

Rebuilding lives: Reaching the Marginalised

Glimpses of response in emergency

Inside:

- Bihar Kosi Flood 2008
- Mizoram Bamboo Bloom 2008
- Kashmir psycho-social support



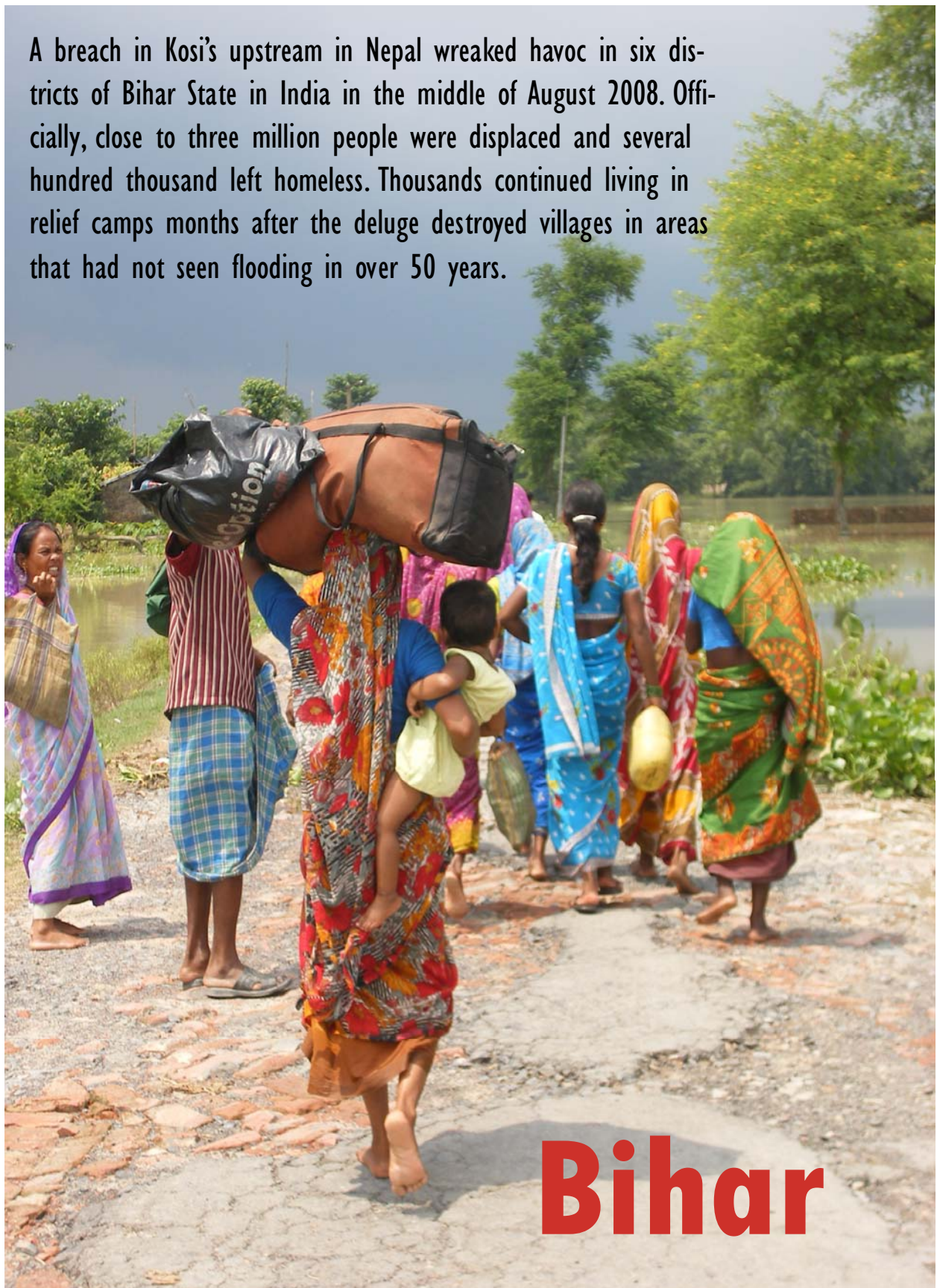
Stories on rebuilding of Marginalised Communities hit by Disasters and Emergencies in India through ActionAid-ECHO interventions.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION



Humanitarian Aid

A breach in Kosi's upstream in Nepal wreaked havoc in six districts of Bihar State in India in the middle of August 2008. Officially, close to three million people were displaced and several hundred thousand left homeless. Thousands continued living in relief camps months after the deluge destroyed villages in areas that had not seen flooding in over 50 years.



