sup>2</sup> Uttarakhand: 5,000 feared killed, 19,000 still stranded, Jun 23, 2013, 09.33PM IST  
[http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-06-23/india/40146595\\_1\\_kedarnath-gaurikund-badrinath](http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-06-23/india/40146595_1_kedarnath-gaurikund-badrinath)

<sup>3</sup>We must learn from the Uttarakhand disaster, By [Business Standard](http://www.business-standard.com), 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>

<sup>4</sup>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>

<sup>5</sup>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>

## **B. Cash Transfers: An Emerging Area for Humanitarian Action**

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 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.

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

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>6</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.

### **C. The Recovery: Not Re-building Risk but Building Back a More Resilient Uttarakhand**

The recent disaster of floods in Uttarakhand 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>7</sup>. The Statement on the Uttarakhand Catastrophe by India Climate Justice<sup>8</sup>, endorsed by number of organisations, demand action on a number of grounds and offers valuable

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<sup>6</sup>Uttarakhand floods: Deconstructing a disaster, MayankAggrawal, 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>

<sup>7</sup>Available at [http://www.uttarakhandforest.org/Data/SC\\_Revised\\_UAPCC\\_27june12.pdf](http://www.uttarakhandforest.org/Data/SC_Revised_UAPCC_27june12.pdf)

<sup>8</sup>[Statement on Uttarakhand Catastrophe by India Climate Justice, Greg Laden's Blog, Posted by Greg Laden on June 25, 2013.](http://www.uttarakhandforest.org/Data/SC_Revised_UAPCC_27june12.pdf) <http://scienceblogs.com/gregladen/2013/06/25/statement-on-uttarakhand-catastrophe-by-india-climate-justice/>

suggestions for integrating adaptation measures into relief and risk reduction agendas. It demands:

- 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 a 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.

#### **D. Areas of Intervention: Opportunities to Build Back a More Resilient Uttarakhand**

The devastation wrecked by the floods and consequent landslides in Uttarakhand provide a unique opportunity to rebuild the state in a more risk averse and resilient manner. There are several sectors that need to completely restructure themselves to achieve this resilience. 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>9</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 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

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<sup>9</sup>Shishir Prashant | 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)

missing persons, the LIC will now make it easier from Uttarakhand calamity victims to obtain payment<sup>10</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 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.

## **E. A New Deal: A New Hope**

A new relief deal that addresses all the aforementioned issues 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>11</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>12</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>13</sup>. But urgency must not kill the need to better plan and ponder strategic actions in Uttarakhand.

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

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<sup>10</sup>Uttarakhand disaster: LIC asked to relax claim norms, [PTI](http://businessToday.intoday.in/story/uttarakhand-disaster-lic-asked-to-relax-claim-norms/1/196168.html) New Delhi Last Updated: June 25, 2013 | 23:01 IST, <http://businessToday.intoday.in/story/uttarakhand-disaster-lic-asked-to-relax-claim-norms/1/196168.html>

<sup>11</sup>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>

<sup>12</sup>'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)

<sup>13</sup>Uttarakhand Flood Situation is Catastrophic; Large Dams Partially to Blame Says ActionAid, [http://www.webwire.com/ViewPressRel.asp?aid=176347#.Uc0QR\\_Wqnps](http://www.webwire.com/ViewPressRel.asp?aid=176347#.Uc0QR_Wqnps)

performance of National Disaster Management Authority is dependent on what the State Disaster Management Authorities are capable of doing. In its performance audit report of 2013<sup>14</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>15</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>16</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?

Answers to these uncomfortable questions can only be found in the relief measures that will be taken in the months following this tragedy. However, disguised opportunity is the inevitable concomitant of any crisis. As the entire country bemoans the loss of thousands of lives in the recent floods in Uttarakhand, a silver lining has emerged to this dark cloud as well. After having being exposed to the unforgiving ravages of nature, Uttarakhand now has an opportunity to start anew with an approach that will be effective and efficient in combating any such future contingencies. In this respect, the prime Minister’s 1000 crore relief package seems to be timely.

