

PwCIF and SEEDS

**Collaboration for
humanitarian action**

July 2020



डा. जितेन्द्र सिंह

केन्द्रीय राज्य मंत्री (स्वतंत्र प्रभार)
उत्तर पूर्वी क्षेत्र विकास मंत्रालय,
राज्य मंत्री प्रधान मंत्री कार्यालय,
कार्मिक, लोक शिकायत तथा पेंशन मंत्रालय,
परमाणु उर्जा विभाग तथा अंतरिक्ष मंत्रालय,
भारत सरकार



DR. JITENDRA SINGH

Union Minister of State (Independent Charge),
Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER),
Minister of State, Prime Minister's Office,
Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions
Department of Atomic Energy & Department of Space,
Government of India

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FOREWORD

Humanitarian crises are devastating reminders of climate change and contagion-based threats to humanity. Our citizens safety and long-term resilience to increasingly frequent disasters is a priority to our Government. Through scientific restructuring and modernisation, we are constantly improving our states' and frontline workers preparedness to face threats. At this time, it is heartening to note able support from collaborators in the private and not-for-profit sector.

I appreciate the PwC India Foundation and SEEDS on successfully rebuilding disaster resilient social infrastructure including schools, water structures and interim shelters in complex terrains. I also take this opportunity to appreciate the agencies for positively impacting the lives of affected communities, vulnerable children, women and tribals through their projects. This publication may provide a roadmap for many seeking insights into participative approaches for engaging collaborations.

(Dr. Jitendra Singh)
MBBS (Stanley, Chennai)
MD Medicine, Fellowship (AIIMS, NDL)
MNAMS Diabetes & Endocrinology)

“ I appreciate the PwC India Foundation and SEEDS on successfully rebuilding disaster resilient social infrastructure including schools, water structures and interim shelters in complex terrains. ”

Preface

To achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, it is necessary to design interventions and build collaborations that respond to the needs of affected and at-risk communities, women, girls, children, refugees and internally displaced people who have been impacted by conflict and natural hazards.¹ In order to address these needs, the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 sought to restructure the existing humanitarian architecture in consonance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Governments, international institutions, the private sector and civil society organisations have since begun to leverage each other's comparative advantage to usher in improved efficiencies and effectiveness in humanitarian response. This has become increasingly relevant as we witness disturbing new trends in disasters that are repeatedly endangering communities as well as businesses and debilitating state resources.

Today, natural hazards affect approximately 160 million people and cost the global economy over USD 520 billion annually. The World Bank estimates that disasters push 26 million people into poverty every year.² According to the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR),³ between 1998–2017, India experienced economic losses worth USD 79.5 billion due to natural hazards. Through georeferencing, the UNISDR report also notes that in low-income countries, people exposed to natural hazards are more than seven times likely to die than their counterparts in higher income countries. These trends point towards significant challenges for states and humanitarian actors.

The PricewaterhouseCoopers India Foundation (PwCIF) and the Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society (SEEDS) collaboration, in responding to disasters in South Asia, demonstrates the potential for successful private sector and civil society interventions for humanitarian action and post-disaster restoration. The abiding relationship that has grown over our joint response to three critical emergencies in India and Nepal has brought us unique learnings.

Since its inception, the collaboration was based on a shared understanding of humanitarian principles – humanity, independence, neutrality and impartiality. Together, we carried out assessments of affected communities, keeping their needs at the centre of our response design. This required both partner organisations to be jointly accountable to the people; any challenges SEEDS faced on ground were addressed

based on mutual discussion and understanding with PwCIF. Overall, flexibility in programming that reflected the changing ground realities was key to improving effectiveness and programme success.

SEEDS, while responding to emergencies and working with affected communities, treats communities as equal partners. We respect and learn from their traditions and incorporate local culture into our designs while investing in developing a community's capacity to build back better. In each of our projects, the communities are treated as partners and not just 'beneficiaries'. PwCIF brings its globally recognised skill sets and expertise to its collaborations while ensuring project management is enhanced through transparency and accountability from inception to implementation. Through its wide-ranging experience in designing solutions, PwCIF brings international standards to programme delivery, and its teams are actively engaged at every step of the humanitarian response cycle.

While building a primary school after the floods in Pulwama (South Kashmir) through a participative model, we learnt how to slowly but surely build trust in an environment of instability. In Nepal, our intervention benefited from the knowledge of our on-ground partner's experience in logistics and transport. At Wayanad, we built shelters and cleaned community wells in response to the needs of the poorest and predominantly tribal communities, as identified by the communities themselves. Each of our interventions has shaped our understanding of individual roles based on the changing grassroots challenges.

