



Himalayan Tsunami – nature's fury in Uttarakhand

The flash floods that hit Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh in June 2013, followed by the landslides & mudflows, caused mass destruction and the loss of thousands of lives. Over 13,600 villages were affected. Houses had been destroyed or severely damaged and in some areas settlements had been wiped out. The floods snatched away the breadwinners, as well as means of livelihood of the villages. Public infrastructure, private landholdings, crops and irrigation infrastructure had been rendered unusable. Even basic amenities and services for education, healthcare, communication, power, water supply were severely compromised.

Relief efforts by PRAGYA

PRAGYA has been working in the Himalayan region for nearly two decades. We have been addressing sustainable development & preservation of the delicate cultural fabric and traditional knowledgebase of these areas through our 6 Field Offices across the Himalayan states. It was this on ground presence that helped us to promptly respond to the emergency and undertake rapid relief operations much before accessibility was restored and external help was available. PRAGYA Head Office at the national capital region mobilized and transported relief material to the affected areas where the field staff ensured its prompt and effective distribution, at times even taking significant risks to reach out to those in need.

We received monetary & material assistance, which helped enhance the reach of our relief efforts. Our presence on the ground over the years and close ties with the communities helped in rapid identification of those in need and to reach out to remotest villages. Utility kits containing everyday essentials from food items to utensils, blankets and clothing were put together and distributed to people at pre-arranged drop points. Where these weren't feasible, PRAGYA staff trekked long distances along with mules/porters to reach valleys and hamlets that had been cut off.

PRAGYA provided water purification tablets & hygiene kits to ensure that acceptable standards of health & sanitation could be maintained as the infrastructure for the same had collapsed. Temporary shelters in form of tents and tarpaulins were provided to families who had lost their homes. PRAGYA also replenished the medical supplies in districts, and facilitated government doctors to provide medical treatment to the ill & injured. Damage assessments were carried out simultaneously to frame rehabilitation plans.

Reach:

4 Districts: 22709 individuals

Relief materials provided:

81000+ packets of food items
5200+kgs of food grains
4100+ Blankets & bed sheets
280 Tents, 440+ Tarpaulins
4500+ Hygiene kits
17 consignments of medicines
74000 Water purification tablets



"We have not received any significant support from any agency. We were being ignored. I am glad that Pragma provided us with food supplies." - Anil Nautyal, Rontru-Buyana village, Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand

"You are like messengers of God! You were the first one to get in touch with us in this time of struggle..." - Raj Kumar, Urni village, Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh

Challenges faced: Supplying relief materials to affected areas proved to be a very difficult task. Several areas were completely isolated from the reach of relief efforts due to the collapse of infrastructure. Landslides blocked several motor able roads and gaping sinkholes cut off many villages altogether. Trucks loaded with relief materials got stuck in different places. Bridges, roads had been washed away. Boulders continued to roll down the slopes. But our team did not give up! Pragma staff members went beyond the call of duty to reach people that were unable to get access to relief supplies. They reached out to relief camps and to distressed communities in the villages with relief material. This entailed trekking long distances at high altitudes and using multiple means at times.

The transportation of materials to the installation sites in the flood-affected villages was made extremely difficult due to the damaged roads and frequent snowfall; the transportation had to be carried out in tranches, and involved several stretches on mule back and even manually by labour. Damage to water sources and the diversion of fresh water sources due to landslides and accumulation of debris, resulted in increased distances from water sources, which hindered the installation of the water filtration and storage facilities.

Our Approach: PRAGYA's ground teams carried out rapid targeted and effective relief operations by:

1. Prioritizing areas that needed immediate attention:

- Surveying and analyzing affected areas
- Identifying most affected; relevant distribution strategies

2. Targeted distribution of relief materials:

- Coordinating with villagers
- Identified key locations for material distribution

3. Effectively planning logistics:

- Overcame access issues caused by infrastructure collapse, landslides
- Used multiple modes of transport - mules, ropeways, porters



Initiatives by PRAGYA towards Recovery & Rehabilitation

The floods wiped out thousands of people and their aftermath left many more stranded, helpless, homeless and robbed of their possessions. The trail of death and destruction this tragedy left behind was not what its victims had ever anticipated or prepared for. Due to our long-standing presence in these areas, people placed a great amount of trust in us and assisted us during our efforts to ensure rapid and effective relief dissemination to remote and now even more cut off areas. This also enabled us to supplement the government's response & recovery measures, and roll out rehabilitation support as soon as this was feasible and restore some semblance of normalcy /structure in the lives of the multitudes of people affected by the floods.