This presents the opportunity of providing relief through direct cash transfer. The greatest advantage of the cash transfer approach is that it accomplishes the twin goals of protecting living standards and promoting wealth creation. The following suggestions can make the ‘New Relief Deal in Uttarakhand more robust:

## **1. Cash Transfer**

In order to make the cash transfers work in Uttarakhand in the recovery efforts, the concept of conditional cash transfers can be piloted. Conditional cash transfers basically entail the important aspect of accountability into them. This implies that the families that have received cash from the authorities as relief need to show that this financial help is being put to proper use. This can be proved through checking enrolments at schools, the purchase receipts of basic necessities, etc. Essentially, a conditional cash transfer scheme

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<sup>14</sup>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)

<sup>15</sup> 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>

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



is an exercise to plug all the leakages from an otherwise watertight system by ensuring accountability.<sup>17</sup>

## **2. Gender Sensitive Design of Cash Transfer**

There is increasing evidence from the development interventions in Africa and South-Asia that a gender sensitive cash transfer scheme that takes into consideration the needs and interests of women lead to women empowerment. A gender sensitive design for cash transfers would ensure the increase in the role, responsibility and in turn respect for women in households and communities. For, such a design would be able to address the special needs of girls and women during and after contingencies. It is well known that because of the interplay of various biological and sociological factors, women bear a greater brunt of the consequences of disasters as compared to their male counterparts. For instance, adolescent girls are always vulnerable to physical and sexual abuse in relief camps post a disaster event<sup>18</sup>. Further, a gender sensitive design for relief can foster the leadership abilities of women at all levels across several other development and humanitarian interventions. All in all, gender sensitive cash transfer can be a potent tool for achieving the enshrined goal of women empowerment in the post disaster rehabilitation phase in Uttarakhand.<sup>19</sup>

## **3. Robust Monitoring and Evaluation Structure**

Sine this concept of direct cash transfer for relief is being piloted, therefore it behooves to have robust monitoring and evaluation structure for the same to gauge at its effectiveness and efficiency. The best way to ensure a complete transparency of the monitoring and evaluation process is to rope in the support of civil society organizations that could scrutinize the progress of this new relief deal. The greatest advantage of this approach would be to offer widespread credibility to the new relief deal by making the efforts subsumed in it open to public scrutiny. Another advantage of this monitoring and evaluation structure will be that it will help in the identification of what measures work and what don't. Taking that into consideration, the best practices in the field of cash transfer to disaster victims could be evolved to serve as guidelines for similar future endeavours. In addition to this, a concerted mechanism of quality service and benchmarking would also evolve through this monitoring and evaluation structure.

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<sup>17</sup> The Economic Times [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-12-12/news/35773812\\_1\\_direct-cash-transfer-conditional-cash-poor-families](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-12-12/news/35773812_1_direct-cash-transfer-conditional-cash-poor-families)

<sup>18</sup> How to take care of adolescent girls in Haiti during the Resettlement <http://www.cgdev.org/blog/mind-girls-how-take-care-adolescent-girls-haiti-during-resettlement>

<sup>19</sup> DFID Cash transfers Literature Review <http://r4d.dfid.gov.uk/PDF/Articles/cash-transfers-literature-review.pdf>



#### **4. The Irreparable loss caused by Landslides**

Landslides are the only disaster in which affected communities lose land and have virtually nothing to return to after the disaster, spawning a generation of landslide refugees who have lost everything including their land and livelihoods (for rural areas). Hence there is a necessity to include compensation of land lost to slides in the relief policy and make it applicable to all mountainous areas. This is essential to make the relief more effective.

#### **5. The need for trained State Disaster Response Force**

The efforts of the armed forces of the country in saving lives in Uttarakhand have been nothing short of heroic. However, the rising frequency of disasters points to the disconcerting fact that had there been another disaster in another part of the country then the effectiveness of the armed forces in minimizing losses to life might be considerably less.

In such a scenario, the relief efforts can only be made robust and effective by having a suitably equipped and properly trained State Disaster Response Force. The greatest advantage of SDRF would be that since it is composed of locals, an SDRF will be intimately familiar with the terrain, community and the culture of the area. This familiarity would increase the efficiency of the SDRF in rescue operations.

Needless to say that in order to have a properly prepared and fully equipped State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), consultation with the armed forces of the nation is imperative. As was evidenced in the immediate aftermath of the disaster in Uttarakhand, the armed forces have made heroic efforts to rescue the stranded victims. All these experiences can go a long way in preparing the SDRFs for impending disasters.

#### **6. Urgent Need for Capacity Raising of the Community**

The communities in Uttarakhand, even after the loss, are still willing and capable to plan and work out their own recovery. Their capacities may need strengthening. The community remains the weakest link in all disasters and there is a necessity to train and equip young volunteers so that in the eventuality of roads being destroyed or adverse weather hampering air operations (as was the case both in North Sikkim, after the quake and recently in Uttarakhand), people in remote areas may still survive till help reaches. This calls for a massive capacity building exercise at the community level that can make prepare the community to face any contingency.

