

Uttarakhand Floods Disaster 2013

PSI's Third Progress Report, Aug 15 - Sept 30, 2013

During the review period (Aug 15 - Sept 30, 2013) People's Science Institute (PSI) and its partners focused most of their attention on Phase-II of the Disaster Response Programme, i.e., the construction of temporary shelters and classrooms. In this period a training workshop was organised for masons and based on the participants' recommendations the unit design was modified. Construction of 59 temporary units was completed.

A brain storming meeting was organised in Dehra Doon with potential field partners to conceptualize Phase-III of the programme. This phase is expected to span a period of at least 3 years from Oct 2013 to Sept 2016. PSI colleagues attended various coordination meetings at the district and state levels. They also took part in events related to the June 2013 disaster.

It is a matter of satisfaction that several other voluntary organizations are constructing temporary shelters this time. In the past PSI was the lone organization building temporary shelters after a disaster in Uttarakhand.

I. Construction of Temporary Shelters

Masons Training Workshop

PSI conducted a training workshop on building temporary shelters for masons and volunteers from the Kumaon region on August 22-23, 2013. Twenty four local masons and volunteers from seven partner organizations (POs) participated (Fig. 1). Construction of temporary shelters began thereafter in the Kumaon region.

Redesign and Improvements

Many temporary shelters in Kumaon have to be built in villages that are located at high altitudes. Several participants at the Kumaon workshop expressed preference for a double slope (\wedge) roof instead of PSI's single slope model so that the snow could drain off more easily. Accordingly PSI's engineering team prepared a new double slope design. The first set of these double-sloped shelters was made at Sama village, Kapkot block in



Fig. 1: Masons training workshop at Almora

Bageshwar district. It takes two days to build one shelter. They have been appreciated by the local people (Fig. 2).

We have also improved the joinery elements so that the roofs are more strongly attached to the frame now. We have replaced wooden poles with plane sections at the corners so that the tin sheets can be more firmly attached to the frame and for a better finish (Fig. 3). On the suggestion of a volunteer, Parth Sejjpal from Mumbai, we are termite-proofing the bottom of the wooden columns. We hope our donors will agree with us that these changes are desirable.

Addition of Toilet & Bathroom Units

Hygiene and sanitation are critical components of shelters. In discussions with potential beneficiaries PSI learnt that though in many villages people practiced open defecation, women preferred the privacy of a toilet and bathroom. With some donors wishing to give funds specifically for toilets and bathrooms PSI is now adding a separate toilet-cum-bath unit of 6 ft by 4 ft (Fig. 4). Its cost is estimated to be about Rs. 7000 per unit.

Construction Status

Table 1 summarizes the current status of the construction phase. By Sept 30th we had received requests for the construction of 435 temporary shelters. Our colleagues and volunteers visited 375 families/schools for verification of these requests and recommended building 204 units, including a few classrooms.



Fig. 2: Double slope temporary shelter at Panyali Village, Bageshwar district



Fig. 3: Use of wooden section at the corners



Fig. 4: Toilet Unit

Table 1: Current status summary of the construction programme

Sl. No.	P.O.	Block	District	Requests Recd	Units Confirmed	Units Constructed	Under constrn	Remaining
1	MKA	Agastyamuni	R'pyg	38	18	18	0	0
2	PSI	Thatyur	T.G.	13	13	3	0	10
3	PNWS	Ukhimath	R'pyg	100	17*	0	0	17*
4	JANDESH	Joshimath	Chamoli	50	33	0	33	0
5	JANDESH	Joshimath	Chamoli	20	0	0	0	0
6	JANDESH	Karnaprayag	Chamoli	33	8**	8	0	0
7	Jago Him	Tharali	Chamoli	40	22	4	18	0
8	KSS	Kapkot	B'war	34	23	19	4	0
9	KSS	Kapkot	B'war	10	8	0	0	8
10	Mahila Haat	Almora	Almora	7	7	7	0	0
11	Himal Prakrati	Munsiyari	P'garh	40	0	0	0	0
12	Arpan	Dharchula	P'garh	50	30*	0	0	30*?
	Total	-	-	435	179**	59	55	65 ?

