

TRANSCENDING THE TRAGEDY TOGETHER

Jammu & Kashmir Flood Response 2014





This documentation has been made possible by generous support from TATA Relief Committee and United Way of India.

Between September 2014 and March 2015, SEEDS was able to assist families in Pulwama and Poonch districts of Jammu & Kashmir in the aftermath of devastating floods. This would not have been possible without the active support of the following organisations and individuals. Our heartfelt gratitude goes out to all individual donors, TATA Relief Committee, Trafigura, UNICEF and United Way of India.

June 2015

Photographs: Joginder Singh, Siddharth Behl and SEEDS team

Content, design & layout: Saferworld Communications, www.saferworld.in



A TRAGEDY OF TORRENTIAL RAINS AND RISING RIVERS



In the first week of September 2014, the state of Jammu and Kashmir, India, experienced the worst flood that it had seen in 60 years. The incessant rain gave rise to a swelling Jhelum river and its tributaries; submerging houses and leaving people stranded on rooftops. In some places, the water rose to over 12 feet.

More than 10,000,000 people were affected and over 100,000 houses suffered damage across 19 districts.

Considering the extensive devastation across both rural and urban areas, the floods were declared a national calamity by the Prime Minister's office.

Families across Poonch and Pulwama districts were some of the worst affected. SEEDS' intervention therefore focused on these two areas.

“I saw my house collapsing. Nothing is left from my home now. All the land papers, utensils, personal belongings. Nothing. I can’t even tell that something like my home existed there.”

- Mohammed Sadeeq, Mankot, Poonch district



A week and half after the disaster, Mohammed’s family of 15 were poised on a piece of land a few kilometres from their broken home. Huddled in a makeshift covering created from a few leftover timber bands and a waste tent sheet, they were struggling to survive.



RESPONDING FOR RELIEF

Relief efforts began in the area on September 17th, 2014. The items were based on identified needs that emerged from the community themselves.

Family Kits

TENTS AND BEDDING

Tent | 2 double-side plastic floor mats
| Mosquito net | Blanket

HYGIENE KITS

5 toothbrushes | Toothpaste | Towel |
Sanitary napkins | 2 buckets (one with lid)
| Mug | Bathing soap | Nail cutter |
Toilet soap

UTENSIL KITS

5 plates | 5 glasses | 5 bowls | 1 Kadai
| Rolling pin and board | Pressure
cooker | Stirring spoon | Tawa | Parat

School Kits

STRUCTURE

School tents | Floor mats |
Soak pit toilet | Fire extinguisher

STUDENT NEEDS

Books | Notebooks | Bag |
Lunch box | Water bottle |
Pencil box | Stationery

TEACHING AIDS

Blackboard | Chalk | Duster |
Notebooks | Table | Chairs |
Dustbins | Play equipment



Restoring basic dignity

“I’m happy to have the relief kit. It has utensils for cooking and a tent for shelter which will be very useful for my whole family and children especially.”

– Fatima Hameed, Mankot, Poonch district



Fatima’s husband is the only earning member of their family. Having seen their corn fields destroyed and their house crumble before their very eyes, the tent gives some basic security as they regroup and plan ahead.

314 most vulnerable families like Fatima’s were reached out to across Pulwama and Poonch districts.



Expediting emergency education

“Where will the low-income families go? This school was their only lifeline and needed to be restarted as soon as possible. We are thankful to SEEDS that it intervened at the right time and students got school kits and a tent to study in. During the rains too, the tent helped us conduct classes normally.”

– Hussain Mushtaq Ahmed, Gulab Bagh Primary School, Awantipora, Pulwama district



Catering to 35 students, this is the only government school in the area. Unfortunately, with its land engulfed by floods, it had to shut down. Mohammad Ashraf, one of the other teachers, volunteered his own land to erect SEEDS’ school tents.

The SEEDS’ school kits included physical infrastructure, student study supplies and teacher’s aids. This timely support allowed education to resume in the worst of situations, Bringing back a sense of normalcy for the children.



RECONSTRUCTION WITH A HUMAN FACE



Vetting the 'most vulnerable'

“A flood doesn’t differentiate. It takes away the homes of the rich and the poor like us too.”

- Ghulam Qadar Bhat, Mohanvij, Pulwama district

Old and frail, Bhat and his family of six were surviving in the midst of the ruins of their uneven land. His son is the sole breadwinner, but there was no demand for a plumber / electrician post the floods. A custom design built on the elevated side of their land has offered some solace.

A transparent and actionable process

The process to find the most vulnerable was done in a very transparent manner. Priority was given to low-income, socially marginalised and those with medical problems. People with absolutely nowhere else to go (those without other properties or relatives to visit) were given precedence.