Bihar

Supaul was one of the worst affected districts, and ActionAid reached here on the 28th of August 2008 to offer relief. It was decided to focus relief and rehabilitation in three blocks — Triveniganj, Raghapur and Basantpur - of the district.

Families, women and young took shelter in school buildings or on high grounds like embankments immediately after the floods. For many weeks after the first influx of flood survivors, food and fresh drinking water remained unavailable. Nursing mothers and infants remained un-reach by any special medical or nutritional support.

ActionAid rushed to provide food through community kitchen in the second week of its operation, following the immediate distribution of food packets, and fresh water through hand pumps, for victims pitching on embankments or raised places in a scattered manner.

ActionAid took over these “unorganised” clusters and started community rehabilitation, including information dissemination on their relief entitlements. With water receding gradually, ActionAid is initiating emergency response work in inaccessible villages.

Cooked meal:

ActionAid partners started providing cooked meal to the survivors in the relief camps that sprung up immediately after the flood. People were provided ready-to-eat items like flattened rice, jaggery or sattu and salt for breakfast and cooked meal of rice, dal & curry preparation of potato and soya chunks for lunch and dinner.

Later, a menu was introduced adding a variety of offerings to people accessing food support from the camp. The menu and quantity of food was displayed in the camps for public information. Minimum calorie intake need by an individual was given through the cooked meals.

Each adult was provided with at least 2,200 cal each day and other nutrients, like as protein.

Supplementary food: Supplementary food was provided to pregnant women, lactating mothers and children. Over 750 children are given biscuits and powder milk in the morning. Nearly 50 pregnant & lactating women are provided with dalia for extra nutrition, during the first phase.

Temporary shelter: A total of 400 families were given 2 tarpaulin sheets (15 ft X 12ft) each which will protect them from elements.



Immediate Needs

- Amplify rescue efforts.
- Food, water, sanitation and ORS.
- Tarpaulins and temporary shelter materials.
- Water purification tablets and bleaching powder.
- Advance information on release of water and potential areas to be submerged.
- Improve the living conditions in the camps.
- Ensure safety and security of women — those stranded and in the camps.
- Ensure food security.
- Torch lights, matchboxes, candles.
- Simple health education material on managing health situation in the camps.
- Inform survivors about government's relief package.

Long-term Issues

- Initiate/support campaigns and advocacy on policy issues related to river water management and floods.
- Develop programmes aimed at rehabilitating women who are made more vulnerable by the current floods.
- Initiate action to link floods and disasters with the development programmes at the Government level, NGOs and INGOs and at the community level. ActionAid needs to put conscious efforts to facilitate this.
- Capacity building is necessary to respond to the challenges disasters pose. Government, NGOs and INGOs need to put efforts to address this. Staff among many INGOs and NGOs have limited experience.
- Key challenges for women during long-term recovery work need to be understood and addressed.
- Ensure food security.
- Inform and educate survivors about government's relief package, their entitlements and rights.

Water storage: A total of 200 families were given jerry cane (of 20ltrs) for storing of water.

Lighting: As most of the camps adopted did not have electricity facilities, the camps were provided with gas petromaxes. The families were given candle & match box.

Health, hygiene & drinking water support

Health camp: Ten medical camps were organised, apart from four mobilised with support from other agencies, at camps being managed by ActionAid partners. Medicines worth Rs 50,000 were also distributed. Ten cases of advanced pregnancy and illness were also referred to government health centres.

Medicine box: Every camp has a medical kit equipped with common medicine and first aid material. Oral Re-hydration Salts packets, halogen tablets and bleaching powder are also kept with the box. A woman manages supply of sanitary napkins for those needing them in the camp. This allowing women and adolescent girls to take use them without any hesitation. Mosquito coils are also provided to the camp inmates.

Personal hygiene: About 250 families were provided with soaps for toilet and washing cloths, sixty plastic buckets and mugs were provided at camp level for common usage for bathing and washing cloth.