## 7. Tailor New Development Approaches to the Local Context

There is an urgent need to study, specify and strictly implement what exactly 'new ways of development, development that is protected from disaster risk, development that is climate smart—green and clean—in the long run' means in the Himalayan region. A knee-jerk reaction as is being seen in the aftermath of this horrific tragedy may soon be forgotten if the next two or three years are disaster free.

An important intervention that can be part of a locally suited post disaster rehabilitation strategy is the construction of roads in Uttarakhand. Since roads increase the vulnerability of landslides, therefore their construction should be meticulously scrutinized by the state government. Similarly, hydro-electric dams have been held culpable by environmentalists for the devastation in Uttarakhand<sup>20</sup>. Therefore, a new approach should modulate the construction of hydroelectric dams in Uttarakhand too.

Similarly, a special focus on the tourists and pilgrims thronging to the state of Uttarakhand every year should be part of the relief strategy. In addition to this, since Uttarakhand has witnessed a lot of labour migration to other states, therefore the needs of these migrant labourers and their families should be addressed in the new relief deal.

## 8. The Need for Urgency

The floods in Uttarakhand have exposed deep fault lines within the disaster management apparatus of the country. The utter inadequacy of the rescue efforts is state are made ostensible by the plight of the blighted victims. The government is now contemplating on handing over the rehabilitation efforts to central ministries<sup>21</sup>. This highlights the urgency with which the problem ought to be dealt with. In the light of these glaring shortcomings in the strategy employed to deal with this disaster, concerted efforts in terms of time, money and manpower need to be invested in the following areas<sup>22</sup>:

1. Detailed hazard zonation for whole Indian Himalayan region, in Uttarakhand on priority,
2. Developing a system that makes availability and accessibility of robust scientific data on various hazard related aspects,
3. An action oriented disaster network that quickly acts when disaster strikes on rescue and rehabilitation aspects,
4. Developing and placing long term monitoring and early warning systems,
5. Developing regional preparedness and mitigation plans,
6. Using advanced information communication tools, ensuring last mile connectivity,
7. Developing private sector towards livelihood and employment generation through small and medium enterprises,

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/1852688/report-uttarakhand-floods-deconstructing-a-disaster>

<sup>21</sup> [http://epaper.tribuneindia.com/140099/The-Tribune/TT\\_26\\_July\\_2013](http://epaper.tribuneindia.com/140099/The-Tribune/TT_26_July_2013)

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/floods-expose-india-s/727664.html>

8. Mandatory provision of insurance coverage for each family living in highly sensitive Himalayan region, and subsidized it for poor families.
9. Conducting mock drills at the schools in all the districts of the state to inculcate the disaster preparedness among children
10. Making comprehensive plans for hospital safety plans from disasters in all the districts of the state.
11. Making comprehensive plans for the protection of heritage monuments and places of worship in the state of Uttarakhand.

## 12.A transparent system to ensure the efficacy of cash transfers

Till recently relief was all about providing aid in the form of food, seeds, tools, medicines, shelter materials and household goods and provision of cash or vouchers as alternatives or complements to in-kind assistance was only taken up for restoration activities. But experiences have shown that cash transfer or vouchers can play an important role in assisting people after emergencies across a range of sector as access to food (beyond that is provided), help to rebuild or protect livelihoods, help to meet people's need for shelter and non-food items. The issue is not about its appropriateness but the mechanism that is used to transfer it as cash transfer will depend on the needs of the people, market and other social factors which would be different for different contexts. It is very important to ensure that it is done in a very systematic and thought out manner to preclude the possibility of unfair distribution and consequent conflict.

## 13. The important role of technology

Conventional ways of relief measures are always delayed (which may fail to achieve its purpose) due to lack of knowledge about the total devastation in real time or near to real time. The floods in Uttarakhand are a case in point, where we were not aware about the situation of villagers for a long period. Even information about the number of bridges collapsed, number and length of roads devastated and the number of people affected were not known till later.

There is thus, an urgent need to have '**Geospatial Database**' of the whole country regarding Road, Rail, Electricity, Habitation, Forest, River basin etc. With the space informatics and GIS technology, each and every infrastructure, resources can be mapped to be used when disaster strikes. As disaster strikes, a team of expert may inform the government about the devastation/ destruction in real time or near to real time after comparison of satellite data before and after the event. This will certainly save precious time and even these data will certainly prove to be helpful in planning, response, preparedness, and reconstruction phase<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> <http://www.unescap.org/idd/>

#### **14. Inclusive and Multi Stakeholder Nature of the New Relief Agenda**

It is well known that every disaster teaches a new lesson and also takes us on the back - foot from the path of progress. A heavy price has to be paid & especially for a country like India, it is a big shock. The great tragedy in Uttarakhand is no different. It has affected several groups of people in several debilitating ways.

