

D E C C M A



Workshop Report

Report of the India first district stakeholders workshop (North 24 Parganas), 22nd January 2015



DECCMA India team



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About DECCMA Working Papers

This series is based on the work of the Deltas, Vulnerability and Climate Change: Migration and Adaptation (DECCMA) project, funded by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) through the **Collaborative Adaptation Research Initiative in Africa and Asia (CARIAA)**. CARIAA aims to build the resilience of vulnerable populations and their livelihoods in three climate change hot spots in Africa and Asia. The program supports collaborative research to inform adaptation policy and practice.

Titles in this series are intended to share initial findings and lessons from research studies commissioned by the program. Papers are intended to foster exchange and dialogue within science and policy circles concerned with climate change adaptation in vulnerability hotspots. As an interim output of the DECCMA project, they have not undergone an external review process. Opinions stated are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the policies or opinions of IDRC, DFID, or partners. Feedback is welcomed as a means to strengthen these works: some may later be revised for peer-reviewed publication.

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DECCMA-India Minutes of the 1st District Level Stakeholder Meet North 24 Parganas,
Indian Sundarbans Delta (ISD) At Dhamakhali, West Bengal On January 22nd, 2014; IST
11:00 am – 5:00 pm

Contents

Attendees.....	1
Agenda	4
Activity 1	5
Activity 2.....	6
Activity 3.....	9
Group I	9
Group II	10
Group III	11
Group IV.....	11
Group V.....	11
Activity 4.....	12

Attendees

DECCMA-INDIA LEAD INSTITUTION - JADAVPUR UNIVERSITY (JU):

- Dr. Somnath Hazra, Senior Research Fellow
- Mr. Shouvik Das, Junior Research Fellow

CENTRE FOR ENVIRONMENT & DEVELOPMENT (CED) PARTNER ORGANISATION WITH JU DECCMA-INDIA

- Dr. A K Ghosh, Director, CED, Work Package-1 Lead Team-India
- Ms. Clare Lizamit Samling, Junior Research Fellow (WP 3), DECCMA-CED
- Ms. Sunita Dey, Junior Research Fellow (WP 1 & 6), DECCMA-CED

GOVERNMENT:

- Mr. Subhas Chandra Acharya, Former Joint Director, Sundarban Development Board (SDB) & Convener for the sectoral Plan for Sundarbans CCA
- Prof. Abdul Gani, Professor, Natural Disaster Management & Administrative Training Institute (ATI), GoWB & Ex Officio Joint Secretary, GoWB
- Mr. Somnath Dey, Block Development Officer (BDO), Sandeshkhali II

LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT/PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS:

- Sri Nirapada Sarkar, Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA), Sandeshkhali Block
- Sri. Subhendu Mondol, Sabhapati, Panchayat Samity Haroa, North 24 Parganas
- Sri. Manik Joguhin, Member, Jeiakhali Gram Panchayat, Sandeshkhali II
- Sri. Nishikanta Das, Member, Nityaberia Gram Panchayat
- Smt. Anjana Mondol Biswas, Khulna Gram Panchyat, Sandeshkhali II
- Sri. Tapas Halder, Sabhadipati Representative, Sandeshkhali Block I
- Sri. Hemanta Mondol, Member Koragati Gram Panchayat, Sandeshkhali II
- Sri. Monoranjan Bridja, Koragati Gram Panchayat, Sandeshkhali II
- Sri. Sirajul Mir, Sandeshkhali Gram Panchayat, Sandeshkhali Block II
- Sri. Ananda Das, Elected Member, PRI Gram Panchayat, Sandeshkhali Block II

EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:

1. Atapur Kenaram High School, Atapur Gram, Sandeshkhali II

Swapan Kumar Das, Teacher

2. Jeliakhali H S School, Jeliakahli Gram, Sandeshkhali II

Utpal Sardar, Member, School Managing Committee

NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS/COMMUNITY BASED ORGANISATIONS (CBO):