Note: R'pyg = Rudraprayag, T.G. = Tehri Garhwal, B'war = Bageshwar, P'garh = Pithoragarh

*Permission for land withheld by the district administration ?Final number uncertain

**Almost the entire village was wiped out by a cloud burst in July 2013. PSI agreed to build 33 units. But after 8 were constructed the district administration brought in another agency to undertake construction. Reduced from 204 since 25 units are to be constructed by another agency as explained above.

Construction activities were slowed down by late administrative responses and poor coordination by local officials. After we had built 8 units in Sunali village, Chamoli district, the district administration asked us to shift to another location and leave the remaining 25 shelters for another agency. Continuing heavy rains in August and a part of September delayed the restoration of road links, slowing down logistics (Fig. 5).

By September 30th 59 shelters were completed. Work has begun for another 55 units. In October we expect to complete at least 73 shelters, though our aim will be to complete all the remaining 120 that have been confirmed so far. Forty seven units are still awaiting permission from district authorities to build on village *van panchayat* lands. We are now seeking the help of local MLAs to help secure land for the construction.

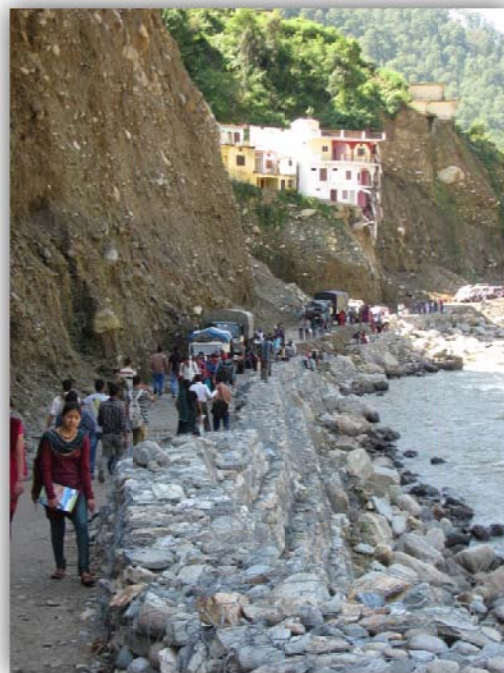


Fig. 5: National highway to Kedarnath

Though the costs per unit have increased significantly due to the addition of the toilets+bathroom units, double-slope roofs and the other above-mentioned improvements, the total expenditure will remain within the budgeted amount for Phase II. This is because in all likelihood the total number of units built ultimately will be less than the earlier expected 300 units.

Volunteers for Phase-II

We have been very fortunate that several accomplished individuals have volunteered with us at the construction sites. We are grateful to them and their organizations for sparing them. The volunteers who have worked so far include:

1. Mr Karthik Seshan, SasiWaters, Hyderabad, 15 days at Chandrapuri, Rudraprayag.
2. Mr Krishna Yashwant, an Aid India volunteer, worked on a contract for two months.
3. Mr Nishant Ojha and Mr Varun Sharma from Latika Roy Foundation, Dehra Doon assisted in the verification process in Chamoli and Rudraprayag districts.
4. Mr. Parth Sejpal, Mumbai.
5. Mr. Najeeb Ashraf, NTPC, Rae Bareilly, for 2 weeks.

We continue to be short-staffed and welcome volunteers, preferably those who can be with us for longer durations. People with construction experience or engineering backgrounds or experience in with mobilizing women's groups are welcome. If necessary we can also work out short-term paid contracts.

II. Meeting with Potential Field Partners for Phase-III

PSI organized a meeting in Dehra Doon on August 26, 2013 with potential field partners for Phase-III of the programme , i.e., the restoration of local livelihoods (Fig.6). It was attended by 5 local partner organizations (POs) from four of the five worst-affected districts. They were:

1. Parvatiya Niyojan Evam Vikas Sansthan (PNVS), Rudraprayag
2. Mount Valley Development Association (MVDA)
3. JANDESH, Joshimath, Chamoli district
4. Kapkot Sewa Samiti (KSS), Kapkot, Bageshwar district
5. Himal Prakriti/ Maiti, Munsiyari, Pithoragarh district



Fig. 6: Partners' meet

The objective of the meeting was to discuss the prospects for livelihoods restoration in disaster-affected villages and possible approaches for Phase-III. At the start PSI outlined the framework of the discussion and presented its thoughts on Phase-III activities and processes.