This publication is an attempt to share our learnings with a wider audience, with the hope that collaborations between businesses and civil society organisations are taken beyond typical funding arrangements.

Jaivir Singh

Leader, PwC Global Office for Humanitarian Affairs

Vice Chairman, PwC India Foundation

Manu Gupta

Co-founder, SEEDS

¹ We believe no disaster is 'natural'. There are risks and vulnerabilities, sometimes under the radar, which when not managed well (or inadequately prepared for) give rise to a disaster situation.

² S. Hallegatte, A. Vogt, Schilb, M. Bangalore & J. Rozenburg. (2017). *Unbreakable: Building the resilience of the poor in the face of natural disasters*. Washington: The World Bank.

³ UNISDR. (2017). *Economic losses, poverty & Disasters 1998-2017*. Belgium: Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters, United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

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Introduction

The manner in which disasters manifest and their impact on communities is becoming increasingly complex. The subsequent impact on the socioeconomic fabric of communities can be equally multifaceted, causing destruction, trauma and irrevocable loss. A large-scale disaster such as the 2015 Nepal earthquake can severely reverse development gains. Similarly, recurrent small-scale events may keep vulnerable families within the cycle of poverty which is further exacerbated by climate change.⁴ Given this background, responding to the risks and vulnerabilities precipitated by disaster-induced challenges necessitates collaborations for humanitarian action between traditional and non-traditional actors.

1. 1. Shared values and goals

Traditional humanitarian actors include NGOs, bilateral and multilateral agencies, government functionaries, front-line health workers and trained community facilitators. With their experience and training in responding to on-ground needs and mobilising communities, traditional actors lead the planning and implementation of joint humanitarian engagements. Apart from funding the engagement, non-traditional actors such as private sector entities can present diverse, fresh solutions and skill sets while leveraging global networks to address humanitarian needs.

Over the years, corporate social responsibility (CSR) mandates and philanthropy have encouraged the formation of collaborations with shared values and goals. The private sector is keen to associate with and support NGOs at the grassroots. NGOs, on the other hand, are likely to benefit from operational support and the impact-driven, results-based management style of private institutions. Responding to natural disasters and crises together presents a rare opportunity for knowledge exchange between these stakeholders.

New collaborations can be used to redefine the medium, speed and accuracy with which affected communities are assured relief and social safeguards. Such collaborations develop through sustained support during and after a crisis or post-disaster engagement. Not only does this model benefit communities but it also builds the understanding and capacities of the partner institutions involved.

1. 2. Our approach to humanitarian action

Humanitarian action in response to disasters commences with assessing community needs, identifying the most vulnerable amongst prospective beneficiaries, consulting local governments and community-based organisations, and finally rebuilding and restoring social infrastructure. A common understanding, vision and approach are essential for ensuring change via humanitarian action. The PwCIF-SEEDS approach to humanitarian action has been derived from the comprehensive and localised approach designed by SEEDS.

⁴ V. Viswanathan & A. Sharma. (2019). *The Face of disasters*. New Delhi, India: SEEDS.

Our approach towards intervention in design and implementation is derived from the SEEDS approach to provide localised and sustainable solutions that are community-driven

Community led

Each intervention was driven by the community themselves. All stakeholders, including the local government, were actively involved in the process, ensuring shared responsibility. We particularly focused on involving women. Adopting such an approach helped make the processes as meaningful as the final outputs and build core skills that stay with the community.

Socio-technical Integration

A strong technical foundation and the social aspect of engaging with communities come together in each intervention. A socio-technical process design, starting from community mobilisation and going on to include assessment, design and implementation, ensured highly engineered processes and designs that the community could understand from inception.

Innovative design

Our interventions were supported by broader strategic knowledge and innovative action research. SEEDS has extensive experience in studying indigenous technologies, collaborating for architectural design workshops; experimenting with communication and learning tools in order to simplify complex ideas. Innovative design was central to our processes, construction designs and behaviour change strategies in each intervention.

Locally appropriate and sustainable

SEEDS ensures the use of local (and where possible natural) materials and integrates modern disaster-resistance techniques with traditional practices. This has included bamboo, wood, stone, mud, CGI sheeting, traditional grasses and often the use of salvaged material in the aftermath of a disaster. This approach of using locally available and culturally appropriate materials, rather than importing foreign materials, helps decrease the carbon footprint of our interventions while making them more sustainable.

