

## LIVING WITH THE RIVER (TRANS-BORDER APPROACH TOWARDS FLOODS RISK MANAGEMENT)

PGVS works with communities at the borders between India and Nepal, to prepare delicious fusion recipes for trans-boundary local early warning systems.

### KEY INGREDIENTS



#### SUSTAINABILITY



#### Effectiveness

- Develop participatory risk maps of the community that detail local realities from the perspective of the local people
- Foster collaboration between CSOs, government, communities by creating spaces for open dialogue
- Perform a stakeholder analysis to understand existing groups, consult all stakeholders from the design stage, especially vulnerable groups



#### INSTITUTIONALISATION



#### Policy environment

- Decentralise DRM frameworks by promoting local DRM strategies that are owned by the local government and informed by local actors



#### Structures and mechanisms

- Allow for members of CBDRM committees at community level to report up to national platforms



Key to the success of this dish is the use of locally-sourced ingredients for its preparation: local knowledge, local resources, local material... everything that goes into this dish should be local.

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And what makes this dish unique is that with all these local ingredients we will be preparing a trans-boundary early warning system, which involves communities upstream and downstream of a river that crosses two different countries.

Communities in the eastern part of Uttar Pradesh have been suffering from the impact of floods for generations: three rivers run through the area, and all of them originate in Nepal. As a result, when upstream rainfall increases the water level of the rivers, this information does not reach the downstream communities in India.

PGVS, a local NGO, developed a structured system of informal upstream-downstream communication for flood early warning and preparedness: villages along the river have organised themselves into local disaster management committees (DMC), composed of task forces with different responsibilities (from reading the river water levels, to disseminating the alerts, to evacuating and performing search and rescue activities).

PGVS acts as overall coordination, but communities are fully responsible for the activities in their villages. The DMCs develop risk and vulnerability maps of the village, with the participation of all vulnerable groups, and, based on their knowledge and experience, define water level thresholds that trigger different levels of alert. This local knowledge is complemented by inputs from technical experts that support in understanding the correlation between upstream water levels, downstream levels and timescale.

There is a clear vertical structure, that links the DMCs to the District Disaster Management Authority up to the authorities at State level and in Nepal: this was the result of an existing robust regulatory framework which provided a space for this vertical linkage to be created, once local authorities understood the value of such system.

Drills and trainings are done regularly, especially in the run up to the rainy season, and all the village is involved: children and women are part of specific task forces and contribute to the drills. Everyone volunteers in the task forces and contribute his or her skills to the benefit of the community.

A focus on people and vulnerable groups, strong connections with the government, and the use of informal communication channels (mainly SMS and WhatsApp groups) have ensured that the activities continue to this date, even though financial support for the project has ended more than a year ago. The DMCs are now embedded in the villages' structure and their reliance on local knowledge and local material for almost everything (from risk maps, to alert flags, to floating devices) makes them self-sustainable.