Reinstating Schools:

Young children were possibly one of the worst affected by this disaster. The trauma of having witnessed such loss and devastation needed to be addressed quickly. Taking this into

Reach:

5 Districts

Rehab measures implemented:

- 61 Prefab toilet blocks
- Tents and school stationery and teaching & learning aids for 12 schools
- 89 Water storage tanks & filtration systems
- Agricultural tools to farmers to clear their land of debris
- Livelihood support measures (greenhouses) for 141 households that have lost their earning members
- 240 Health camps and 273 Awareness sessions
- 48 helplines anchored with local youth to help flood victims access govt. relief & rehab measures.



account, PRAGYA promptly mobilized all utilities necessary to reinstate schools in the most affected districts. Tents were sent up, blackboards were provided, notebooks and equipment were distributed amongst children and in less than two months. PRAGYA's ground teams single handedly set up makeshift structures and helped 12 schools across 11 villages in Uttarakhand to resume classes.

Medical assistance:

Consignments of medicines and supplies were provided to the Chief Medical Officers in the flood-affected districts of Rudrapur, Chamoli, Pithoragarh and Uttarkashi, during the relief phase, which served several injured and ill flood-victims. In addition, we set up regular medical support for the remote, flood-affected villages, to ensure continuing healthcare and keep epidemics at bay.

Mobile Healthcare Units: PRAGYA staff fitted two vehicles with basic diagnostic equipment & essential medicines, as well as necessary furniture and lighting, in consultation with PRAGYA's in-house medical professionals & the medical officers in the affected districts. These were operating in

the districts of Chamoli & Rudrapur.

Health Camps: PRAGYA's on-ground staff along with district Health departments held 240 health camps in worst-affected areas. The PRAGYA team coordinates with Pradhans (village heads) and ensures that the people are aware of the health camps being conducted, and turn up in large numbers. Apart from diagnosis & treatment of health conditions, the camps also provided basic health awareness & counselling.

Safe Water and Sanitation Interventions:

Access to safe water and freedom from disease, are among the greatest challenges for communities in the remote reaches of the flood-affected regions of Uttarakhand. Realizing these constraints of potable water & sanitation in the flood-affected region and its serious fallouts, PRAGYA set up prefabricated toilet blocks and potable water systems. The beneficiary groups have also been trained on the installation & maintenance of the water & sanitation systems, thereby ensuring sustainability and community capacity building. Awareness sessions on health and hygiene were also carried out.



Water storage tanks & filtration systems: PRAGYA installed a total of 89 covered water storage tanks & filtration systems in villages where water supply and storage systems had been compromised by the floods. The tanks were fitted with BARC approved filters to ensure safe drinking water.

Construction of Prefabricated toilets: To counter the risk of open water sources being polluted and to restore the dignity of the flood-victims, 61 prefabricated toilet blocks were installed to benefit those households that lacked access to sanitation facilities.

Awareness sessions: Awareness sessions were conducted on health and hygiene to make people realize the importance of health and hygiene in day-to-day life and promote healthy habits. A total of 273 awareness sessions were conducted.



Livelihood Support Measures:

Helpline services: 48 helpline volunteers were mobilized and trained. These helpline volunteers are local youths who have been trained to assist the flood-affected families and ensure that individuals gain access to Government relief and rehabilitation schemes apart from providing psychosocial counseling and support.

Greenhouses (Polyhouses) and agricultural tools: 141 households who had lost their earning members were provided polysheets and seeds. They along with PRAGYA staff then set up polyhouses. These polyhouses and the seeds provided a better yield and also allowed them to grow crops throughout the year, therefore enabling them to get more income from a small area of land.