Bridging policy-practice gaps

Through our interventions, we break down abstract policy concepts into actionable items and skill sets that create safer communities. This ranges from disaster management planning to climate-adaptive strategies to training local masons and construction workers on retrofitting and safe construction practices.

Reaching out to the most vulnerable

Our interventions have reached those who are usually left out, both in the aftermath of a disaster and to reduce risks. In Kashmir, we built a school in a conflict-affected district, in Kerala's Wayanad our intervention impacted the quality of life for vulnerable tribals, while in Nepal our shelters were built in a complex geography.

Child-first approach

In disasters and other fragile environments, children get affected the most. SEEDS' child-first approach means all our interventions in disaster scenarios – from preparedness to rebuilding – pay special attention to the safety and security of children.

Participative collaboration

PwCIF and SEEDS collaborate through a participative approach where PwCIF is actively involved in community discussions, design selection, engaging with government stakeholders and ensuring quality management frameworks that are flexible in keeping with the context of the intervention.

Our collaboration

2. 1. An overview of our interventions

Interventions focused on medical needs, access to clean drinking water, shelter, hygienic toilets, rebuilding social infrastructure such as schools, health facilities, water conservation structures and community halls are priority areas for humanitarian action. Apart from these, it is imperative to build the resilience of communities to respond to repeated natural disasters such as droughts, cyclones and floods while providing humanitarian relief.

Together, SEEDS and PwCIF have leveraged their skills for humanitarian action to design interventions in some of these critical areas. For these interventions, SEEDS has provided expertise on mobilising communities, sustainably rebuilding social infrastructure, and ensuring our interventions meet national and local norms. PwCIF, on the other hand, funds these interventions and engages advisory teams and internal expertise to support on-ground interventions.

Our collaborations span four years – from 2015–2018 – and we have responded to three disasters by building upon needs identified by communities and using a high-impact socio-technical and sustainable approach for lasting resilience.



“ In collaboration with PwC, SEEDS has responded to various emergencies – the 2015 Nepal Earthquake, the 2014 Jammu and Kashmir floods, and the 2018 Kerala floods – with a community-driven reconstruction approach. The programmes have been formulated with the vision of building resilient communities through participatory design, illustrating models of contemporary vernacular community architecture. Teams of architects and artisans have worked together for disaster-resilient construction using local materials and skills. Community participation throughout the process, from design to execution, and use of locally available materials have helped in the scaling up of response and allowed homeowners to expand houses as per their requirements. ”

Kamal Chawla, Director – Design, SEEDS

The timeline below provides an overview of our interventions and their impact:

2015



Nepal earthquake response

Need: Displaced and homeless families in the heavily affected Gorkha district required shelter before the monsoon rains and onset of winter.

Within three months, with the help of a corporate foundation, the Chaudhary Foundation, we built 100 shelters and trained 100 masons in disaster resilient construction.

2016-2017



Jammu and Kashmir flood response, Pulwama

Need: A primary school in conflict-affected Pulwama had been extensively damaged by the floods; the school needed new benches, desks and WASH facilities.

We built a new school using local designs, engaging with the community and benefiting over 125 schoolchildren. The new construction and gender-segregated WASH facilities, including new toilets for the teachers, benches and chairs, were appreciated by all.

2018



Kerala flood response

Need: Tribal families in the flood-affected Wayanad district needed new shelters. The water in community wells was not safe for drinking.

Together with the community, we assessed priority needs and built 61 shelters and transitional toilets. Together, we cleaned and repaired 15 community wells, which positively impacted well-being and access to water for 105 families.

2. 2. Collaborating with communities

A participative process involving consultation with communities has been at the centre of each intervention design. After witnessing a disaster, communities are deeply traumatised by the loss of family members and assets. Rebuilding their homes and social infrastructure provides us with an opportunity to collaborate with at-risk communities or those experiencing repeated disasters.

Through participative approaches that support local governments and village councils, our interventions meet legal land and infrastructure-related norms. This ensures that structures are protected and appropriately designed for local use for affected families. Our teams ensure that stakeholders include women, the elderly, and the poorest, those with special needs and children. In addition to improving a sense of ownership of their new assets, interventions leverage consultations with vulnerable communities by providing skills training and awareness sessions on disaster response and WASH.