1. Joygopalpur Youth Development Centre (JYDC)

- Dinabandhu Das, Secretary
- Krishnapada Paik, Coordinator

- Monikanta das, Supervisor
 - Goutam Mondol, Treasurer
 - Azim Mondol, Supervisor
 - Srikrishna Mistri, Committee Member
 - Utpal Das, SHG Training Centre
 - Anjana Das, SHG Member
 - Tumpa Singha, SHG Member
 - Parama Gayen, SHG Member
 - Mita Singha, SHG Member
 - Minakshi Das, SHG Member
 - Sanjib Mistri, Coordinator, Child Line
 - Kaushik Bhunia, Child Line
 - Rupali Khendit, SHG Member
 - Manisha Das, SHG Member
 - Mohua Das, SHG Member
 - Bulu Pramanik, SHG Member
 - Sumitra Das Mondol, SHG Member
 - Samir Kumar Munian, SHG Member
 - Madhab Chandra Barman, Tailor Master, SHG Training Centre
 - Kinkar Das, Tailor Master, SHG Training Centre
 - Shiraj Akunji, Office Staff
 - Nawaz Seth, Office Staff
 - Nimai Dhar, Supervisor, Social Work
 - Sukumar Das, Supervisor, Women Training
 - Kakhoka Sardar, WASH Unit Member
 - Ajanta Singha, SHG Member
 - Ramkrishna Baidya, Sahebkhali, Hingalgunj
 - Dilip Panda, Sahebkhali, Hingalgunj
- 2. District Rural Development Cell (DRDC)**
- Mofizul Laskar, District Resource Person
- 3. National Rural Mission (NRSN)**
- Soumen Guchait, Chief Resource Person
- 4. Nimpith Ramkrishna Asram, Nimpith, North 24 Parganas**
- Mrinmoy Mondol
- 5. Adra-India**
- Jayanta Mondol, Tongtala Gram, Sandeshkhali II
- 6. Krishi Unnayan Samiti (KUS), Sandeshkhali II**
- Sandip Das
- 7. Sandeshkhali Uttaray Sangha**

- Rubi Mondol Ghosh

8. Prabhabati Smriti Sangha (PBBM)

- Sudhanshu Sekhar Mondol, Sabhapati

9. Dakshin Social Welfare Society (DSWS)

- Hriday Ghosh, Secretary
- Sahabuddin Mollah, Coordinator

10. Dishari Sangha, Dhamakhali

- Halijur Rahaman Mollah
- Sahid Mistry
- Jahangir Sardar
- Chaeydi Ali Mollah
- Bulbul
- Henalala Rashid, Secretary
- Alim Mollah, Vice President
- Ainur Mollah
- Babu

11. Jelikhali Vivekananda Club

- Sukumar Biswas
- Asit Mondol

12. Sundarban Harishpur Society for Human Resource Improvement, Gosaba Block

- Jugal Prasad Mondol

13. Sathi Seva, Sandeshkhali II

- Swapan Nan, Secretary
- Uttam Kumar Naskar, Sanitary Mart
- Naba Kumar Mondol

14. GAS, Haroa

Nasiruddin Mollah

15. Janakalyan Society

Pinoy Naskar

16. Traders Association, Sandeshkhali II

Dhiman Mondol, Member

SELF HELP GROUP (SHG): 1. Chetana Swanirvar Gosthi

Sulata

2. Biplabi Khudaram Gosthi

Jamuna Mirdha

3. Raimangal Gosthi

Dipali Singha

4. Sandeshkhali Cluster SHG

Shyamali Naik

5. Manipur Mabasanti Sangha

Lalita Das, Saha Sabhanetri

6. Atapur Swanirvar Gosthi

Sulata Biswas

7. Sonar Bangla Sangha

Sadhana Ari

8. Khulna Nabadiganta Sangha

Sujata Bowli

9. Bholakhali Adivashi Jana Kalyan Sangha

Subimal Sardar, Secretary

10. Jeliakhali Pravati Swanirvar Sangha

Kalpana Sardar, Saha Sabhanetri Sumita Manna Reba Aguan

11. Durga Mondop Gosthi

Jamuna Mirdha

12. Bibek Chetna Pragati Sangha

Niranjan Sarkar, Sabhapati (President)

13. Biswalakhmi Swanivar Gosthi

Sirin Ansari

14. Sandeshkhali Lakkhi Narayan Swanirvar Daul

Rama Das

15. Shib-Durga Swanirvar Gosthi

Anima Das Mondol, Sampadika, (Secretary)