Hand-pump installation: Hand-pumps were installed in all the relief camps being run by partners, to ensure portable water at the camp site. A total of 13 hand pumps were disinfected and made ready for use.

Support logistics: Teams of volunteers are placed in both locations with two wheelers. Camp offices and stores are also functioning 24x7. More staff to support the Programme Officer will be placed soon. Regional Office at Patna and partners at Muzaffarpur are supporting in material procurement and distribution.

ActionAid started its initiative in five affected villages after a consultation with the concerned government agencies for permission to work in these villages in Triveniganj and Raghapur blocks of the Supaul District.

ActionAid has provided food pack for two weeks to 6,893 people in the Phase I and in the Phase II food packs for 30 days were given to the same number.



The Cash for Work programme implemented by ActionAid followed the NREGS guidelines to make people aware of their right to work and the legal minimum wages. A minimum wage of Rs. 92 a day was paid and this was higher than what is paid at government run projects. Photo Credit: Pramod/ActionAid

Long-term Response

ActionAid started the Relief and Rehabilitation work in the selected villages of Triveniganj and Raghapur block in Supaul District in November 2008.

As the women, children and men returned to villages from relief camps and shelters, they needed support to be able to manage lives on their own. This was particularly true for Dalit and Muslim families.

Targeting the most vulnerable families we expanded our reach through the panchayats. For this we conducted the PVA (Participatory Vulnerability Analysis) survey among the existing as well as new villages and finalized the list of most vulnerable people.

Livelihood and Shelter

To provide immediate income generating options to the flood survivors, ActionAid/ECHO provided locally available livelihood options as a means for empowering communities. A major focus was cash for work intervention. The local community was involved in identifying the community resources that needed rebuilding. Following this, activities like rebuilding of roads and schools were taken up in 11 villages. This generated 28,501 days of work. Benefit of the livelihood generated through these projects reached 4,254 families.

In Raghapur, 14 such projects were completed. These generated 8,568 days of work benefiting 1,673 families. Similarly in Triveniganj, 34 projects were taken up generating 17,796 days of work, benefiting 2,070 families. A large number of beneficiaries who participated in the Cash for Work programmes came from marginalised communities. These not only helped the villagers by providing cash for their daily needs but connected villages through new and repaired roads.

The Cash for Work programme implemented by ActionAid followed the NREGS guidelines to make people aware of their right to work and the legal minimum wages. A minimum wage of Rs. 92 a day was paid by ActionAid. This was higher than what is paid in government run projects.



Geeta Devi, 35, in the right, lost her house and belonging to the flood water. He husband is a migrant worker in Punjab. She was left alone to fend for herself and two daughters. She received shelter and livelihood support in Triveniganj. Her daughters now go to school, where they get mid-day meal. Photo Credit: Pramod/ActionAid



Ram Dev, 52, is the sole bread-winner in his family of seven. He belongs to Dalit community. He is seen here with a rickshaw that he got as livelihood support after he lost all his belonging and house in Triveniganj. Photo Credit: Pramod/ActionAid



Salima Khatun, a 45-year-old single woman, was living in a relief shelter for over two months. Her son is a migrant worker. The family lost a cow, few goats and hens during the flood in Raghapur. She received a sewing machine under livelihood support initiative and now earns 75 INR per day. Photo Credit: Pramod/ActionAid



A Dalit woman proudly holding a newly acquired job card at one of the cash for work projects at Raghapur. This particular project provided employment to 175 people. 40 percent of them were women and half of the workforce employed was from the Muslim community. Photo credit: Pramod/ActionAid



