

community
impact



India

Disaster risk reduction: Envisioning growth



Through this programme, Indian Red Cross Society are helping communities to become more resilient. This programme has been delivered thanks to the support of Hong Kong Red Cross. Pictured is the first meeting of the CDMC in Aheri.

Photo: Indian Red Cross Society

Aheri village is located in Wani sub-district of Maharashtra. Surrounded by hills of coal, the narrow road that leads to the village sees an endless stream of trucks each day. Aheri has been severely affected by air pollution since mining started in 1992. Debris dumped near village adds to already existing risk.

Aheri have also had to face natural disasters; the community have not yet fully recovered from flooding in 2004, the worst natural disaster to hit the district in living memory. Chandra kala Bai (40) remembers; "It was bad year. I still remember everything clearly. We lost everything. We had to evacuate the place. It's so fresh in our mind. Fear of water developed in us. Children still talk about it."

Flooding and storms, combined with the results of mining, mean the villagers suffer water related health issues due to chemicals present in the water sources. Respiratory diseases such as bronchitis and asthma, as well as skin infections, are common among this community.

Programme action

Indian Red Cross Society has been working actively in this district for many



Wall murals throughout the village illustrate simple messages on positive behavioural change.

Photo: Indian Red Cross Society

years, and recognized the needs in Aheri. Through this programme, community members identified the risks, and planned how to mitigate them. Over 2,000 trees were planted in an effort to combat the pollution levels, and to provide income for households through their fruit. Five specialized taskforces were also established.

The most visible difference in the community today is acceptance of the need to change behaviours. The community has asked the Red Cross to provide them more plants through the support of the Agriculture Department which they can plant in their community. Villagers have also contributed towards the construction of a yard for storing household waste.

Ganesh Khade (24), a member of the local search and rescue committee said, "Other than tree plantation we have also been trained in search and rescue, community-based health and first aid, early warning, assessment and emergency training, community management, and resource mobilization, information, communication

and reporting. We have learned to prepare boats from drums during floods, which is an excellent and economic way to ensure that lives can be saved."

To reach wider audiences, the walls of village were painted with pictures explaining significance of cleanliness and safe water drinking practices. Young people also share the learnings gained from the training with other villagers to strengthen their capacities.

Nanaji Dhote (61) added, "Since 1992 the fate of this area has changed completely. It used to be clean place, but coal mines started blasting and started dumping debris all around our village. We realized that breathing problems like asthma and bronchitis are increasing. We tried taking up issue with the mining company but we didn't receive any positive response from them. Red Cross showed us the way; we are happy and really thankful."

Community members themselves have highlighted the sustainability of this initiative; Shakutala Kharker, one of the community members shared, "We have received a lot from the Red Cross. We have benefitted in different forms including information on cleanliness, maintaining health and hygiene. It's long term, and even when the Red Cross finishes the project, we will continue following what we have learnt."

The late Dr. Ghanshyam A.Umre, honorary secretary and founding member of the Wani sub-district branch who passed away in 2013 had said, "It very satisfying to see the enthusiasm and improvement in these villages. Even if we complete the project now, the trainings conducted, mitigation measures taken such as waste management and tree plantation will reduce potential risks to the community for years to come."

Supported by



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