16. Raimangal Swanirvar Gosthi

Phuleshwari Sardar, Sabhanetri, (Chair Person)

17. Disha SHG

Tulika Singha

Rakhi Singha

18. Ma SHG

Jaba Singha Chameli Singha

19. Agnishikha Swanirvar Gosthi

Rita Naskar, Treasurer

20. Joyguru Swanirvar Gosthi

Sushama De, Sampadika (Chair Person)

Agenda

Registration – 10:30 am – 10:45 am

Activity 1: 10:45 am – 11:45 am

1. Welcome Address by Dr. A K Ghosh, Director, CED on behalf of DECCMA-India 2. Address from India Team, Lead Institution: Jadavpur University 3. Self Introduction of the participants 4. Presentation on the theme of the meet by Dr. A K Ghosh

TEA BREAK: 11:45 pm – 12 noon Activity 2: 12 noon – 1:15 pm 5. Presentations by the participants (15 minutes each)

- Dr. Jose Matthew, IFS, Chief Environment Officer, GoWB & Member Secretary, West Bengal Biodiversity Board
- Mr. Subhas Acharya, Formerly Joint Director, Sundarban Development Board & Convener, Sectoral Plan for Climate Change & Sundarbans GoWB
- Representatives from Local Self Government/Panchayati Raj Institutions
- Mr. Dinabandhu Das, Secretary, Joygopalpur Youth Development Centre (JYDC) Activity 3: 1:15 pm – 2:15 pm 6. Dividing the participants into groups for Group Activity and Discussions
- Reaction of the community during Natural Disaster/“Cyclone Aila” in 2009?
- Effectiveness of the Early Warning System, if any?
- Experience of Post Disaster “Cyclone Aila” scenario?
- What Adaptation measures, in terms of Lives, Livelihood taken by the Community or the Government, if any?
- Experience of Post “Cyclone Aila” period’s relief?
- Is there any case of Migration from the area?
- If yes, who were the principle Migrant able bodied male/some selected members/entire family
- What are the preferred areas of Migration, noted in the region?

BREAK FOR LUNCH: 2:15 pm – 3:00 pm

Activity 3 (continued): 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm

7. Followed by presentations from each groups 8. Suggestions from the groups

Activity 4: 4:00 pm – 4:45 pm

9. Feedback Sessions from the different Stakeholder invited

10. Sum up Discussion by Dr. Asish K Ghosh

TEA BREAK: 4:45 pm – 5:00 pm

Activity 1

• Welcome Address: Dr. A K Ghosh, Director CED, on behalf of DECCMA-India to all the participants at 1st District Level Stakeholder Meeting, representing all the six Blocks of Indian Sundarbans Delta, North 24 Parganas District, West Bengal. He specially expressed his thanks to the Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) from Sandeshkhali Block II, the Block Development Officer, the Karmadhaksha of Panchayat Samiti, Representative of Disaster Management Authority and the Former Joint Director of Sundarbans Development Board.

He explained in details the objective of the DECCMA project, focusing on the vulnerability of ISD in the era of Climate Change, the current modes of Adaptation and on the trend of Migration of human population from the Delta, especially in the Post Aila Period. He emphasized on the need for support for Adaptation programme as well as preparedness for Disaster Management to avoid large scale human Migration, which has been predicted in the in the study of Indian Sundarban Delta: A Vision, WWF-I and the most recent report of Caritas,

by Prof. Sugata Hazra. It has been pointed out that on the basis of Delta Vision and subsequent studies, it is predicted that more than 1 million people may have to move out of ISD between 2030-2050. Unless the farmers and the fishers of Sundarbans are empowered with additional skills, it may be extremely difficult for the immigrants to settle in the new localities.

Mentions were also made that, this workshop is the first step towards further interactions with the community, throughout the life of the project, to understand the gaps within the concerned government departments, expectations of the people and execution of the plans and policies at the receivers end.

He mentioned about the community initiative to make the adaptation for food security a success with the Salt Tolerant Paddy cultivation, after the incidence of "Cyclone Aila" in 2009, and to what extent the initiative has helped the community to cope up with the crisis. This is just but one example.