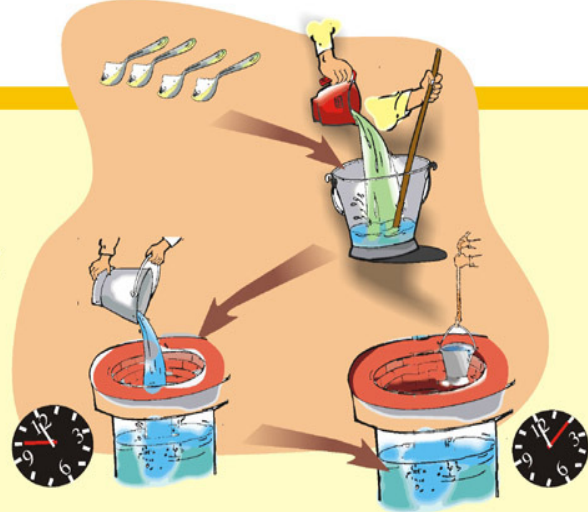
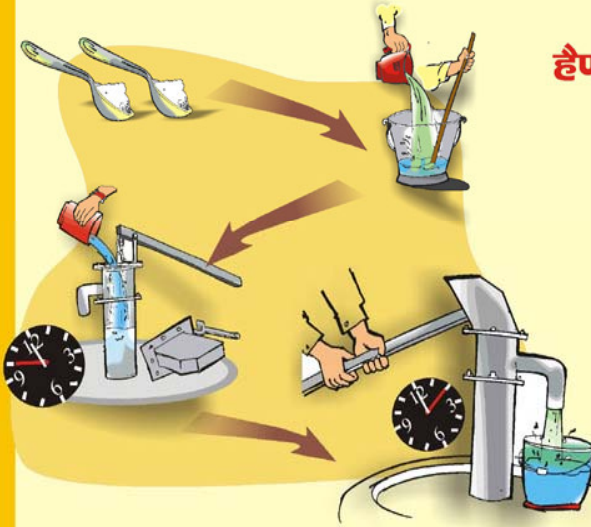
Emergency Relief Support Programme to Flood Survivors of Bihar 2008 तात्कालिक बाढ़ राहत कार्यक्रम, बिहार 2008

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कुएँ के पानी को स्वच्छ कैसे करें।

प्रति एक मीटर गहरे पानी के हिसाब से

- बाल्टी में एक लीटर पानी लेकर चार चम्मच ब्लीचिंग पाउडर मिलाएँ।
- इसके बाद इस घोल को कुएँ में डाल दें।
- चार घण्टे तक कुएँ से पानी न निकालें।
- इसके बाद पानी पीने योग्य है।



हैण्ड पम्प के पानी को स्वच्छ कैसे करें?

- एक बाल्टी में एक लीटर पानी लेकर दो चम्मच ब्लीचिंग पाउडर मिलाएँ
- हैण्ड पम्प को खोलकर ब्लीचिंग मिला हुआ एक लीटर पानी हैण्ड पम्प में डालें।
- चार घण्टों तक हैण्ड पम्प को न चलाएँ
- हैण्ड पम्प को ठीक से पुनः उसका नट बोल्ट कसकर बाँध दें और 10 मिनट तक चलाते रहें।
- इस तरह हमने पानी को स्वच्छ कर लिया और पीने योग्य हो गया।

जल स्वच्छीकरण और क्लोरीन की टिकिया का प्रयोग

- 20 लीटर पानी में एक क्लोरीन की टिकियाँ डालकर लकड़ी की छड़ी से पानी को अच्छी तरह हिलाएँ
- क्लोरीन मिले घोल को दो घण्टे के लिए छोड़ दें।
- अब पानी पीने योग्य हो गया।