Nepal earthquake (2015)

Collaborating with a large corporate, the Chaudhary Group, enhanced our intervention as together we leveraged the group's expertise in construction and supply chain management and local presence to speed up our procurement and transport in challenging terrain. Similarly, the pro-bono safety audits of shelters by PwC's advisory team assisted in arriving at design corrections, while SEEDS' robust community mobilisation strategy and on-ground experience ensured we met tight deadlines.

“ PwC was our valuable partner during our post-disaster response in April 2015. It not only lent credibility to the whole process and helped set up the entire monitoring and evaluation system for our post-disaster response project but also performed proper audits. The PwC team played a significant role right from the beginning and added immense value. When the calamity occurred, we were looking for technology that could help us in quickly assessing the damage done. PwC helped us at every stage, particularly on getting us connected with the required technology, and our collaboration has now expanded beyond India's borders. ”

- Dr Binod K Chaudhary,
Chairman of Chaudhary Foundation and CG Corp Global













3. 1. Background

Over 8000 people lost their lives, approximately 400,000 families were left homeless and 2.8 million people were displaced in the catastrophic earthquake that hit Nepal on 25 April 2015. With the monsoons fast approaching, several families needed shelter from the rain and winter. Along with our partner organisation in Nepal, the Chaudhary Foundation, we supported 100 families in the Gairung and Taklung villages of the Gorkha district by building interim shelters.

These shelters were to be built quickly before the monsoon in a terrain that was facing extreme weather conditions and had limited transport facilities

Population affected by earthquake in Gorkha, 25 April 2015		
	Total population	271,061
	Total number of houses	59,871
	Number of fatalities	449
	Number of people injured	952
	Fully destroyed government buildings	227
	Partially destroyed government buildings	36
	Fully destroyed houses	59,527
	Partially destroyed houses	13,428

Source: National Society for Earthquake Technology - Nepal (NSET)⁵

3. 2. Location

The Gorkha district was one of the worst affected as the epicentre of the earthquake was 15 km from the main city. As a result, people were forced to reside in open areas in tents. With a scattered population and difficult terrain where some villages can only be accessed by making the journey on foot for three to four days, PwCIF and SEEDS built 100 transitional shelters to support the families.

⁵ <http://nset.org.np/eq2015/index.php>

3.3. The intervention

In adherence to the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS) principles,⁶ extensive community and stakeholder engagement and participation were ensured in the intervention. The key stakeholders included the families who received the shelters, local authorities and the Government of Nepal, local artisans, and the Chaudhary Foundation.

Collaboration model

Our collaboration brought together the private sector and consultancy and NGO skill sets which impacted the efficiency of the project and long-term outcomes.

SEEDS was engaged in the training and facilitation of the construction of the shelters and was responsible for safe shelter design, orientation of beneficiaries, preparation of shelter guidelines and handbooks. The Nepal-based Chaudhary Foundation, a social initiative by the Chaudhary Group, facilitated approvals and permissions from local authorities and assisted in logistic support for material procurement, storage and distribution. PwCIF provided the necessary and timely financial support to SEEDS for undertaking the intervention. The PwCIF team also conducted regular audits and site visits as part of the monitoring and evaluation process.

The shelter

The shelters used low-cost construction technology; their structural design took into consideration earthquake and strong wind risks, and the materials used were bamboo and corrugated galvanised iron (CGI) roofing sheets. The shelters were acceptable and adaptable for local community needs and were made by applying local architectural skills. Each shelter was built to house an average family of five to six members and adhered to the Sphere Minimum Standards.⁷

Community participation and ownership

The intervention supported 100 families through an 'owner-driven' process. Owner-driven reconstruction (ODR), as opposed to the conventional method where a contractor is commissioned to construct a house, treats homeowners as partners. They give their inputs on design and use of material, and contribute labour. This ensures that the local community's shelter construction and masonry abilities are developed, enabling them to be more resilient in the future. One member from each family was trained and oriented in the construction of shelters. Guidance material on shelter construction was also provided to each family.

Local village development committees (VDCs) were oriented and involved in the intervention from inception and based on their recommendations, beneficiary families were selected. The intervention provided livelihoods and training to several masons and site supervisors from Bihar and Nepal.