- Dr. Somnath Hazra, representing JU Lead Team, introduced the DECCMA Project to the participants. He also mentioned about the cases and records of migration from the area. Mentions were made about the review of the existing government policies to that of the problems of Migration. He also mentioned about the Intergovernmental Panel for Climate Change (IPCC) where the coastal areas are identified as highly vulnerable areas due to impacts of climate change, and Indian Sundarbans part of Ganga-Meghna-Brahmaputra Delta is on high alert due to the large number of population it supports.

Activity 2: Presentation by the Panel

- Mr. Nirapada Sardar, MLA, Sandeshkhali II, was the first speaker on the theme. He started with the recent problems faced by the people of Sundarbans. People who have shifted from agriculture to aquaculture are now facing problems of river water contamination due to untreated sewage dumped in the rivers which flows towards the Sundarbans and due to the changes in the land use pattern converting the prawn culture areas into Brick Kilns. The main reason behind migration, he believes is due to the loss of livelihood and thus income, which has led people to migrate to other places for work. He feels that more discussion is needed on this issue.

He is also of the opinion that meeting in Kolkata on this issue would not have been fruitful as they would not have been able to see the reality of Sundarbans and welcome the selection of the site for stakeholder meeting, where the true representatives of the community can attend. He ended with a note on the need to save Sundarbans.

- Mr. Somnath Dey, Block Development Officer (BDO), Sandeshkhali II, thanked the organizers for inviting him to the event. According to him, Climate Change is an emerging issue and has large media coverage. He read about the sea level rise in the Sundarbans and the consequent submergence of islands after 20-25 years and has been realizing, how devastating the impact can be. He dwelt at large on the current system of governance and socio-economic, political, scenarios in the area under his jurisdiction. The common mass is majorly poor and often suffer from heavy debt burden due to the inefficiency of the Banking personnel/structure and Post Office. The process involves investment from the people with no assured returns on time or delayed processing. Mentions were made about lodging a First Information Report (FIR) at the local Police Station against one Post Office. He also mentioned about the limitations of the Adaptation choices among the community. He clearly stated that, the choices does not emphasize Gender specificity, thereby, women folk are the worst sufferer in majority of the cases. He pointed out that, the majority of the money given under the scheme of "Indira Awas Yagna" for reconstruction of houses damaged during "Cyclone Aila", were actually used up for other non productive purposes. Instances were also given about the non regularized payment of pensions for five to six months. He pointed out that, 25% of the population from the area have already migrated, which becomes evidence during the

verification of the Voters List. One of the reasons for such migration is the lack of opportunity with increasing price rise and inability of the earning member to maintain the family. The limitation of rain-fed agriculture often lead to mono cropping and thereby, land remains unutilized, resulting in very poor family income.

On the subject of embankments, he expressed his doubts about durability of the new embankments that are being built. On the other hand, more emphasis should be given on Mangrove Afforestation and Conservation; according to him, people have not yet fully understood the importance of mangroves in the Sundarbans landscape. He shared with the participants an incident of a visit to a mangrove plantation in a certain area which was totally deforested within a period of two years. Impractical proposal in the name of Economic Development should be rejected like setting up of Cold Storage in an area, where no vegetables are produced. He fears that, in the name of Economic Development, common people of ISD are often exploited by unscrupulous outsiders.

Mentions were made about the importance of regular monitoring of the salinity and the pH of the groundwater. He pointed out that, it was observed that there is a shift in the livelihood pattern through the clearance of Mangrove forests for livelihood sustenance before "Cyclone Aila" while, during the Post Aila period how the shrimp farms were overnight converted to Brick Kilns due to the loss associated with the viral disease infections of the shrimp cultivation. People are also facing the problem of unavailability of fish seedlings in the rivers, which in turn leading to the closure of the prawn fisheries. The entire region also suffers from poor road connectivity.

He also pointed out that, National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) has implemented successfully in five villages under his jurisdiction in Sandeshkhali II through Intensive Participatory Planning Exercise (IPPE) Model. Proposal has been made to Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) for the development of shallow tube-wells and mud channel. But the excavation of the canal in the area is still pending. Mentions were also made about the proposal for development of Eco-Tourism in Atapur village of Sandeshkhali II, by a local NGO, viz. Joygopalpur Youth Development Centre (JYDC) which is in the process of consideration. The initiative could augment income generation for the locals in the area. Finally, he pointed out that, though the blocks of Sandeshkhali I & II and Hingalgunj are highly vulnerable areas to Climate Change impacts, still there is no allocation of fund for Adaptation and development. It is intriguing to note that, while Agriculture and Embankment play vital role in the life and livelihood of the people factors, positive efforts to develop the same at a faster pace are not evidenced. He ended his presentation with an open ended question so as how to stop the Emigration from the area, in such a scenario?