Consequently, we must come up with a new relief agenda that has to be more inclusive in nature. Technically speaking it should be a multi stakeholder forum. Local College Youths have to play a major role in such type of forum. The interests of migrant labourers, artisans and all other groups that have hitherto been excluded from the disaster risk reduction efforts have to be considered. Preparedness and regular practice [Mock Drills in schools and hospitals] at panchayat level will certainly help. For instance, the 'New Relief Deal' in Uttarakhand can focus on the special needs of the children in terms of relief, recovery and rehabilitation efforts.

In addition to this, a 'Safety Culture' needs to be inculcated in our society from the grass root level. Capacity building at large will certainly help coping with emergency situations than making most of us helpless & vulnerable. School safety through conducting mock drills is an effective way to achieve this ideal.

Therefore, in future, we have to focus on every big disaster keeping all the factors in mind viz. Natural factors, Man induced actions, Climate Change/ Global Warming effects.

#### **15. Suitable measures to tackle Multi-Hazard Nature of Uttarakhand**

Damage due to flooding tends to increase with increasing developments in river basin, whereas population pressure in flood prone areas is often high. Full protection through large-scale embankments of rivers is often not possible because of prohibitive costs, and not desirable due to environmental and other reasons. In the aftermath of Flood on the Blue Nile which caused damage on a massive scale to agriculture, property and infrastructure, DELPH HYDRAULICS was commissioned. Such system must be implemented in Uttarakhand because here there is a complex disaster situation, cloudburst, landslides and floods. What is needed for such situation especially in the Himalayas is a more advanced warning system for future floods, modern forecasting techniques and improved data collection<sup>24</sup>.

Keeping in view the Uttarakhand catastrophe, a devastating result of multiple factors, focusing on following components and activities for future planning would be prudent:

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<sup>24</sup> [http://dmmc.uk.gov.in/files/pdf/final\\_report\\_DRR.docx.pdf](http://dmmc.uk.gov.in/files/pdf/final_report_DRR.docx.pdf)

1. Data collection network
2. Data transmission system.
3. Rainfall estimation and forecasting
4. Information system
5. Institutional aspects

## **16. The importance of Traditional knowledge**

Local challenges are best tackled by local knowledge. This pithy axiom holds particularly true for disaster risk reduction. Since the term risk is relative to the local context, therefore, the approaches to reduce risk should be thoroughly grounded in the local milieu. Thus, traditional knowledge systems have a special role to play in disaster risk reduction.<sup>25</sup>

This calls for an inclusion of traditional knowledge systems in the relief measures for the floods in Uttarakhand. Inclusion of traditional approaches in the strategy to mitigate disasters can be facilitated through active promotion of community participation and involvement. The efficacy of traditional knowledge in mitigating disasters could be corroborated from the efforts of various organizations working in India and beyond. The simplest benchmarks that can be used to gauge at the level of importance accorded to traditional approaches are the inclusiveness of local communities and the local youth in all the stages of disaster management from planning to implementation to monitoring and evaluation.

## **14. Accountability Concerns**

One of the most disconcerting aspects to the tragedy in Uttarakhand was the deliberate unheeding of the advice of the Meteorological Department by the state government of Uttarakhand.<sup>26</sup>

It is well known that Uttarakhand attracts a lot of pilgrims and tourists due to an inordinate amount of temples being there. Religious tourism thus, accounts for a major chunk of the revenues for the state. This is probably the reason why the state government despite several warnings from the Met. Dept. decided to go ahead with the pilgrimages. In the light of this most unfortunate tragedy the constitutional, legal and accountability issues of the state ignoring timely warning of Met dept. to affect a cancellation of the pilgrimages should be scrutinized to preclude such tragedies from happening in the future.

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<sup>25</sup> <http://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/publications/3646>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.newsx.com/opinion/collective-massacre-by-uttarakhand-government>

## 15. The Categorization of Villages for Relief Strategy

Affected villages in Uttarakhand cannot be bundled in to one group for the purpose of relief strategy. Grouping of villages and relief strategy for each group is captured in the framework below. We really need to take special care for different emerging situations such as winters, landslides while formulating relief strategy and be prepared to respond to changes. Availability / access critical material for survival, repairing homes would be critical along with ensuring cash in hands of people.