The POs presented their organization profiles, previous work experience, the work being done by them in the current disaster and also possible livelihood options that could be viable in the disaster-affected clusters where they were currently working. Among the possible livelihoods options discussed were:

- NRM activities based on common pool resources like afforestation, pasture development on wastelands, revival of springs, rain water harvesting, construction and/or renovation of irrigation facilities -- like check dams and guhls (diversion channels), etc. These activities can help increase the productive potential of the village land and water resources.
- Farm-based activities like planting fodder grasses on field bunds, introduction of improved methods of cultivation including greenhouses and the system of crop intensification (SCI)¹ to increase grain yields, cultivation of vegetables, bulbs, tubers, spices and aromatic plants, planting fruit trees on homestead land or farm lands, etc. these can help enhance household incomes.
- Off-farm income and employment generation activities including dairy farming, establishing mini dairies; poultry farming; bee-keeping and honey production; community-based tourism, weaving high-end fabrics; assembly/marketing/ repair of solar lamps, solar panels, mobile phones, TVs; stitching garments; establishing call centres in small towns; upgrading trade skills like masonry, carpentry, plumbing, electrical wiring.
- The effort should be to make the off-farm activities bankable. Bank loans can also be availed to establish value chains wherever necessary.

All the potential partners present expressed an interest in joining the proposed programme. The criteria for selecting villages/clusters were discussed. The partners agreed to submit lists of selected villages for Phase-III to PSI by the second week of September. PSI will review these lists and visit the villages to interact with the villagers before making a final selection.

A second meeting was proposed for after the village visits. In this out-of-state partners like B-ABLE, Letz Dream Foundation and SRIJAN among others with expertise in non-farm livelihood options will be invited along with major funders of PSI's Disaster Response Programme like Axis Bank and Star TV. Before then a draft program outline will be shared with all of them.

¹ Since 2007 PSI has worked with dozens of organizations in Uttarakhand to successfully introduce SCI to tens of thousands of farmers across all districts in the state. See Ravi Chopra & Debashish Sen (2013): "Golden wheat becomes more golden: Extending SRI to wheat", *LEISA India*, v 15 no. 1, Bengaluru, March 2013, pp 30-32.

Budget: A final programme budget for Phase III will be prepared only after the individual village livelihoods rehabilitation and development plans are ready; most likely by March 2014.

We expect to undertake livelihoods development activities in 25 to 30 villages in all. For planning purposes it can be assumed that a typical mountain village has an average of about 50 families. At present it is estimated that the total investment for all livelihoods related activities and facilitation costs could add up to Rs. 5 million/village. Thus the total fund requirement could be in the range of Rs. 125 million to 150 million for 25 to 30 villages over a three year period.

PSI envisages mobilizing donations and grants of about 50 per cent of the total funds required. We expect to mobilize about 40 per cent of the total fund requirement from government programmes like MGNREG Scheme or the National Rural Drinking Water Programme, etc. Villagers' contributions and bank loans can provide the remaining funds.

III. Miscellaneous Activities

Star TV organized a campaign to raise funds for helping the victims of the Uttarakhand disaster. A high point of the campaign was a special fund raising event supported by Mumbai's film industry in the form of a 7-hours programme televised simultaneously by all Star TV channels in India on August 15th, India's Independence Day. On the basis of PSI's proposed disaster response programme Star TV selected it as one of the two organizations through which the funds collected would be spent. Dr. Ravi Chopra represented PSI at the event. (Fig.7)



Fig. 7: Star TV campaign

Dr. Chopra was invited to make a presentation at a roundtable consultation on the Uttarakhand disaster organized by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Asia Regional Office in New Delhi on September 12th. He also represented the Institute at a two day workshop on Sept 2-3, 2013 organized by Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology, Dehra Doon.

PSI's Disaster Mitigation Response Group colleagues have attended relevant coordination meetings convened by the state government, district administrations and non-government coordination bodies.

Dr. Chopra undertook a tour of the Mandakini valley from September 15 to 18, 2013 to review the work being done by PSI, meet with affected communities and POs in the valley as part of a process to begin planning for Phase III of PSI's disaster related work.