- Mr. Subhas Chandra Acharya, Former Joint Director, Sundarban Development Board (SDB) & Convener for the sectoral Plan for Sundarbans CCA, acknowledged the Presentees and started with the note that regarding the theme in question, the problem is more of talk and less of action. He shared his experience on the West Bengal State Climate Change Action Plan (SAPCC) and his association during the formulation of the sectoral plan on Sundarbans undertaken National Action Plan for Climate Change (NAPCC). He clearly pointed out that the stress was given on both Adaptation & Mitigation in the sectoral plan for Indian Sundarbans. He further claims that the region is already experiencing effects of Climate Change. He points out that for the formulation of the West Bengal SAPCC no stakeholders were consulted but reviewed various reports, studies and websites.

Mentions were also made about earlier initiatives taken by the then MLA viz. Kumud Ranjan Biswas in the village named chinchurah against the heinous or a dangerous practice of extraction of groundwater. Further, a law in India, states that the extraction of groundwater required prior permission from a competent authority, but who to approach is not clearly specified. A method of desalinization of the brackish water for drinking purposes was also initiated during the same. It involves the storage of the brackish water in an earthen pot soaking tamarind overnight and on the following day, the water needed to be sieved before

consumption. He also mentioned about the fresh water and the embankment, is considered as the two most essential component needed for the survival in the area.

He pointed out that, the devastation of "Cyclone Aila" has lead to the creation of Saline Blanks i.e. agricultural lands ingresses by saline water, unfit for agricultural production, on various islands facing the sea. Earlier the entire Mangroves on the islands of Indian Sundarbans were cleared to accommodate people moving in from the adjoining areas of East Bengal (after Republic of Bangladesh), Midnapore district and states of Odisha. But in recent times due to cyclones, rising of sea level and land subsidence, the area is witnessing out migration of the population. The destination of the migrated population can be traced to fringes of the Kolkata Metropolitan Region viz. Baruipur, Sonarpur, Behala and others. He also mentioned about the forms of Migration observed from the viz. Forced Migration-which is due to the loss of livelihood and income, Willing Migration- among the youth is may be due to the lack of employment facility or training of skill development, though there are degree colleges for higher studies in the 16 blocks out of 19 blocks of ISD Permanent Migration-Mentions were also made about the recorded number population displaced in last 30 years amounts to 7, 000. & Seasonal Migration-people migrated to Kerala to work in Coconut farms, during lean season.

He clearly stated that, migration should now be considered as a strategy of Adaptation because the land per person ratio is 0.06%, with a population of 4.7 million. He also pointed that, due to lack of skill development and training, the emigrants often takes up toilet cleaning and sweeping as their means of livelihood in places like Delhi. He also stated that all the cyclones and the storm surges has happened during day, otherwise the number of casualties would have been doubled. The villages in the areas like Atapur, Jharkhali, Dulduli, Patharpratima were the most affected because the lack of early warning system and the evacuation process, unfortunately the same has not yet been ensured. One day Aila alone led to the death of 130 people.

- Commenting on Mr. Acharaya"s statement, Dr. A K Ghosh stated that the available data shows that, at least 2 million people affected; 1300 km length of embankment was breached and 197 human deaths were reported besides, yet to be estimated loss to live stocks in Indian Sundarbans.

- Prof. Abdul Gani, Professor, Natural Disaster Management & Administrative Training Institute (ATI), GoWB & Ex Officio Joint Secretary, GoWB, was introduced to the participants by Dr. Ghosh; he also mentioned that Prof. Gani is appointed as Trainer for Skill Development in Haroa Gram Panchayat (GP). Prof. Gani addressed the audience that, the sole purpose of his visit during the workshop was to listen to the local or community about their problems, as the receiving end.