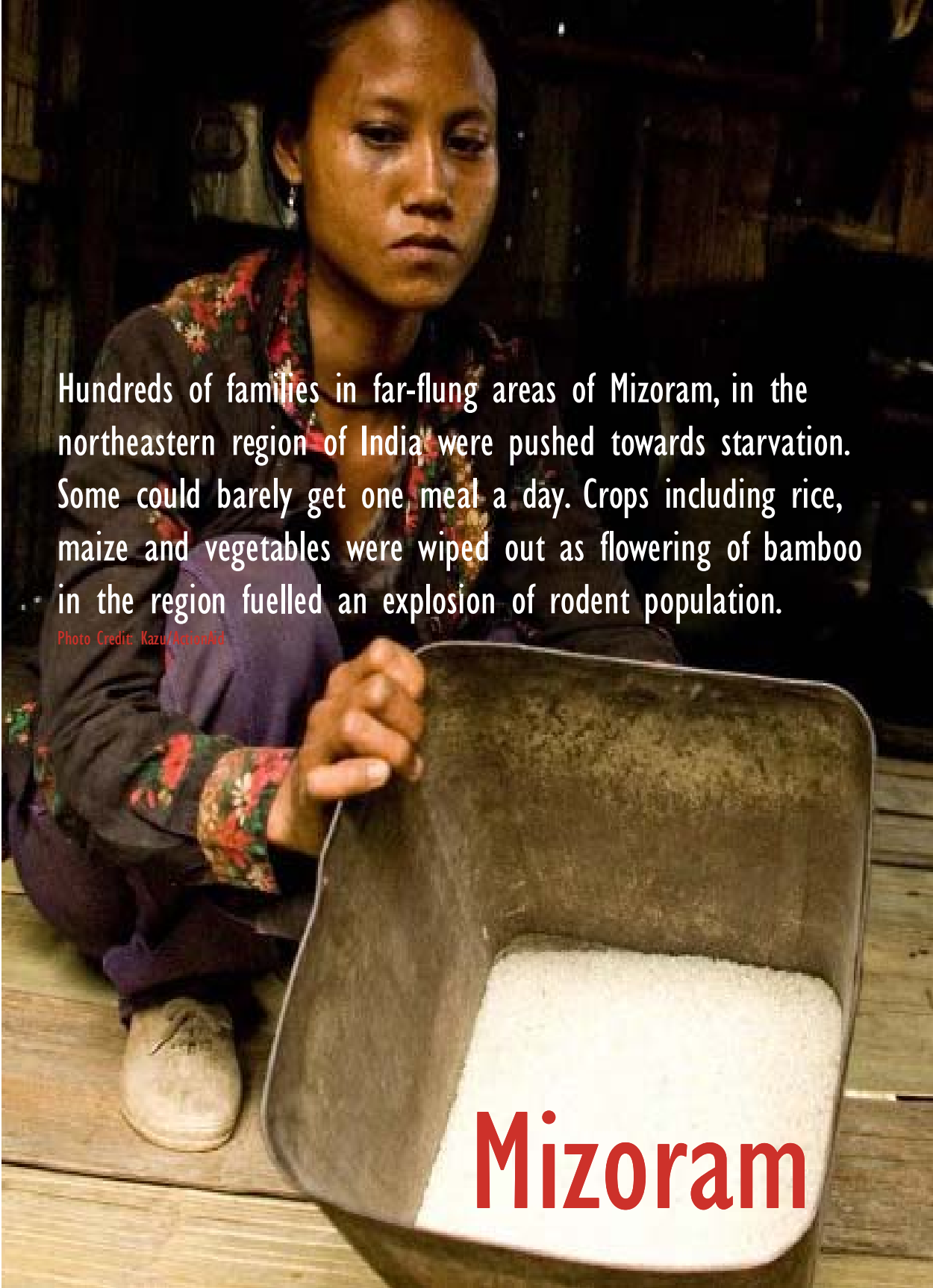
स्थानीय सहयोग _____

त्रिवेणीगंज : बिहार ग्राम विकास परिषद, सीतामढ़ी

राघोपुर : मुजफ्फरपुर विकास मंडल, मुजफ्फरपुर

गन्दा पानी पीने से हम बीमार हो सकते हैं।





Hundreds of families in far-flung areas of Mizoram, in the northeastern region of India were pushed towards starvation. Some could barely get one meal a day. Crops including rice, maize and vegetables were wiped out as flowering of bamboo in the region fuelled an explosion of rodent population.

Photo Credit: Kazu Matsuda

Mizoram

Hunger stalks Mizoram — rat plague triggers food crisis

A food crisis is unfolding in Mizoram with an explosion of rat population. Reports of acute food shortages in pockets adjoining borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh are coming in.

It evokes images of the legend of the Pied Piper of Hamelin, but for the tribal villagers living on the land that has been overrun by rats, it is time of hunger, disease and anxiety.

Hundreds of families in far-flung areas of Mizoram, in the northeastern region of India are facing food shortages. Some are barely eking out one meal a day. Crops including rice, maize and vegetables have been wiped out as flowering of bamboo in the region caused an explosion of rodent population.

"All our crops were eaten by the rats. We couldn't save anything," says Binondo, who lives with eight family members in Bawngva village, Mamit district.

