

Women's Participation in Disaster Relief and Recovery

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Box 1

Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP): A Maharashtra NGO Strengthening the Organizational Capacity of Rural Women and Their Role in Local Development

Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) was formally established as an NGO in 1988 to build the capacities of rural women's groups to access and manage development resources and to participate in decisionmaking processes affecting their families and communities. SSP's program experience was developed in the late 1980s in a pilot collaborative effort with the government to enhance women's economic participation in an existing antipoverty program (DWCRA), funded by UNICEF (the United Nations Children's Fund) and the national and state governments. SSP facilitated a dialogue between community-based women's groups and local government officials in six districts in the Marathwada region of Maharashtra State. During this period, SSP piloted methods such as districtwide information fairs and community-to-community exchanges and

dialogues for women designed to help them to learn to work with banks and government agencies.

Today SSP, with a staff of more than 60, partners with women's collectives and communities across 889 villages, including 1,680 savings and credit groups that represent more than 22,000 female members. These women's groups address urgent issues such as credit, food security, water and sanitation, health, education, and social infrastructure by initiating demonstration projects, community planning, and skills training, and by increasing their participation in local governance. To support these efforts, SSP, with headquarters in Bombay, operates field centers in the Maharashtra districts of Anaravati, Beed, Latur, Nanded, Osmanabad, Solapur, and the Gujarat districts of Jamnagar and Kutch.

Creating Spaces for Women in Relief, Recovery, and Reconstruction Efforts in Turkey: The Foundation for the Support of Women's Work (KEDV)

The Marmara Earthquake

Turkey is at high risk for earthquakes, which account for the majority of damage to the country caused by natural disasters. A destructive earthquake occurs about every one and a half years; more than 90 percent of the country's total surface area is at seismic risk. In fact, more than half of Turkey's land area and population are first- and second-degree risk zones.⁴

Two earthquakes in the Marmara Region, occurring on 17 August and 12 November 1999, were the strongest ever experienced in Turkey, with fatality rates five times greater than those of previous quakes. Rated at 7.4 and 7.2 on the seismic scale, they occurred in the most densely urbanized and industrialized region of the country where 23 percent of the country's population and 47 percent of Turkey's gross national product were concentrated and affected. According to official figures, more than 18,000 people died in the two quakes and about 48,900 were injured. About 100,000 housing units were destroyed; more than 250,000 units received serious to moderate damage. Estimates of economic damage ranged from US\$5 to 6.5 billion.

Located adjacent to the Istanbul Metropolitan Area, the Marmara region had a thriving and diverse economy. Some cities like Izmit were highly industrialized; Adapazari and Duzce were wealthy agricultural provinces with flourishing trade. A major navy base was situated in

Golcuk; a middle-class summer resort was nearby. The majority of new migrants to the area had fled from civil strife and economic problems in the Kurdish region in Southeast Turkey. As a result, the earthquake disrupted the lives of people with highly diverse social, economic, and cultural backgrounds, resources, and needs.

The Turkish Government's Response and Recovery Programs

In the few hours that followed the first earthquake on August 17, volunteers and donations (food, clothing, household goods, medicine, and other necessities) started to flow into the area. As one observer put it, "As blood gushes to an open wound, volunteers flowed to the area. Anyone who could use a shovel or dress a wound, rushed to the area from all parts of the country" (Coskun 2001). Even if uncoordinated and inexperienced, volunteers and local people performed most of the immediate rescue work. Government and military forces and international rescue teams arrived 72 hours later. By that time, local people and volunteers had accounted for most of the 10,000 people that were pulled out of the rubble; professional teams rescued only about 500 more.

Despite a second earthquake that devastated the region within 86 days of the first one, the government—supported by an outpouring of international assistance from various governments and aid agencies—was able to rebuild the basic infrastructure and provide temporary accommodation for about 800,000 in 121 tent cities. Within four to nine months, about 42,000 prefabricated temporary housing units were completed; NGOs and the private sector contributed one-fourth of the total number of units.

⁴ The figures cited in this section are from the UN Habitat+5 draft report for Turkey (2000).