In response to the Development of Eco-Tourism proposal mentioned by Mr. Somnath Dey, Block Development Officer (BDO), Sandeshkhali II, he mentions that he has doubt to what extent the initiative will be successful without proper training of the people about the service industry viz. hygiene, customer support, maintenance and ability to deliver. Mentions were also made about the state of Kerala where cultivation of paddy dominates among the rural livelihood support, but with the empowerment of education and skill development, the women migrants from the state of Kerala could be seen serving as nursing staff in most of the private hospitals in Bengal, as the vocation offers better pay scale in Bengal. He emphasized on the need for a system to enlist the Immigrants and the Emigrants at every booth level.

He also emphasized on the need for skill development of the local people on use of handlooms and the crafts to increase the per capita income, and also in the service industry viz. local tourism, and increasing the height of the embankments, as the three measures that could lessen migration. He felt the importance of the education degree or skill ability of the locals, which would further contribute to the growth of country"s Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

- Sri. Subhendu Mondol, Sabhapati, Panchayat Samity Haroa, North 24 Parganas, shared his views on the present status of life and livelihood options in the area of Haroa Block of ISD.

Agricultural yield has reduced over the years and the farmlands are taken over by the outsiders for aquaculture. But later, especially, during “Post Aila” period, there is rapid conversion of the many aquaculture farms into brick kilns for quick returns to repay the debts incurred during the Aila disaster.

National Government schemes for Rural Employment generation have covered most of the villages of the block, which is still unable to stop the out migration from the area. He emphasized on the ill servicing in the banking facility in the area, most of which is non operative or lacks cooperation of the banking personnel, which in turn restricts proper savings and often leads to approach to the money lenders, thereby increasing the debt burden. He concluded that, Unemployment is the major crisis for the people of the area.

Activity 3: Group Activity

- Participants were divided into five groups for focused discussions on the given topics.
 1. What was the reaction of the community during „Natural Disaster“/“Cyclone Aila“ in 2009?
 2. Effectiveness of the Early Warning System, if any?
 3. Experience of Post-Disaster „Cyclone Aila“ scenario?
 4. What Adaptation measures, in terms of lives, livelihood was taken by the community or the government, if any?
 5. Experience of Post „Cyclone Aila“ period“s relief?
 6. Is there any case of Migration from the area?
 7. If yes, who were the principle migrant- able bodied male/some selected members/entire family?
 8. What are the preferred areas of migration noted in the region?
- Ms. Sunita Dey, Junior Researcher DECCMA-CED, coordinated with each of the groups to make them understand the given questions (in vernacular) and helped selecting two rapporteurs-one male and one female to present on behalf of each of the groups. Each of the groups was given 20 minutes for the discussion.
- Post Graduate students (11 female & 5 male students) of Human Rights Department, University of Calcutta, who also were present at the Stakeholder Meetings, assisted (3 students per group) in writing the observations from each of the groups. It was ensured that, opinions expressed by both male and female members of the group are equally given importance and recorded.

Afternoon Session ACTIVITY 3 (cont.):

- Presentation on the Group Findings: The following points could be noted from the discussions,

Group I

Ms. Anima Das Mondol, Sampadika (Secretary), Shib-Durga Swanirvar Gosthi (SHG), Singhapara, Sandeshkhali II represented the group, recalling Cyclone Aila of 2009, and said that they did not get any warning about Cyclone Aila from the government. Some of them got to know about an ensuing thunderstorm from their relatives but they thought “it was just a mere storm”. There was intermittent rain for couple of days, which slowly raised the water level and flooded the entire village and then the cyclone struck. The village primary school building served as the shelter during the crisis. She could give shelter to her neighbours, because her house was pucca and built on a higher platform. Pregnant women and children were the most vulnerable during the disaster and were given shelter under tarpaulin located at an elevated area. Road connectivity was lost due to flooding. The embankments were destroyed and also all communication lines were disrupted. Bloated carcasses of animals were found everywhere. All the kuchha (mud) houses in the village were destroyed. For 2-3 days they had to go without food and clean drinking water. Even when food was available, due to lack of clean drinking

water, contaminated water led to diarrhea. Finally, they had to travel across the river to Dhamakhali to avail clean water from supply tap.