“ In the initial phase of the shelter reconstruction process in Nepal, we oriented the Village Development Committee members and other local leaders towards the importance of building a 'resilient shelter' and their role in building community resilience through effective management. In turn, their support was limitless and ranged from providing local resources such as storage space and helping with logistical requirements for trainers to motivating the community to complete their shelters and making arrangements which helped us to improve service delivery. ”

– Parag Talankar, Director – Planning and Mobilisation, SEEDS, who led the team on the field in Nepal



⁶ <https://corehumanitarianstandard.org/>

⁷ The Sphere Minimum Standards were created in 1997 by humanitarian NGOs to improve the quality of their humanitarian responses and to ensure accountability for their actions.



3. 4. Outcomes

Apart from the 100 families with individual shelters, 100 masons were trained to build disaster risk reduction features for shelters as part of the intervention, positively impacting their future livelihood opportunities and increasing resilience in the community. A key outcome of the project was the local upskilling in disaster resilient architecture and disaster response.

Our intervention required synchronisation among different teams that were operating simultaneously to meet a short deadline. Within three months, we were able to build 100 shelters for our beneficiaries as well as complete our monitoring and evaluation exercise to ensure the best possible quality of safe shelters.

In addition to our combined response to the earthquake in Nepal, as a rehabilitation measure and to strengthen Nepal's the public healthcare system post the earthquake, a pro-bono project funded by PwCIF was initiated by PwC India's Healthcare Advisory team in August 2016. The aim of the project was to devise a roadmap for the strategic and operational transformation of the largest public hospital in Nepal, in Kathmandu. The hospital is over 120 years old and 75% of the beds are available free of cost to poor patients.

Our pro-bono engagement has helped develop Vision 2030 for the Hospital, ensuring it can continue serving the poorest.

“ PwC's Healthcare practice assisted one of the largest public healthcare institutions in South Asia in creating an efficient delivery model by leveraging technology that would help address any emergency caused by a natural disaster in the future. Such a delivery model will lessen the extent of damage to public infrastructure that is at the forefront of dealing with such natural disaster situations. ”

Dr Rana Mehta, Partner and Healthcare Consulting Leader, PwC India

Jammu and Kashmir floods (2015 and 2016)

Several challenges in a complex geography had an impact on the delivery of the intervention. Rebuilding a school in a post-disaster, conflict-ridden environment required mutual understanding and trust between the collaborating organisations and the community. By incorporating vernacular designs including exposed brickwork, wooden truss, false wooden ceilings and a sloping roof, the final design of the school was localised and appreciated by all stakeholders, especially the students.

4. 1. Background

Post the 2014 floods in the fragile and conflict-ridden state of Jammu and Kashmir, we rebuilt a government-run primary school for over 125 school-going children in Pulwama, one of the districts of southern Kashmir that was most severely affected by insurgency. Part of the school's structure had been washed away as it was situated on the banks of the flooded Jhelum river. The interventions required were a needs assessment of the area and community mobilisation to allocate new land for the school.

Rebuilding the school was not just an effort to provide safe or new infrastructure. Our intervention aimed to provide friendly and safe learning spaces for the continuation of education while strengthening the capacity of the local community to respond to disasters.

4. 2. Location

The development indicators in Kashmir are better than those of most states that have experienced some form of conflict in India.⁸ However, Kashmir ranks lowest on multiple other indicators, including access to electricity and presence of boundary walls around school infrastructure. Over 1,000 girls' schools in Kashmir lack toilets,⁹ impacting the overall ratio of girls attending school and the retention of adolescent girls in schools.

8 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/jammu-kashmir-backward-far-from-it/articleshow/70581083.cms>

9 <https://www.dailyexcelsior.com/thousands-of-schools-in-jk-lack-toilets-water-electricity/>



4. 3. The intervention

The intervention required patience and sensitivity to prevailing conditions. The socio-technical approach taken by SEEDS ensured that the intervention was community-driven with a consensus among the students, teachers and other stakeholders in the community.

The situation

The floods had disrupted normal living conditions for many weeks. Schools in the region remained shut as they were heavily damaged and silted from mudflows. Prior to the floods, the school had three classrooms, a kitchen, a store and one hall for distribution of mid-day meals. The school would need to be rebuilt on a new site identified in the village of Nowdal, which was at a distance of 1 km from the previous school's site. The land for the new school was originally allocated for setting up a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) base camp.

The Department of Education, CRPF officials and the state government agreed to establish the school on the new site. Identifying and finalising land for reconstruction took a significant amount of time and the construction plans faced further delay and complications due to continued political unrest and challenging weather conditions.