Further there are three important takeaways from Uttarakhand disaster:

1. The need to have a workable / actionable early warning system.
2. Any temporary (from a day to a week), extended (2 to 3 months) periods of mass congregations need to have a temporary but dedicated organizations which function 24X7 (including weekends) which ensure work for these mass gatherings in a dedicated manner<sup>27</sup>. It is very difficult to fix accountability when existing administrative set up is added with responsibility for management of such mass gathering.
3. The tourism industry has to become more responsible and explain to the visitors to locations such as Chardham associated difficulties and risks.

Affected locations need to be divided in to clusters for effective relief management. The villages can be divided on the following parameters:

- Situation
- Location

Villages could be divided into following six clusters and formulate a strategy for each of the clusters. Following is a one such framework:

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<sup>27</sup> <http://www.trust.org/item/20130722130008-rigam/>

Situation	Location		
	Located in high altitudes	Located in plains	Potential for cut off in winters
Accessible	<p>Start relief supplies transport immediately and ensure availability / storage of sufficient supplies even for winters</p> <p>Identify some base locations close to group of villages and ensure availability of supplies in such locations ensuring access to supplies even if the access is disturbed</p>	<p>Ensure adequate relief to the needy</p> <p>Undertake efforts to restore normalcy, and market mechanism, cash transfer, cash for repair of homes, cleaning lands etc</p>	<p>Repair or establish social infrastructure to facilitate storage of food to sustain during winters when villages are cutoff (lessons from Leh would be useful / critical)</p>
Inaccessible	<p>Air drop relief whenever weather permits</p> <p>Work on ensuring access</p> <p>Store supplies in locations close to group of inaccessible villages, so that immediately after opening of route relief could be taken</p>	<p>Speed up work to restore access</p> <p>Temporary airdrop of minimal relief</p> <p>Restoration of market mechanism, cash transfer, cash for repair of homes, cleaning lands etc</p>	<p>Air drop relief</p> <p>Transport prefabricated storage closest to these locations and store relief in these structures. People from nearby villages would be able to walk and take relief</p> <p>Repair or establish social infrastructure in villages to facilitate storage of food immediately after the access is established</p>
Each cluster should have dedicated coordination mechanism and strategy			

## 16. Integration of Disaster Risk Reduction with Climate Change Adaptation for Effective Relief Strategy

There is a growing body of research work that points out to the incontrovertible evidence between climate change and disasters. Thus, there is an urgent need to integrate the strategies for Disaster Risk Reduction & Climate Change Adaptation for developing, planning & monitoring tools for different stakeholders and sectors. This integration would encapsulate the following:

1. Development of minimum standards of engineering for each ecosystem with clear guidelines of Do's & Don'ts based on a comprehensive risk & vulnerability analysis
2. Adoption of an approach to disaster management that is attuned to the exigencies of a fragile ecosystem. The parameters for such interventions should be considered for such interventions to ensure increasing resilience of such ecosystems.
3. Organization of an exhibition-cum-workshop for showcasing alternative green technologies that can work in different agro eco-systems. Such an exhibition-cum-workshop will strengthen the DM community's initiatives for showcasing green technologies which can reduce risks and vulnerabilities and enhance climate change adaptation & mitigation.

## 17. A Categorization of the Victims of the Disaster

An effective relief strategy for Uttarakhand needs to categorize the hapless victims of the disaster and then tailor the interventions to suit their specific needs. The victims can be divided into three clear cut categories:

**Category 1:** Those who have lost their lives in the disaster (Uttarakhand based people and people from other states)

**Category 2:** People from Uttarakhand who have lost their productive assets/ houses and other assets

**Category 3:** People who have lost the bread earners in the process and also lost productive assets to continue their livelihoods

The process of categorizing the victims/ disaster affected people will help in deciding the type of assistance that is required for the people. For category 1, cash transfers of a particular relief amount will be the right way to provide assistance. For category 2, a mix of support initiatives are required to get them established. For Category 3, which is the most important and vulnerable category, besides cash transfers, a good mix of support initiatives in the form of money and productive assets will be required.



## 18. Twin Pronged Approach making use of Short and Long Term Approaches

### a) Cash Transfers – Option under short term relief strategy

The first and foremost requirement after the disaster is on the issue of transferring the government assistance and remittance from friends and relatives to the families. We need innovative methods of transferring money. There are many examples now. Mobile phone banking and other electronic based innovations can be used through specialized intermediaries to help the affected families in re-establishing them in fast mode. There are organizations like FINO, EKO, Zero Mass etc. who have already done path breaking work in India in terms of transfer of money. These institutions can be used in the process.