After three days, relief was sent through boats, which included items like beaten rice, jaggery, baby food, biscuits, milk and some clothes, provided by the Government in Dhamakhali (Nazat bus stand). At least once the helicopters carried relief materials for dropping. Gram Panchayat opened Langarkhana (community canteen serving cooked dal and rice) after 2-3 days but it could not reach all.

Post-Aila recovery has been very slow, almost 6-7 months. Although compensation packages have been distributed by the government to the Aila victims (for house construction of Rs. 10,000/- and 2,500/- as partial damage) but the money has yet not been received (even in 2015) by all the victims. They are of the belief that the money is in the hold of some NGOs or political parties. The compensation for Aila has not been received by the villagers in the interior parts of the region yet.

The greatest impact was felt in the agricultural sector; the main livelihood of the people was disrupted due to the increase in the salinity of the soil. As a result, people started migrating to places such as Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala etc.

There is a trend of individual as well as family migration and also temporary as well as permanent migration. Single crop production usually paddy was the practice but now the people have moved to vegetable cultivation. Drinking water ponds have now been dug up. Construction of toilets has started and embankments are still being repaired.

Group II

Mr. Krishnapada Paik, Coordinator, JYDC, Moinapur GP, Sandeshkhali Block, presented on behalf of the group. According to him, Cyclone Aila raised the water level to 8 ft. which led to the loss of many lives, both human and animals, since, people were not warned about the onset of the cyclone. It took them more or less three years to get back to their usual life. Elderly, disabled, children and pregnant women, according to the group, were the most vulnerable during such disasters. Even in the makeshift Rescue Shelters, women faced problems because there are no separate lavatories for women. There was lack of Search and Rescue Team during the post disaster period to reach out to the trapped population.

Cases of Migration have become more after Aila due to loss of livelihood of the people in the region. The conversion of the agricultural field into aquaculture farms was increased during the period.

Through the lessons learnt during Aila, they planned on the formation of a Special Task Team, which would be divided into several teams with specific task for Disaster Management, Women and Child Protection, Education; a Search and Rescue Team - to assess the number of such vulnerable people; a First Aid Team that would attend to the basic health care of the people during such disasters.

A Women and Child Protection Team also has been formed to prevent trafficking from the area; Other teams that have been formed includes: A Village Protection Team, to protect from theft and robbery; Carcass Disposal Team - also with the additional task of providing tablets, bleaching powders etc; a Child Survival Team - to provide with baby food, clothing etc during crisis period. Family Survival Team - to provide people with torch lights, candles, dry food etc; Valuable Survival Team - to look into important documents of people like Ration Cards, Voter's card etc. A Knowledge Information Centre, to provide life-jackets, medicines, contact numbers of boatmen, motor van pullers etc., during emergencies. But there is also need for proactive Early Warning System through radio or television.

Group III

Ms. Phuleshwari Sardar, Sabhanetri (Chair Person), Raimangal Swanirvar Gosthi, presented on behalf of the group and informed that they were totally unaware of the ensuing Cyclone. The embankments and huts were destroyed. The people took shelter in primary schools and BDO's quarter, as they were pucca houses. Water surrounded the area and carcasses of animals could be seen floating in the waters. Family members were separated from each other. Transport and communication were totally disrupted. Diarrhea and other enteric diseases were on the rise. People faced problems of provision of foods and clothing. They would eat whatever they could scavenge. After about 15 days, relief was sent by the government. Relief has been also sent from Dhamakhali. It can be noted that assistance was majorly provided by National and international NGOs and community organizations.

Compensation was provided to the Aila victim households in the form of money- Rs. 10,000 for severely affected households and Rs. 2,500 for partially affected households. But most of the people have still not yet received the partially affected compensation.

Lack of livelihood opportunities during Post-Aila period, has led to migration of people to states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala etc., in search of work. Still now there is no Cyclone or Flood Shelters in the interiors, which have been constructed only near market places in the villages.

Group IV

Ms. Rubi Mondol Ghosh, Sandeshkhali Uttaray Sangha, presented on behalf of the group and proclaimed that there was no proper early warning system during Aila. People took shelter in elevated places. Insufficiency of food, clothing and drinking water were the main problems that were faced by the people. Smell of rotten carcasses of animals filled the air. Communication lines were all disrupted. Till today some of the people whose houses have been destroyed are living in temporary make-shift houses made of polythenes. Food and relief were provided after 2-3 days. About 16 Kgs of rice were given to each of the family.