IV. Financials

Table 2 summarizes the Programme's monetary receipts and payments till September 30, 2013. Besides the monetary donations, some donors have given in kind, mainly solar lamps. It is heartening that donations from India are significantly higher than foreign contributions. We have also received some pledges of contributions that will be made later. Axis Bank Foundation has also offered to consider a grant. Some more contributions may come in from the Star TV campaign. With the pace of construction of temporary shelters picking up, the disbursements have also picked up now. We expect to spend just over Rs. 10 million during Phases I & II.

Table 2: Monetary Receipts and Payments for Uttarakhand 2013 Disaster Response (30.09.13)

Sl. No.	Type of funds	Direct Donations to PSI Rs.	Star TV Campaign Donations Rs.	Total Rs.	Payments Rs.
1.	Indian funds	13,716,617.70	5,327,198.73	19,043,816.43	3,660,851.00
2.	Foreign funds	6,392,463.08	8,001,848.56	14,394,311.64	1,948,193.00
3.	TOTAL	20,109,080.78	13,329,047.29	33,438,128.07	5,609,044.00

The Programme expenses are detailed below.

Table 3: Programme Expenses (30.09.13)

Sl. No.	Item	Total Budget***	Total Expenditure
1	Relief Material	625,000.00	548,304.00
2	Temporary Shelters*	7,500,000.00	3,534,661.00
3	Toilets**	1,050,000.00	591,500.00
4	Masons' Training Workshops	100,000.00	124,207.00
5	Meetings	60,000.00	16,079.00
6	Phase III Training	140,000.00	-
7	Livelihoods Plans Preparation	200,000.00	-
8	Personnel	775,000.00	503,157.00
9	Travel	145,000.00	145,784.00
10	Miscellaneous	25,000.00	36,489.00
11	Administration	250,000.00	108,863.00
	Total	10,870,000.00	5,609,044.00

* For 250 units

** For 150 units

*** Total budget till the end of Phase-II

A Home for Mr. Bachi Ram

Mr. Bachi Ram (42) of Bajel village in Almora district is a landless lohar (blacksmith), a dalit. He lost his house in the 2010 landslides disaster. He took shelter with eight family members in a small hut which he had constructed for his blacksmithy. In June 2013 this hut was also destroyed. His eldest son Prakash Ram 14 left studies after primary school 5th to work with his father. Mr. Bachi Ram earns some extra money by working as a laborer.

After his tiny workshed was destroyed last June, Mr. Ram approached various government departments for help but got no response. PSI's partner organization Mahila Haat staff heard about his plight in August 2013 and decided to give him a temporary shelter being built during the training workshop. He worked hard to develop the site for building the temporary shelter. His wife and children were very happy with the shelter. "Now we can sleep comfortably and keep our things safely" says Bachi Ram.



Mr. Bachi Ram from Bajel village (Almora) and his family pose before their newly constructed temporary shelters

A Brave Lad's Story

Sunil, the 16 year old son of Manju Devi, lives with his family in Salya village near Guptkashi. Like most young men in Mandakini valley Sunil and his older brother Anil (19 years) went up to Kedarnath to earn money during their summer holidays. They found work in two different lodges. On the morning of June 17th when the wall of water from the Chorabari lake outburst engulfed Kedarnath, Sunil was swept away by the flood water. As he thrashed around in the water his hand managed to grasp the window of a building. Somehow he hauled himself out of the swirling waters into a room. When the flood receded he ventured out and saw that the path outside had been washed away. Some Nepali labourers had strung a rope across the stream and Sunil used it to cross over to safety. He trekked for five days with other survivors to Gauri Kund and then to Sonprayag. He kept a look out for his brother but could not spot him. In Sonprayag, Sunil had to wait a day to cross a river. He left Sonprayag in the middle of the night and walked to Phata. A jeep took him to Guptkashi from where he finally reached home, a week after the flood. But his brother did not reach home. For several days Sunil went to the helipad near Phata and checked around in Guptkashi and Nala village but there was no sign of his brother.



When asked if he will go back to work at Kedarnath in the future, his mother replied with an emphatic "No!" Sunil would like to join the Army when he grows up, but his mother is not keen to put her surviving son in peril.