There are interesting examples of Vodafone from other countries wherein technology and delivery chain is used to transfer money by using mobile phones. After the successful functioning of M-Pesa in Kenya, Vodafone has launched M-Pesa in India recently<sup>28</sup>. Such organizations can be assigned the work of transferring money in consultation with the government.

For disaster affected people classified under category 1 and category 3, there will be need of long term and mixed strategy. Following could be the options for supporting such people.

### b) Micro Insurance and Micro-Leasing – option under long term relief strategy

**Micro Insurance:** Second important issue for the disaster-affected people of Uttarakhand relates to micro insurance, which will be in the form of health, life, livestock and even general insurance. A proactive approach needs to be applied at the time of micro insurance making all efforts to provide the claims to the members of the affected families. ICT can play a vital role in making the process on fast track. For future, premiums can be given by the government for the insurance of the people who have already lost their family members.

**Micro-Leasing:** There are a large number of families in Uttarakhand badly affected by the recent disaster. They do not have any productive assets for livelihood activities. Affected families need support for getting productive assets without providing any collateral. Lease Finance customized as per the needs of the members can be a good option. However, a moratorium of one year or more as per the project needs to be there so that the members get time to establish business and start getting sufficient cash inflows. This can be taken up through the existing collectives such as self-help groups. Productive assets can be provided on lease to individuals or group of people/collectives so that they start getting some income immediately, without any investment. Government

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<sup>28</sup> <http://thenextweb.com/in/2013/04/17/vodafone-launches-m-pesa-mobile-banking-service-in-india-targets-700m-unbanked-people/>.

can link with private agencies to provide productive assets and provide a lump sum fund for procuring the productive assets.

### **19. Transparency of Cash Transfers and Building Back Better**

Relief cannot always replace loss or damage. Especially, livelihood losses in case of marginalized people. If money transaction is not done in a disaster time, its money value is not lost; but if manpower is not invested at the time of disaster, its money value is lost and can never be recovered. The loss of daily wages is irreversible loss for marginalized people. Through relief, we try to replace the direct losses and by this try to bring their situation back to normalcy. Currently the focus should be on trying to ‘build back better’ by not ‘rebuilding the risk’.

Cash transfers have proved to be an effective measure to bring relief to distressed people. However, it is not easy. The selection process is not always transparent. So, the transfer unnecessarily gets delayed. The NGOs can do it smoothly, but their capacity is limited. The governments have the capacity to cover huge number of people, but bureaucratic system and political interventions hampers the process. Roping in experienced insurance companies to partake the responsibility of the government can make this strategy work.

Consequently, a nationwide Hazard Vulnerability Risk Assessment (HRVA) can give us level of risk and vulnerability of people and areas. The premium to be disbursed to the victims can be determined on the basis of that level. The mechanism may be difficult, but it is imperative that this system be developed. An important first step towards this ideal could be setting up a consultative policy forum on Uttarakhand Floods that would facilitate a longer term involvement of a network of DRR experts on this vital issue.

### **20. Livelihood Promotion in Relief Activities**

Any relief strategy in Uttarakhand can only be successful if it proactively deals with the issue of livelihood promotion and security. Livelihoods tend to provide us with a sense of continuity to the normalcy of our everyday lives. Disasters on the other hand, derail this normalcy by wreaking havoc on individuals and communities. Therefore, a relief strategy that aims to restore normalcy should necessarily focus upon livelihood promotion and security<sup>29</sup>. The following activities can be taken up for livelihood promotion in Uttarakhand post the disaster:

1. SHG based collective action
2. Funds for MSMEs that aim at strategic action
3. Promotion of non-agrarian activities such as petty shop opening, household equipment repairing

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<sup>29</sup> <http://www.odi.org.uk/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/5860.pdf>

4. Psycho-social support to the affected people
5. Promote NTFP collection & Marketing
6. Training to local youths on masonry skills for construction of Toilets

While large scale movement of people from the devastated households to new houses will take time, we can consider to come up with interim-shelter approach with facilities for toilet and rain water conservation. For next three to six months a transit plan should be put in place where the transit camp residents would need to be supplied food, clothing, toiletries as well as ration for these periods.

## **21. Timeliness of Cash Transfers**

Cash transfers provide a unique opportunity to build back Uttarakhand after the terrible floods. However, there is a need to assess the effectiveness of cash transfers for every stage of disaster management in the state. For, presently there are four stages of disaster management viz. relief, recovery, rehabilitation and preventive steps for future<sup>30</sup>.

These would naturally be having different timeframes in different contexts. It would be useful to make an assessment of the time-frame for each of these stages in the context of Uttarakhand.

