Impact Assessment Report

Project Title

Emergency Relief Initiative for Cyclone Remal Affected People of South 24 Parganas District of West Bengal (July to September 2024)

Sabuj Sangha is a 50-year young non-profit, non-government development organization committed to improving the lives of people less fortunate in West Bengal, India, through participation and empowerment. Their thematic areas include Health & Nutrition, Education & Protection, Water, Sanitation & Hygiene, Livelihood & Women Empowerment, Environment & Disaster Response. They are registered with West Bengal Society's Act 1961, FCRA (FCRA Regulation Act 1976 and renewal as per Act 2010), 12A & 80G with Income Tax Act 1961 and NSE Social Stock Exchange in December 2024. Their geographical area of operation are Howrah, South 24 Parganas, North 24 Parganas, Kolkata, Nadia, Murshidabad, Purba Medinipur, Paschim Medinipur, Purulia, Alipurduar, and Darjeeling District of West Bengal , West Sikkim district of Sikkim and Thane District of Maharashtra India.

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1. Strategic intent and implementation plan for cyclone Remal relief project in Sundarbans

Sundarbans is the most prominent part of the largest delta in the world, which is formed by the rivers Ganga, Brahmaputra and Meghna. Sundarbans is enlisted as UNESCO World Heritage sites. Despite its status of Mariene Protected Areas (MPA) and its unconducive nature for habitation, it's densely populated, with villages spread across the forest.

Increasing deforestation and damage to the mangrove forests are not only leaving the coastal areas of Sundarbans progressively exposed and more vulnerable to storms, at the same time it also depletes the rich biodiversity of the region. As per the estimate, more than 67 percent of population of Sundarbans belongs to underdeveloped and excluded communities[1].

1.1. Key challenges faced by the people of Sundarbans: Climate Change Induced disasters and lack of employment opportunities

In recent years, the frequency and intensity of cyclones in Sundarbans have escalated, with major storms such as Cyclones Aila (2009), Amphan (2020), and Yaas (2021) causing widespread devastation. These events have resulted in the loss of lives, extensive damage to homes and infrastructure, salinization of agricultural lands, and destruction of the protective mangrove belt that buffers coastal communities against storm surges.

The compounded effects of these disasters have led to increased displacement, food insecurity, and economic hardship for the millions of people living in the Sundarbans, highlighting the urgent need for resilient infrastructure and sustainable adaptation strategies to protect this vulnerable region.

1.2. Devastating impact of Cyclone Remal and humanitarian relief & response intervention by Sabuj Sangha

Cyclone Remal, which struck in May 2024, had a severe impact on both India and Bangladesh, particularly in the Sundarbans region. In India, it caused severe impact on human life, including fatalities and injuries, and property, including extensive damage to homes, power infrastructure, and public facilities. The tidal surge, reaching over 10 feet, led to severe flooding, saltwater intrusion into freshwater ponds, and extensive environmental damage, including uprooting trees and endangering wildlife.

Sabuj Sangha with the support of the State Bank of India Foundation implemented an *"Emergency relief initiative for cyclone Remal affected people of South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal"* thereby providing relief support for the cyclone-affected families at the remote villages of Sundarbans in hard-to-reach blocks of Patharpratima, Mathurapur II, and Sagar blocks in South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal.

1.3. Objective of the project

- To provide relief support by distributing 1000 hygiene kits and shelter materials to the most affected families in operational areas.
- To provide basic health care service to the beneficiaries through medical camps.

1.4. Activities conducted under the project and the target population

Distribution of Relief Materials: **1,000** hygiene kits and shelter materials were distributed to affected families across the cyclone-hit areas in 4 blocks of Patharpratima, Sagar, Mathurapur II and Kultali in South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal. Each kit

[1] Kanjilal, 1999b

included essential items such as soap, sanitizers, menstrual hygiene products, bucket, mug, and other personal care items. The distribution aimed to ensure that the community members maintain proper hygiene and reduce the risk of health issues.