During Post-Aila, the people could not cultivate for 3-4 years and some of them took up fishing as a means of livelihood. Compensation was provided in the form of money, in the same rate as mentioned above.

People have migrated to other areas like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andamans etc., where they work as construction laborers, sweepers, masons, etc. No jobs were provided by the government. Trend of both family as well as individual migration can be seen.

Group V

Mr. Jayanta Mondol, Adra-India (CBO), Tongtala Gram, Sandeshkhali II, presented on behalf of the group. He emphasized that there was severe drawbacks in the existing early warning system, which was seen during Cyclone Aila. The earlier organisation, he was working with, provided the task force in each of the mouza/booth during the disaster. The roads, embankments and the first story school building were the only places where people took shelter. But none of the places have the facility of toilets for 70-80 people, which led to the spread of infections and diarrhea.

There was no source of drinking water in the area. Initially relief was sent from Dhamakhali, but did not reach all the targeted population. Relief from the helicopters reached after 10-15 days. It consisted of beaten rice, jaggery, lentils, baby food and biscuits, also drinking water

pouches and chlorine tablets from UNICEF. Later on, drinking water in 10 litres of barrel was procured from tap water supply in Dhamakhali, through boats.

They have recorded cases of out migration from the area due to loss of livelihood and property.

Activity 4

• Feedback Session:

The elected representative Sri Nuirapada Sardar MLA, opined that, this is the first of its kind of meeting ever organised cutting across all stakeholders and expected that, efforts of DECCMA Project will motivate the International Community as well as the National Government to understand the problems of the delta and help the local community to adapt with adequate financial support, specially focusing on food security, access to safe drinking water, sanitation and health care, effective embankment construction but above all with a workable Disaster Management System.

The Block Development Officer (BDO) also opined in the similar line but mentioned about the financial limitations in implementing the current program of work.

The Former Joint Director, Sundarban Development Board focuses specially on the need for setting up the Skill Development Centre at the earliest and expressed his hope that, International funding for Adaptation, the sooner the better, may enable to achieve such a program.

Prof. Gani, from Administrative Training Institute agreed with the observation of the MLA.

The NGO/CBO representatives in general focused on the need for financial support to undertake programs for effective implementations of Adaptation schemes including the construction of Cyclone shelters especially in the most vulnerable blocks of ISD.

The Women representatives of the SHG"s also demand adequate allocation of fund to undertake livelihood implement program, in the Post-Aila Period as well as to combat with the future uncertainties.

• Sum up Discussion by Dr. A K Ghosh

Dr. Ghosh extended his heartfelt thanks to all the participants, who have travelled from far and wide distances. The day long discussion according to him clearly pointed out that; - State level Climate change action Plan involving subsector of Sundarbans is yet to be started

- In spite of fund being released for construction of concrete embankment, the Land Acquisition Policy of the state prevented to achieve the target, which has so far reached only 20%. However, stakeholders seems to be doubtful of the effectiveness of any reconstructed embankments incase of cyclones hitting with greater intensity

- Even after five years of Cyclone Aila, poor and marginalized community are still to get Government support to rebuild dwelling houses and continue to live in misery, in make shift of polythene.

- The issue of absence of lack of appropriate Disaster Management system, including lack Early Warning System and absence of Cyclone Shelters, as pointed out by the participants should be given immediate attention in view of the extreme vulnerability of ISD.

- To achieve successful migration, failing Adaptation or as a part of Adaptation, immediate all out effort should be made to empower the able bodied male and women with appropriate skill development viz. plumbing, carpentry, electrical wiring, masonry, painting, stitching of garments, as demand for such skilled people are increasing all over the country.

- The meeting has ended with a vote of thanks, given by Dr. A K Ghosh, Director CED

NOTE:

1. Dr. Jose Mathew – Communicated over phone, unable to attend the Stakeholder Meeting due to another urgent meeting called by Secretary, GoWB
2. Senior Development Officer (SDO) and Sabhadipati – Could not attend the meeting due to the upcoming elections in the blocks North 24 Parganas of Indian Sundarbans region, as they are barred by existing code of conduct to attend any meeting and express their opinions which can influence the electorate.