Our Outreach:

Location	People Reached	Initiatives by PRAGYA
Uttarakhand		
Chamoli	6063	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relief supplies (food, hygiene kits, utensils, blankets, solar lanterns etc) - Tents and tarpaulins to families - Medicines to Health department
	1490	- 16 Prefab toilets and 29 storage tanks & filtration systems installed
	310	- Greenhouses and seeds for 62 flood-affected families
		- Operating a Mobile Health Van. Conducted health camps in collaboration with district health department. Awareness sessions on health and hygiene. Helpline services
Uttarkashi	9684	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relief supplies (food, medicines, hygiene kits, utensils, blankets, etc) - Tents to families and Anganwadi centre
	1229	- 14 Prefab toilets and 16 storage tanks & filtration systems installed
	250	- Greenhouses and seeds for 50 flood-affected families
		- Medicines to over 2000 people in medical camp conducted health in collaboration with district health department. Awareness sessions on health and hygiene. Helpline services.
Rudraprayag	3652	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relief supplies (food, medicines, hygiene kits, utensils, blankets, etc) - Tents to families and schools - Helped reinstate operations in 12 schools across 11 villages; provided tents, blackboards, teaching materials and stationary
	1950	- 27 Prefab toilets and 38 storage tanks & filtration systems installed
	150	- Greenhouses and seeds for 30 flood-affected families that have lost earning members
		- Operating a Mobile Health Van. Conducted health camps in collaboration with district health department. Awareness sessions on health and hygiene. Helpline services.
Pithoragarh	425	- 3 Prefab toilets and 6 storage tanks & filtration systems installed
		- Conducted health camps in collaboration with district health department. Awareness sessions on health and hygiene. Helpline services.
Himachal Pradesh		
Kinnaur	3310	- Relief supplies (food, medicines, hygiene kits, utensils, blankets, etc)
	3 villages	- Agricultural tools to aid land clearance and restoration of horticultural fields



The Road Ahead..

Pragma will continue with rehabilitation efforts for the next few years with interventions in livelihood, health, water & sanitation, food security and empowerment. Any support towards this effort would go a long way in lightening the distress of the flood-affected in Uttarakhand.

Snapshots from the field

Location: Meeng Gadera Village, Chamoli district, Uttarakhand

Intervention: Health camp

People treated: 227

PRAGYA field staff and doctors trekked with supplies & conducted a health camp here. Along with the injured & sick, special emphasis was given to women, children and the aged. Pregnant women and lactating mothers were provided pre & postnatal check-ups & children in local schools were examined. Stretchers were used to carry the weak and severely injured to the mobile health care vans.



"Very satisfied with the health camp. People have saved a lot of money by getting free medical care, which they could not afford otherwise. The camp was most useful for women as they are not allowed to go to distant medical facilities, and have to keep working even when unwell. Please do conduct more such camps in the future."

- Ms. Chaita Devi,
Pradhan – Zak Village,
Chamoli District , Uttarakhand

Location: Kunjethi Talli Village, Rudraprayag district, Uttarakhand

Intervention: Support for primary school

Students benefitted: 23

The Primary School in Kunjethi was sited next to the main road that connects the village. This road was washed away in the floods leaving the village inaccessible. Due to continuing landslides, the foundation of the school became unstable and the building collapsed. The school continued to run in tents provided by PRAGYA. PRAGYA also supplied the required teaching and learning aids and stationery to the school.



Location: Solnu Village, Rudraprayag district, Uttarakhand

Intervention: Prefabricated toilet block

Beneficiaries: 4 SC/ST households (10 adults and 5 children)

"The toilets set up by Pragma are the most helpful during the rainy season. My children do not have to go out in the open and we feel much safer. We are cleaning the toilets regularly so that they are maintained properly." – Ushma Devi



Location: Salang Village, Uttarkashi district, Uttarakhand

Intervention: Water storage tanks & filtration systems installed

Beneficiaries: 10 households (28 adults and 16 children)

"The water is being used by the whole village. It is very helpful during the rainy season. It has reduced diarrhea and vomiting cases. We have been also been trained on caretaking of the system and cleaning it regularly." – Sobati Singh

PRAGYA (www.pragya.org)

Write to us at: info@pragya.org

Follow our efforts on: <https://www.facebook.com/pragyangoo> and <https://twitter.com/pragyangoo>