Collaboration model

Extensive negotiations between stakeholders were held to build the new school. The SEEDS team worked closely with the school authorities and architects from Jammu and Kashmir to incorporate vernacular designs into a disaster-resilient building. PwCIF provided funding support and the team involved in building the new school was sensitised about the complex environment of the project from the time of its inception. This understanding and appreciation of on-the-ground challenges enabled the collaboration to successfully execute the project by involving the community and government stakeholders in the intervention.

Community participation

In order to ensure community ownership of the school during the construction phase itself, a one-day design sharing workshop was organised for students and teachers to finalise the architectural design of the school. The school design was improvised using a participatory approach, based on feedback from the students and teachers.

The local school management committee, comprising schoolteachers, parents and guardians of the children was sensitised towards disaster risk reduction (DRR). Sessions were conducted with students and teachers on the basic dos and don'ts during an emergency, as well as on personal hygiene and safe sanitation practices.

Rebuilding better

The new school is designed to be safe from earthquakes, floods and landslides. Schoolteachers and students have expressed their gratitude for larger and safer classrooms with new benches and desks, gender-segregated toilets, and water taps.

Despite severe political unrest that restricted the mobility of the project staff in the region, the school was successfully built by employing local artisans and workers and followed the standards set by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE).¹⁰

4. 4. Outcomes

The intervention was community-driven and inclusive. The gender-segregated toilet facilities are culturally sensitive and meet the needs of schoolteachers who did not have usable toilet facilities in the previous school. Apart from building the school and providing better classroom facilities, sessions on DRR and basic do's and don'ts during an emergency were conducted with children and adults from the community.

The intervention reflects our efforts to converge thematic areas of education, disaster response and resilience, child protection and WASH in a high-risk, remote area without any prior private sector funded interventions.

“ This school acts as a nucleus to many families and their children. It carries a lot of importance. We are glad to have big classrooms rather than small ones. I have never seen anything like this on a primary level. The rooms are spacious and new benches for children make them feel big mentally also. This has led the children to be much more open and vocal in class. The flood situation has been very disturbing, more so for me as a teacher. The situation was cumbersome, and children were very scared to come back to school then. ”

Riaz Ahmad Dar, schoolteacher

¹⁰ Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) has published a set of minimum standards which are globally accepted to ensure the right to quality education and a safe learning environment in emergencies through to recovery. (<https://inee.org/resources/inee-minimum-standards>)

Kerala floods (2018)

Active participation by the donor in the project design phase and community discussions with the panchayat created an enabling environment for all stakeholders. The shelters helped in the rehabilitation of a tribal community that had lost everything in the 2018 flash floods. Apart from building shelters, the intervention improved access to clean drinking water by cleaning and chlorinating wells. Since the floods, the affected families were drinking silted and contaminated water.

5. 1. Background

In 2018, severe floods affected Kerala, resulting in one of the worst natural disasters experienced by the coastal state in recent times. Healthcare, drinking water and shelters for affected families were the key concerns, especially in the state's remote areas with limited connectivity. Along with our partner SEEDS, we built 69 shelters, 69 toilets and cleaned and chlorinated 15 wells in Wayanad, one of the worst affected districts in the state. Each well supports up to seven families.

5. 2. Location

The shelters were built for vulnerable tribal communities. The intervention encouraged participation by house owners throughout the building process to ensure acceptability and uptake of the shelters. Apart from the shelters, we also supported the distribution of water purifiers and solar lamps to all the affected families.



5. 3. The intervention

Transitional shelters and toilets were built as part of the intervention and wells were cleaned and chlorinated in the Manathavady municipality and Pozhuthana panchayats. Similar to our intervention in Nepal, the building of shelters in Wayanad was owner-driven, with constant engagement with the community during the design, planning and implementation phases of the intervention.

Selection of affected community members

The list of affected families who had lost their houses to the floods and landslides was provided by the district authorities. Panchayat officials also circulated a second list at the panchayat level which was further validated through a door-to-door survey conducted by SEEDS to ensure that the selection of affected community members was updated.

The community helped us subsidise resources by letting us use salvaged material to ensure reduced carbon footprints and increasing ownership through contribution by families during the building process.

Meeting community needs

The construction of shelters began post obtaining no-objection certificates (NOCs) from each panchayat. The social team of SEEDS facilitated the participation of affected families in the building and designing of their transitional shelters. The floods had damaged most of the toilets in the communities and forced families to defecate in the open, making them susceptible to waterborne diseases. Transitional toilets were built using locally available materials and manpower and the construction was approved by the community and the state government.

