

many cases their destroyed houses are yet to be rebuilt, as an interim measure most of them are housed in 36 Mamta Gruhas set up in various villages. After some time they will move to living with the wider community. In some cases widows will adopt orphans thus starting a new family, or they can set up a new family with an old couple, or a remarriage can be arranged. Orphans can be rehabilitated in extended families and in foster families. Various kinds of livelihood support is planned. The main idea is to strengthen the community itself to take care of its most needy members.

Mamta Gruha Inmates Support
Community Rehabilitation

Chatipaari village in Erasma block is one of the most devastated villages. 565 persons are reported to have died in this village with pre-cyclone population of 1365. There are a large number of widows and orphans. As an interim measure they are housed in a 'Mamta Gruha' (Home of Affection) set up in this village.

When this writer talked to some widows here, they all supported the idea of community based rehabilitation. They do not like the idea that they should be sent to women's homes or the children should be sent to orphanages in some far away place. It is important that despite the low capacity of their community to provide support to them, they still prefer to live within the community instead of going to another place.

Saudamani Mandal says, cyclone has left me all alone in this world. Now I want to look after the orphaned children. This will be my world now. Where else will I go now.

Harsh Mander, national director of Action Aid has campaigned hard for community-based rehabilitation as he feels only this can provide the badly needed emotional support. Bijoy Kumar, regional manager of Action Aid, says

A dog who saved children

Kaalia looks like any ordinary village dog, but today hundreds of people look at him with admiration, sometimes even reverence. The reason - on the fateful day of the super-cyclone he saved three small children from almost certain death in Chatipur village. The children were about to be swept away by powerful waves of surging water, but Kaalia carried them up one by one to the safety to an upper place from where the children were picked up by grateful villagers.

Above all we should not forget the courageous efforts of the villagers themselves. The remarkable resilience that has been shown by a large number of villagers, their ability to keep alive hope in the middle of despair is a story that needs to be told. The most remarkable aspect clearly is the ability to end old feuds, factions and discriminations and join hands together for the united rebuilding of villages. This needs to be built upon further to ensure that villagers remain united in entire rebuilding and rehabilitation process that will clearly take several years. It is heartening to note that some voluntary organisations are conscious of the responsibility and they are thoughtfully planning for interaction in ways that will facilitate this process. Creating certain incentives for such united action is one possibility, but creating strong emotional feelings for 'rebuilding our village' or protecting the most vulnerable groups in the village (for example orphaned children) can perhaps be even more helpful in sustaining this emerging unity.