Relief too slow

Supplies are reaching villagers at an achingly slow pace due to inaccessible terrain and short supply of food grains within Mizoram. An ActionAid assessment team reported in March that 80,000 to 100,000 people in the state are going hungry. "There are clear signs of a crisis unfolding. Reports of acute food shortages in pockets adjoining borders with Myanmar and Bangladesh are coming in.

"Villages in Lawngtlai district are in a particularly bad shape, with people surviving by foraging in the forest since October last year," says Mrinal Gohain, Regional Manager North East, ActionAid.

The deputy commissioner of Lawngtlai district concurs that close to a 100 of the 156 villages are in a "serious crisis". One rupee per rat tail

Flowering of bamboo brakes, which cover 31 percent of the state, occurs once every 48 years. Rats feast on these protein-rich flowers leading to massive increase in their population. But the rats soon turn to crops and food stored in homes and out houses.

The flowering that began in 2007 was preceded by media reports and seminars and the state government launched special 'Bamboo Flowering and Famine Control Schemes'. But measures including early harvesting of bamboo, diversifying to non-food crops, and announcing a reward of one rupee for each rat tail, had little impact.

Distress selling

Distress sales of land and property are being reported across the state as farmers exhaust their reserves. Buyers are usually traders and government officials.

"The local fishing pond provided seasonal income in our village but now even that is up for sale, at far below the market rate. Last year's floods destroyed wet rice fields and dealt a severe blow to fishing stocks. Now it is desperate time," a man from Darlak village, Mamit district told the assessment team. (Story was broken in March 2008)

An overview of ActionAid and ECHO's engagement with Mautam

Impact:

Community suffered from food crisis the most in the first half of the year 2008 and it was the worst in the months of June and July 2008 as —

- Paddy stock was almost exhausted
- Lack of work opportunities (being rainy season)
- Lack of money to buy rations
- Remotest villages hardest hit

Response:

Responding to reports of a humanitarian crisis unfolding from the devastation of crops by rodents, whose population exploded following the phenomenon of 'bamboo flowering', an ActionAid team visited Mizoram in the months of February and March 2008 to assess the extent of the crisis.

Assessment of the team:

Conditions of widespread food shortages and hunger prevailed in all the 8 districts of Mizoram. The worst affected districts were in the western and southern areas of the state notably the districts of Lawngtlai, Lunglei, Saiha and Mamit.

First Phase: March to July 2008:

- ActionAid implemented two projects to support the worst affected families in 40 villages in three blocks of Lawngtlai district- Sangau, Lawngtlai and Bungtlang 'S', between March to June 2008 in association with Centre for Peace and Development, Aizawl, CYLA, Lawngtlai, MHIP, Lunglei.
- 675 families were supported with rice, dal, salt and paddy seeds
- But, ActionAid realised that the scale of aid required was much beyond the current support provided by ActionAid. Hence, ActionAid approached ECHO for further support.

Food Security Assessment as in May 2009:

- Food intake is returning to normal because of Government and ActionAid's interventions.
- 68.5% of respondents from villages under the project have mentioned that the stock of Rice, Dal and Salt in their household is from ActionAid.

However... the gap period from July 2009 to harvest of 2009, there may be shortage of food.

Suggestions:

- More of NREGS employment could be generated during this period, enabling communities to earn wages and buy ration from PDS
- PDS outlets could stock enough of rice to meet the local demand

Public Distribution System

PDS is generally functioning, but there are challenges —

- Supply to PDS outlets is sometimes erratic, especially in the rainy season
- Some villages do not have PDS outlets
- The PDS quotas are not big enough to feed a family of six

Suggestions:

In addition to strengthening PDS, enhanced investment in infrastructure development would work towards restoring and improving local economies. Further, community-based systems could be introduced to improve opportunities that would favour the farmers to market their produce.

The Civil Supplies Office needs to take note of the forecasted food shortages during the coming season. Special arrangements are needed to ensure PDS supplies reach the most remote villages timely in sufficient quantity.

