

Knowledge Resources for Child Centred Disaster Risk Reduction in India


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Disaster Risk Reduction in Pune – Children Play a Key Role

What have drawing lessons got to do with DRR? How can an illiterate person carry out a risk analysis? The RISK Award Project in Pune, India, provides us with answers to these questions.

It has been two years since the All India Institute for Local Self-Government (AIILSG) won the RISK Award, endowed with € 100,000. The NGO is implementing an ambitious programme to prove that the risks for slum residents ensuing from disasters can be dramatically reduced - with simple methods and means. Munich Re Foundation, the donor, joined AIILSG for a field trip and evaluated the project's progress.

Self-dependent Risk Analysis

The Institute has developed an innovative instrument for risk analysis that enables the community authorities in slums to take independent action - even without a scientific background. Instead of using complicated questionnaires reflecting the diverse disaster scenarios, self-explanatory pictograms and a sign language have been developed on the basis of emoticons, e.g. smileys. The slum residents now have a simple method of assessing their situation themselves and informing the project partners accordingly. Even though they might not be able to write. The instrument is called "Self-Assessment and Planning Tool (SAP Tool)".

Women's Self-help Groups Strengthen the Community

Analyses carried out by the United Nations show that women are disproportionately impacted by disasters. The reasons are many and varied. They often have less access to education, they often take care of the household, and consequently are sometimes less mobile than men. Women are therefore often



Dhage Deepa looks over the Janata Vasahat slum on the Parvati Hills. It is located on a steep slope. Each monsoon season triggers grave landslides that often sweep whole houses away.

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underrepresented in risk planning measures of the communities. We aim to change this and integrate women into the measures from the very start. In self-help groups they learn how to prepare for different risks. This can include simple things such as safe handling of gas canisters, the use of a fire-extinguisher or participation in First Aid courses. The measures also extend to complex evacuation drills in the event of a landslide or earthquake. What is important is that responsibility is gradually transferred to the women and that they can independently qualify other women in the slums to become trainers. "This not only strengthens the resilience of the entire community but also the status of the women themselves", emphasises Shweta Gupta from AIILSG.

Children are Key

When disaster risk reduction is at stake, we must think in long-term categories to ensure sustainable success. It is not enough to conduct one training exercise and then believe that everything is safe and well. Following the correct and efficient procedures in a dangerous situation must become an automatic response. This is the only way to save as many

people as possible when disasters strike. DRM-Training must begin as early as possible. Already primary school children must be included. Different kinds of media are used in Pune to make classes interesting and playful. Street plays are one possibility, along with puppet shows, drawing competitions and drills in the community centres. At first glance, the training measures appear to be a bundle of fun for the children. However, they are also a playful way of bringing the messages across successfully. If the children go home and see, for example, that a gas canister is not stored correctly, that an uninsulated cable is running next to a water tap, or that hazardous waste is simply being disposed of, they raise voices of warning in their own homes. These kids become agents of change. ■

- Christian Barthelt, Senior Project Manager, Munich Re Foundation, Germany

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