The whole Kakapora Tehsil was surveyed by SEEDS’ social mobilisers. This was done on the basis of government data and dilapidated house lists; and was greatly assisted by the Numberdaar and Tehsildaar.



A design to meet diverse demands



ENVIRONMENTALLY appropriate materials and design

- Use of salvaged material
- Locally available materials such as timber, CGI roofing sheets, bricks & stone



SOCIALLY DRIVEN PROCESS

- Community consultation to determine the design
- Acceptable and adaptable for local community
- Active involvement of house owners and community in construction
- Personalised innovation from house owners



SAFE and COMFORTABLE

- Size of shelter as per average family size
- Structural design considering seismic safety
- Plinth heights as per snow level
- Thermal comfort and insulation for sub-zero temperatures



LOCAL SKILLS

- Doable using local construction skills
- Replicable and scalable
- Quick construction process
- Low-cost construction technology



“The structure proposed by SEEDS was very well thought out. It stressed on better ventilation, provided earthquake resistance, used long-lasting wood and glass and took care of insulation. It also stressed using the salvaged material of the dilapidated house. It could be wooden planks, plinth material, bricks or mud, but community participation was pivotal for the cause.”

- Arshid Hussain Dav & Syed Muntazir Raza, Community Mobilisers

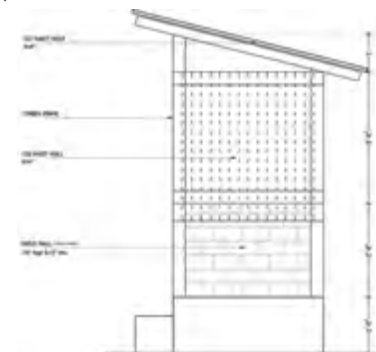


Considering sanitation needs

Unlike other parts of the country where open defecation is common, the practice of using toilets is deeply embedded in communities in Kashmir. Even in the aftermath of the floods, many of these toilets were still semi-functional.

Yet, for 92 of the interim shelters being built, the families felt an acute gap in this regard. Two other families also required assistance in repairing their existing toilet to make it functional.

Broader discussions around sanitation needs with the community focused particularly on problems for women and menstrual hygiene.



With execution assistance
by enabled artisans



“This was a test of our skill. We could see families braving the extremities of weather and we needed to deliver in record time. We have learnt a lot. There was this nitty-gritty we needed to follow to make a structure that can withstand earthquakes, is well-lit, snow-proof and ventilated. These acquired skills are helping us with carpentry in our daily lives too.”

- Rafeeq, carpenter

The herculean task of shelter construction lay in the hands of able carpenters like Rafeeq and team. Their coordination and a synchronised understanding of the task worked magic. The teams' passion to assist their fellow country members in a time of need shone through.

Beginning with 10 joint mason-carpenter teams, a fission effect of the trainings resulted in a total of 35 teams. Together, they helped build 192 shelters in just two months.



& made their own by families

Photo © SEEDS/Loginder Singh

“We've built a partition in the house, dividing the kitchen and room. The windows are filled with glass panes. The tin cover extension in front gives us a space for shoes. It is now our home.”

- Nasreena Ghulam, Mohanvij, Pulwama district

Three months after the shelters were built; they had been truly turned into homes. From small modifications to personal design touches, a sense of ownership prevails. The seeds for this were sown during the construction process itself, where community involvement was key. The families helped in unloading and loading materials and actively participated throughout the process. The entire filling of the plinth with salvaged materials and the walling process was done by the families themselves.



LESSONS FOR THE MILES TO GO YET...

“The shelter provided to us by SEEDS saved us from the flood aftermath. Our neighbours have been helping and SEEDS also understood our misery. But we request for a proper dwelling place and a permanent shelter if possible as the current income is almost nil and building our own house is only a dream now.”

- Dilshada, Gandibagh, Pulwama district

While the interim shelters have fulfilled a critical immediate gap, there are concerns about what will happen in the years ahead. These include:

- Permanent housing
- Restoring livelihoods
- Education and skill-building to 'build back better'
- Better medical facilities
- Restoring and improving education
- Advocacy and capacity building to scale up
- Being safe from the next disaster



DELIVERING A DIFFERENCE DESPITE THE DIFFICULTIES



Harsh weather conditions limited work to five hours a day. Land availability itself was an issue for most families so designs had to be customised to fit specific conditions, without compromising on the core features. Finalising vendors for quality material procurement proved difficult. Working in a conflict zone meant the challenges were only amplified further. Yet despite the challenges, there was a great sense of trust established with the community and the work was completed in record time.

314 shelter relief kits

2566 students kits

23 temporary learning centres established

192 interim shelters built



15-A Institutional Area, R.K.Puram, Sector IV, New Delhi -110022
www.seedsindia.org