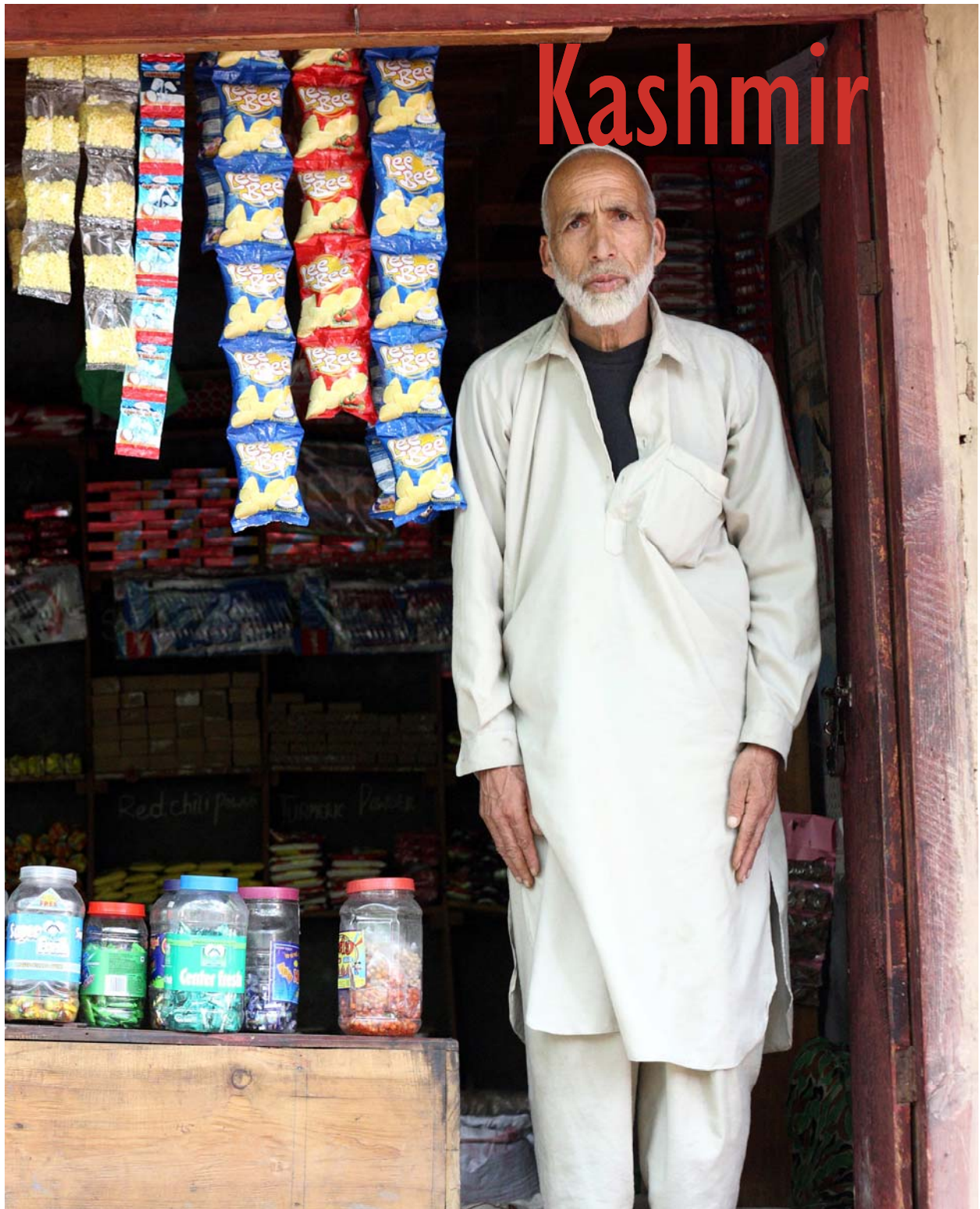
Employment:

- The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) is the major employment provider
- ActionAid's Cash for Work also helped communities to access work during the crisis
- Community had apprehension that NREGS works may reduce during rainy seasons of 2009

Suggestions:

Opportunities for work under the NREGS should be ensured during the rainy season to address the critical gap in food security between sowing and harvesting.

Kashmir



An old man in front of his grocery shop provided as a livelihood support option following an intensive counseling by community worker and medication by mental health doctors. Photo Credit: Srikanth/ActionAid

Psycho Social Care:

In the remote and seriously conflict affected district of Ramban, ActionAid's local office along with the local partner — STEPS — is reaching out to about 300 conflict affected families in inaccessible villages there. This is for the first time that any nongovernmental organization is reaching out to such families in these areas. **ActionAid has also been successful to reach out to the remote Wadwan valley in south-east of Kashmir valley this year**, which was opened for vehicular traffic for the first time in history after the road connectivity to that region.