Wells have been the primary source of water for families in this area and up to seven families depend upon one well. The floods contaminated the drinking water for our beneficiaries. With support from PwCIF, SEEDS cleaned and chlorinated 15 community wells.

Shelter and toilet design

Each shelter can house a family of up to five members. Selection of the sites was based on protection from landslide risks, waterlogging and vector-borne diseases; these shelters were also given higher plinths. The toilets were built with modified soak pits made of discarded plastic barrels and a sand filtration mechanism to reduce groundwater contamination. The toilets were low-cost, well-ventilated and durable. They were built using areca nut timber frames, timber planks for walling and galvalume roofing sheets.

Collaboration model

For the intervention, socio-technical support was provided by SEEDS. State and district authorities proactively supported the intervention, which was funded by PwCIF. The key partners in the intervention were community members themselves as the construction of the shelters was owner-driven and SEEDS conducted WASH, well maintenance and cleaning sessions with the community.

5. 4. Outcomes

For communities in the Pozhuthana panchayat, this was the first time their wells had been cleaned and chlorinated since they were constructed approximately 25 years ago. The intervention encouraged participation from the community, local authorities and both the collaborating organisations. The shelters provided homes to 69 of the most vulnerable tribal families and were constructed using locally sourced materials for a sustainable design. The efforts and intervention were appreciated by the state government stakeholders and the community, especially women who benefited from the privacy of WASH facilities.

“ SEEDS has been an important stakeholder in rebuilding the Wayanad district in Kerala. The 2018 floods were unprecedented, almost similar to the 1924 flood. Response to the flood was also a flood – a flood of goodwill, material and support. SEEDS is one NGO that has been at the forefront of rehabilitation efforts in Wayanad with their interventions – be it construction of transitional shelters in different panchayats or giving school kits to children who had lost their schools bags and notebooks. We are looking forward to more support from SEEDS. ”

NSK Umesh Sub-Collector,
Wayanad, Kerala

Way forward

Globally, future intervention challenges will include dealing with humanitarian crises due to extreme weather events, rainfall variability, earthquakes, air pollution, global warming and forced migration. The last five years were the hottest ever recorded and natural hazards are becoming more intense and frequent. Environmental concerns dominate the top long-term risks in 2020.¹¹ It is expected that more than 200 million people could need humanitarian assistance by 2022.¹² Collaborations to address these risks and vulnerabilities must emerge between diverse stakeholders, including at-risk communities.

“ When we start working on a project, we begin by building a relationship with the community. This is done with the purpose of enabling a community-led recovery – that leaves behind an empowered community before our intervention ends. We ensure that not only is normalcy restored in the lives of community members but also that their resilience towards future events is strengthened. ”

Manu Gupta,
Co-founder, SEEDS

¹¹ World Economic Forum. (2020). *The Global Risks Report 2020*.

¹² UNOCHA. (2020). *Global Humanitarian Overview 2020*.



Private sector-NGO collaborations hold the potential to limit the spread of damage and losses caused by natural disasters and humanitarian crises by leveraging their expertise to respond quickly. Given the criticality of response time, it is imperative that these collaborations are agile and flexible to on-ground realities. The PwCIF-SEEDS experience provides insights into a mutually beneficial operational dynamic that delivers community-centred, sustainable interventions on time.

6. 1. Our learnings

Our learnings from the three emergencies we responded to have been summarised below:

1

Participatory approach to design

From inception to delivery, the interventions are guided by a participatory approach which involves the two key collaborators, the government and the communities whose needs are to be identified. All designs are explored and examined together and the affected communities and the government are made participants in the rebuilding process.

2

Needs assessments

Assessments to identify needs are led by trained teams with due expertise in the social sector to ensure nobody is left behind. From the elderly to the specially abled, the most vulnerable social groups and children, all interventions ensure that identified needs reflect the actual status of the community. Experts also analyse the future needs on accounts of climate change, upcoming seasons and the geography of the intervention site to ensure a more durable solution that will address needs in a sustained manner.

3

Leverage networks for efficiency

Each collaborator has access to a wide-ranging network and the private sector can leverage relationships and expertise globally, providing support at each point of the response cycle. This is especially helpful, given the changing dynamic of the intervention. Similarly, NGO collaborators have in place human resources for the social sector and community outreach initiatives to enable successful implementation. A local NGO in Nepal supported our intervention by enhancing our intervention efforts as per local norms and helped us to navigate a tough geographic terrain.