It would also be useful to highlight if these cash transfers are possible or practical at all stages of disaster management discussed above. For example, in the present stage in Uttarakhand, the main problem at present for the local residents is physical accessibility of basic needs like food, clothing, raw material for repair of shelter etc. In such a situation, it is doubtful if cash availability with the victims could be the best way of relief. In the present stage, the markets may not be functioning in the local/far flung areas due to inaccessibility and lack of roads etc. Hence, providing actual items of food, clothing etc. would be necessary.

## **22. The role of Private Sector in Relief**

The private sector can play an important role in this new relief strategy. For, the private sector possesses the wherewithal to affect the drastic changes that are required by this new deal of relief in Uttarakhand. Thus, there needs to be a greater degree of collaboration between public and private sector in devising new and innovative ways of relief and recovery.

This calls for the development of an extensively collective approach, where the private sector investment should not be limited purely to monetary assistance. Rather, the government and the humanitarian agencies should also encourage more of private sector participation in terms of their skilled manpower, assets, equipment, technical expertise

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<sup>30</sup> <http://www.ifrc.org/Global/Publications/disasters/guidelines/guidelines-cash-en.pdf>

etc. during different phases of disaster response. In particular, the support of private sector for MSMEs in the state can be extremely fruitful.

### **23. A new recovery policy in India**

In India, as of today, there is no national policy that guides recovery assistance. As a result, recovery policies are formulated in response to specific disaster events by respective state governments. Despite the lack of an overarching policy, the experience of implementing disaster-specific recovery policies and programmes have resulted in an accumulated wealth of knowledge related to the experiences of recovery and that of recovery programme implementation in different parts of the country. The catastrophic event that unfolded in Uttarakhand presents us with the opportunity to collectively reflect upon these past experiences and advocate for a broader recovery policy. Such a policy is clearly a need of the hour for the disaster-affected people of Uttarakhand. It would define their rights to seek public assistance for rebuilding their lives.

It is critical that such a policy stipulates formulation of recovery initiatives based on a systematic assessment of the damages and needs of those affected. It should establish clear and transparent processes/guidelines for distribution of assistance to those affected in a timely manner, linked to the scale of damages suffered, and using the established modes of disbursement. Such a policy would also have strong orientation to study the impact of the actions taken. It is a simple and sensible starting point, but generally difficult to achieve in an unstable post-disaster situation.

### **24. Path to a sustainable recovery**

Recovery requires a focus on the people and a clear prioritization of their important needs. As witnessed in the case of Uttarakhand, in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, multiple demands are made, ranging from regulation of economic activities, emphasis on green growth, promotion of eco-friendly tourism, to building resilient livelihoods. All of them are important, and have emerged out of important issues which this disaster has raised. However, we must not lose sight of the issues that are at the core of effective recovery of those affected by the event: shelter, livelihoods, access to social services, community infrastructure, and local governance. The challenge we face and also the opportunity that we have now is to bring these ideas together in a coherent manner, while ensuring that the priorities of the affected communities are satisfactorily met. What we need is a clearly articulated recovery plan, along with adequate resources for operationalizing it.

It requires setting up significant implementation capacities at the state, district, and sub-district levels and sustaining it during the implementation period. Several recovery programmes, however well-formulated, have faltered during implementation period due to a lack of attention to these capacity development issues and led to serious failures. It will be a huge challenge for the state of Uttarakhand as well. Needless to say, that the efficacy of such an approach to recovery can only be gauged through suitable impact studies.

## 25. An Emergency Response Plan for Places of Worship

The Uttarakhand tragedy has exposed the utter lack of preparedness on the part of temples in the state to deal with a disaster. Thus, the moral and prosaic imperative to seriously consider an effective disaster response plan for all places of worship has been rendered inescapable. It is well known that religious/sectarian divide along with terrorism pose major threats to the security of places of worship in India. The catastrophe in Uttarakhand has highlighted how vulnerable the places of worship can be to natural disasters too. It should always be borne in mind, that apart from being places of religious significance, these temples are also a part of the cultural heritage of the area. These temples in turn promote religious /cultural tourism which is the principal fuel of the cultural industry in Uttarakhand. This important point should always be considered in devising a relief strategy for Uttarakhand.

There is thus an urgent need to formulate Emergency Response Plans for all places of worships in India. Under these plans all contingencies from natural disasters like floods, earthquakes, etc. to manmade disasters like stampedes, terrorist attacks need to be considered and consequently respective mitigation strategies need to be incorporated<sup>31</sup>. This perhaps can go a long way in ensuring the safety of pilgrims who visit these sacred places.