The region remains cut off with rest of the world for over six months during the winter season. ActionAid has begun with psycho social care for over 500 families there provision of referral support. Work in Wadwan shall resume in March-April 2009.

In Ganderbal and Badgam districts, in the course of four mental health camps, out of 634 persons, 125 needed psycho-social counseling follow up, while 29 have been referred for psychiatric treatment. In the two districts, eight psycho awareness workshops have been conducted in which about 550 people have been sensitized about various psychological disorders.

In Anantnag (Islamabad) district, at four mental health camps, 858 persons have been seen, out of which 167 required psycho social follow up. About 221 people have attended various psycho awareness camps in the district. Fourteen people have so far been referred for psychiatric treatment from the district. At the counseling and referral centres run by ActionAid at Pulwama district hospital, Shopian district hospital and Tral sub district hospital, 145 persons with serious psychological disorders are being engaged in psycho social care and medication (in some cases).

In the volatile Tral area, five psycho-social awareness events have been conducted, in which 243 people have been seen. 102 persons with various kinds of psychological disorders have been identified for follow up. In the mental health camps over 320 persons have been seen. Two school awareness workshop have also been held, attended by 160 children. Ten children identified with certain psychological disorders, are being followed up with care.

In the sensitive Keller area, 4 psycho awareness camps have been conducted, in which 252 people participated. 97 persons have been identified with various kinds of psychological disorders and are being followed up. At the mental health camps held in the remote Sangerwani tribal area, 83 persons have been seen. 42 have been identified for counseling care.

Livelihoods Project 2008-09:

During 2008-09, about 550 income generation units are to be provided to as many families to the conflict affected families as part of the larger psycho social rehabilitation. Currently psycho social assessment — including coping strengths and possibilities — is being carried out for over 400 families in the seven districts of the State.

Disaster Preparedness Program: Through a specially-designed disaster preparedness program — addressing both man-made and natural emergencies — ActionAid is currently training communities in 17 areas using PVA tools. This exercise, apart from training vulnerable communities in preparing themselves for various emergency situations, mainly emanating from the on-going turmoil, would culminate with the publication of a report reflecting concerns of and perceptions about various risks. Currently ActionAid is working out a partnership with the government which entails training and inclusion of local-level government functionaries in the PVA process. ActionAid plans to involve the government in jointly working out a disaster preparedness mechanism once the publication is done.

During 2007-08, ActionAid continued providing support to the conflict affected families with psychosocial care, psychiatric medical support and income generation units in the districts of Ramban, Anantnag, Shopian, Pulwama, Ganderbal, Srinagar and Badgam to enhance psycho social rehabilitation. We believe psycho social care in isolation, in disregard to the economic condition of the affected families, does not help in speeding up psycho social recovery in most of the cases.

Year 2007 also saw provision of income generation units to 612 families as against a target of 500 families, due to savings made in the support costs, like salaries, over heads and administrative costs.

One of the main features of this approach is reaching out to such people in their community settings only with psycho social care, and, if needed, provided referral support for psychiatric treatment.

One important aspect of the de-stigmatized community-based psycho-social care model has been that this approach has helped in removing the stigma associated with visiting the hospitals in Srinagar which provide psychiatric treatment to such people. Decentralization of mental health services through the government-sponsored NRHM scheme and wider awareness by organizations like ours are starting to make these services available to people in the countryside as well. (This report was updated for activities till 2008)



A mother and her daughter in front of a grocery shop provided under livelihood support project. The woman had lost her husband after he went missing. Photo Credit: Srikanth/ActionAid



A team of doctors and trained psycho-social community workers who lead ActionAid-ECHO work with people suffering from trauma induced by years of conflict. Photo-Credit: Srikanth/ActionAid (Names of subjects in images from Kashmir project have been not been mentioned following their request)

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ActionAid works with poor and excluded people in 24 States in India and over 50 countries worldwide to end poverty and injustice. Together we claim legal, constitutional and moral rights to food and livelihood, shelter, education, healthcare, dignity and a voice in decisions that affect their lives.

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