



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

## **Linking preparedness to recovery: Exploring the past to build resilience to future disasters**

Sneha Krishnan, University College London  
Email: [ucessk0@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:ucessk0@ucl.ac.uk)

### **Abstract**

---

#### **Introduction**

This paper explores learning within communities and institutions based on previous experiences of disasters and underlines the value in preparedness to build resilience to future disasters. In order to reflect upon the experience of disasters from the past to inform and study its relevance in the face of a disaster in the present this paper proposes using the case of Odisha and cyclones.

#### **Methods**

Empirical evidence was gathered through participant observation as a humanitarian practitioner deployed in response programme after Phailin with an INGO in 2013. Participatory rural appraisal techniques such as focus groups, interviews with authorities and local leaders were conducted from October 2013 -March 2014.

#### **Context**

Odisha has a history of cyclones, heavy rains and floods. In October 1999, two cyclones within a period of 2 weeks, killed 10,000 people, and caused socio-economic devastation (Ray-Bennett 2009). In 2013, Cyclone Phailin made landfall in Ganjam leaving 44 people dead, and damaging 256,633 houses (World Bank 2013). A comparison of institutional and community response provides insight into the learning amongst communities and understanding how changes manifest during recovery.

#### **Results**

The Government of Odisha (GoO) was applauded for their success in preparedness and evacuation in 2013. This was achieved by construction of cyclone shelters along the coast, raised water sources and repositioning of boats and other relief stocks through disaster preparedness measures after 1999. The NGOs were prepared with contingency stocks, boats and deployment of volunteers and trained persons for disinfection of tubewells, running community kitchens and relying upon pre-disaster preparedness networks. The World Bank funded the Odisha Disaster Recovery project building on resilience and experiences from previous reconstruction project.

#### **Conclusions**

Odisha provides a rich experience of learning from previous disasters and influencing policy and action. The institutionalization of disaster recovery within the management cycle, and easy

## 7<sup>th</sup> i-Rec Conference 2015: Reconstruction and Recovery in Urban Contexts



International Federation  
of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

transition between preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery activities prove a poignant example for influencing policies at the national level to address challenges in linking relief, recovery, and resilience to future disasters.

**Keywords:** preparedness measures, experiential learning, disaster recovery

**Abstract Reference Number:** 77

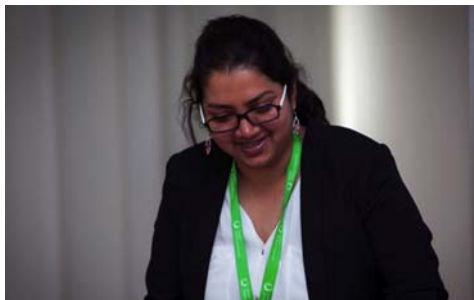
### Bibliography

Barenstein, J.D., 'Who governs reconstruction? Changes and continuity in policies, practices and outcomes' in Lizarralde, G. & Johnson, C., 2009. *Rebuilding after Disasters*.

Ray-Bennett, N.S., 2009. Multiple disasters and policy responses in pre- and post-independence Orissa, India. *Disasters*, 33(2), pp.274–290.

World Bank, 2013. *INDIA Cyclone Phailin in Odisha; October 2013 Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment Report*, Bhubaneswar. Available at: <[http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2014/01/10/000461832\\_20140110162742/Rendered/PDF/838860WPOP14880Box0382116B00PUBLIC0.pdf](http://www-wds.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/WDSP/IB/2014/01/10/000461832_20140110162742/Rendered/PDF/838860WPOP14880Box0382116B00PUBLIC0.pdf)> (Accessed 1 February 2015).

### Author's Biography



Sneha Krishnan is a PhD candidate from University College London, and a post-graduate Teaching Assistant on Masters course on Development and Planning. Her research focuses on disaster resilience and recovery practices and policies, especially in understanding changes in hygiene behaviour, water and sanitation practices. She has used the case studies of Assam floods and Cyclone Phailin in Odisha for her doctoral research on the above issues. Her interests lie on humanitarian and early recovery issues and challenges in programming, evaluation and evidence synthesis for institutional learning. She has been engaged variously as a researcher, practitioner and trainer in various aspects of humanitarian work engaged with organizations including RedR India, and consultancy projects with UNICEF India, Oxfam India and Save the Children India.