4

Supporting the government

In collaborating on humanitarian action, the government, particularly local bodies such as village councils, school management committees and village leaders become critical stakeholders. Our collaboration benefited from SEEDS's knowledge of local systems and structures as it ensured smooth operations with all elements of land norms and infrastructure buildings being government-certified while meeting international standards.

6

Feedback and flexibility

Working together in post-disaster environments that are often fragile or in conflict areas, where communities have experienced extensive trauma and loss, requires immense patience, feedback and flexibility in the collaboration model. In interventions driven by a participatory approach, the feedback received from communities on their needs requires action where possible. Collaborations that can accommodate emerging community needs are likely to deliver more meaningful interventions. For instance, in Kerala, we chlorinated and cleaned wells for tribal families in Wayanad, ensuring they had access to clean drinking water. This added value to our intervention which was primarily designed to be a support project for shelter building.

Together, PwCIF and SEEDS understood and were transparent about the on-ground situation as PwCIF teams visited the sites at all stages of the intervention. SEEDS sought feedback from communities and invited PwCIF to be a part of community consultations. This built sensitivity and encouraged a more flexible yet results-driven approach for each intervention that valued community feedback.

7

Sustainability and resilience

In addition to the above learnings from our collaboration, we learnt that building resilience through skills training, awareness sessions and outreach programmes can have long-lasting impact. We have ensured resilience by building local capacity in Nepal through the training of masons. Similarly, in Kashmir, our awareness workshops for disaster risk reduction empowered affected communities with the knowledge of how to respond better during a disaster.

Sustainability has been a key feature of our collaborative interventions; we have used salvaged materials for shelter-building in Kerala and locally available material in Nepal. By ensuring the use of sustainably sourced materials, we have adapted our shelter designs to the local environment and involved communities at all stages of the shelter-building and sourcing process.

Based on our experience and collaborations, we believe that interventions for humanitarian action may provide more long-term support to communities if our participatory and localised approaches, which put communities at the centre of design and delivery are adapted for varied humanitarian needs and contexts.





About PwC India Foundation (PwCIF)

The PwC India Foundation was established in 2008 with the objective of making an impact in the areas of education and environment sustainability.

We have now expanded our areas of intervention to sanitation, social entrepreneurship and humanitarian response to natural disasters. The Foundation's initiatives revolve around the following:

- Empowering communities: Supporting programmes run by NGOs
- Enabling participation: Involving our employees by using their expertise
- Special initiatives: Addressing some of the fundamental challenges in our country

For more information, visit <https://www.pwc.in/pwc-india-foundation.html>

About SEEDS (Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society)

SEEDS (Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society) is a not-for-profit organisation that enables community resilience through practical solutions in the areas of disaster readiness, response and rehabilitation.

Since 1994, the organisation has worked extensively on every major disaster in the Indian subcontinent – grafting innovative technology on to traditional wisdom. It has reached out to families affected by disasters and climate stresses; strengthened and rebuilt schools and homes; and has invariably put its faith in skill building, planning and communications to foster long-term resilience. SEEDS is also India's first agency to be certified for the global Core Humanitarian Standards – an international certification system for quality and accountability in humanitarian response.

SEEDS completed 25 years of outstanding service to humanity in 2019 and is re-anchoring its approach to building resilience through innovation. It continues to empower the most vulnerable across Asia to build a better future.

For more information, visit www.seedsindia.org

About PwC

At PwC, our purpose is to build trust in society and solve important problems. We're a network of firms in 157 countries with over 276,000 people who are committed to delivering quality in advisory and tax services. Find out more and tell us what matters to you by visiting us at www.pwc.com.

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Contacts

PwCIF

PricewaterhouseCoopers Private Limited
8th Floor, Building No. 8B, DLF Cyber City, Gurgaon-122022
<https://www.pwc.in/pwc-india-foundation.html>
Phone: +91-124-4620114

SEEDS

15-A, Institutional Area. Sector IV, RK Puram, New Delhi, 110022
<https://www.seedsindia.org/>
Phone: +91-11- 2617 4272

Acknowledgements

Co-authors

PwC India:
Shinjini Singh

SEEDS:
Abhishek Das

Images
Aakash Vishwakarma
Siddharth Behl

Editorial support

PwC India:
Dion D'souza
Saptarshi Dutta
Sakshi Aggarwal
Neetika Goyal

SEEDS:
Manu Gupta

Design and layout

Pallavi Dhingra
Kirtika Saxena





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