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<sup>31</sup> [http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/developing\\_eops\\_for\\_houses\\_of\\_worship\\_final.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/developing_eops_for_houses_of_worship_final.pdf)

## F. Summary Table of Key Recommendations

The key recommendations that have been advocated in this Experience Learning Series (ELS) have been presented below in a tabular format with Key Recommendations and Expected Impact.

Key Recommendation	Expected Impact
1. Conditional Cash Transfer	1. Ensuring the efficacy of cash transfer.
2. Gender Sensitive Cash Transfer	2. Women empowerment and leadership
3. Robust Monitoring and Evaluation Structure	3. Preventing misuse of the monetary resources
4. Proactive State Disaster Response Force	4. Reduction of dependency on external agencies like the army for rescue and recovery efforts
5. Capacity Building at community level	5. Self reliance of community in mitigating the impacts of disasters
6. Approaches suited to local context	6. Enhanced effectiveness of the interventions to meet local challenges
7. Promotion of Technology	7. The setting up of important early warning mechanisms
8. Categorization of villages for relief strategy	8. Devising specific interventions for specific villages to ensure maximum effectiveness
9. Categorization of the victims of the disaster	9. Addressing of specific needs of the victims, contingent to their specific condition
10. Integration of Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction for Relief Strategy	10. Promotion of a holistic perspective for the achievement of development objectives
11. Combining long-term and short-term approaches	11. Maximum effectiveness from a twin pronged approach
12. Building back better, not rebuilding risks	12. The opportunity to rebuild an environmentally sound and sustainable Uttarakhand
13. Livelihood Promotion for Relief Strategy	13. Emergence of resilient livelihoods in the state of Uttarakhand
14. Timeliness of Cash Transfer	14. Attending to immediate needs of the victims before chalking out an effective cash transfer strategy
15. Encouraging private sector involvement in relief strategy	15. Productive collaboration between the public and private sector
16. A new recovery policy for India	16. A national policy to guide recovery assistance
17. The pursuit of a sustainable recovery	17. The ability to meet the priorities of the victims at present without compromising the ability to cope with future disasters
18. An emergency response plan for places of worship	18. Risk resilient places of worship in the state

## **G. The Pillars of the New Relief Deal in Uttarakhand**

The relief deal as elaborated in the above pages is novel and unique in many ways. It seeks to directly benefit the victims by obviating all the bureaucratic encumbrances through cash transfers and making a strong case for development in the state that is buttressed by the environmental security. Thus, for all practical purposes it can be averred that the ‘New Relief Deal’ for Uttarakhand is based on the following cornerstones:

### **1. Ecological and Economic Sustainability**

The various interventions suggested under this new relief deal for Uttarakhand focus inordinately on the ecological and economic sustainability. It is well known that the vulnerability of Uttarakhand was exacerbated by the ecological imbalance caused by human activity; therefore it behooves to incorporate the important aspect of ecological sustainability in all the interventions taken as part of relief efforts in the state. Similarly, the colossal economic losses due to the disaster necessitate that an economically expedient approach be taken for recovery. Cash transfers seem promising as they have the prospect of plugging in all the leakages of earlier relief systems and ensuring timely help to victims sans the encumbrances of bureaucracy.

### **2. Local Community Involvement**

One of the most ostensible aspects of the Uttarakhand catastrophe was the complete lack of community preparedness to the impending disasters of this nature. Many experts believe that a delayed response by the state coupled with a lack of capacity on the part of the community to take preventive action compounded the loss of life manifold. Therefore, a new relief deal for Uttarakhand ought to pursue the imperative of local community involvement. A massive exercise in capacity building of the community coupled with awareness campaigns will add immensely to this ideal.

### **3. Technologically Facilitated**

Technology that provides early warning to disasters has life saving implications. The tragedy in Uttarakhand has brought home this point very strongly. Thus, the new relief deal in Uttarakhand should accord a lot of importance to technology that promotes and improves warning systems for disasters. GPS and GIS are just some examples of how technology can be employed to deal with the disaster risks.

### **4. Centrality of Livelihood**

Livelihoods maintain the continuity of our daily lives. In this manner, they are potent instruments to restore normalcy post disasters. Apart from the shattering loss of life, disasters prove to be particularly debilitating in terms of the economic losses they bring

in their wake. To mitigate the economic losses from disasters, a relief deal that focuses on livelihood promotion seems to be good idea. This would also impart a much needed sustainability to the relief endeavour in the state.

The diagram below shows these cornerstones of the ‘**New Relief Deal in Uttarakhand**’





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