Sl. No.	Block	Total No. of families who received relief kits
1	Patharpratima	190
2	Sagar	631
3	Mathurapur II	115
4	Kultali	64
Total No. of families		**1000**

Organising 'Medical Camps': **20** medical camps were organized in the most affected regions, providing much-needed healthcare services to **1668** individuals. The team of doctors and healthcare professionals from Sabuj Sangha offered free consultations, basic treatments, and medicines to those suffering from cyclone-related injuries and illnesses.



Conducting 'Awareness Camps': In the month of August 2024, **6 awareness camps** attended by **359** people who received messages on preventive healthcare measures, hygiene practices, and disaster preparedness.



Using a specific set of criteria, the most vulnerable and worst affected families were identified and brought under the direct coverage of the project, i.e. distribution of relief kits. As mentioned above, 1000 families or an estimated 4000 people have received direct support through the intervention.

Special attention was made to include the people from the vulnerable communities/ groups such as women, children, the elderly, and individuals whose livelihoods depend on agriculture and fishing.

Organisation of medical camps and the awareness camps helped the entire community from the target areas to receive information or referral support services to ensure safe health and hygienic practices, immediately after the cyclone as well as throughout the year.

2. The project approach: Ensuring the right to survival of the affected people

The key focus of the intervention has remained at securing the 'right to survival' for the people affected by the devastating Cyclone Remal in Sundarbans areas of West Bengal. Both the 'Process' as well as 'Impact' indicators were developed during the planning of the intervention, and they were verified during the impact assessment activity. The entire design of the project was based on the findings and recommendations from the impact assessment study conducted by Sabuj Sangha.

2.1. Findings from the situations assessment: Devastations caused by Cyclone Remal in life and livelihoods of people

The Sundarbans region, particularly South 24 Parganas, is highly vulnerable to natural disasters due to its geographical location, low-lying terrain, and proximity to the Bay of Bengal. The recent Cyclone Remal was a stark reminder of the ongoing threats faced by this fragile ecosystem and its inhabitants. The cyclone caused widespread destruction, severely impacting homes, public infrastructure, and essential services. Critical facilities, including local Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) centres and health clinics, were heavily damaged, leaving thousands of families homeless and without access to vital support systems.

The aftermath of Cyclone Remal exacerbated existing vulnerabilities in the region. Food insecurity surged as agricultural lands and food stores were destroyed, depriving communities of their main sources of sustenance. Access to safe drinking water became scarce, heightening the risk of waterborne diseases. Healthcare facilities, already strained, were overwhelmed by the increasing demand, while unsanitary conditions raised the likelihood of disease outbreaks. The disaster also disrupted livelihoods, particularly for those dependent on agriculture and fishing, as the destruction of farmlands, fishing equipment, and aquaculture ponds stripped many residents of their primary income sources.

Environmental degradation, including soil erosion and the loss of protective mangrove cover, further complicates recovery and increases the vulnerability of the Sundarbans to future cyclones. The erosion of riverbanks and saline water intrusion have rendered agricultural lands unproductive, posing long-term challenges to food security and economic stability. Addressing these complex challenges required effective coordination among government bodies, NGOs, and local communities, as well as strategic resource mobilization to ensure timely and efficient relief distribution. Robust and sustainable recovery efforts were essential not only to rebuild the affected communities but also to strengthen the region's resilience against future natural disasters. In this context, Sabuj Sangha implemented the relief and recovery initiative reaching out to the most vulnerable population in the affected regions.

2.2. Project implementation plan

The four main components of the programme were:

i. Rapid assessment to identify the most affected areas and specific needs of the impacted families.
ii. Distribution of relied on materials such as dry foods and shelter (tarpaulin, rope) to the cyclone affected families.
iii. Deploy basic healthcare to deliver first aid, essential medicines and health check-ups.
iv. Provide materials and technical support for the reconstruction of damaged houses, focusing on building back better with resilient designs.

Given the very nature of the humanitarian intervention, the emphasis was there since the very onset of the project planning to ensure participation of people from all subsets of the affected communities. All the project activities were designed based on findings from the situation assessment study.

2.3. Significance of the project in terms of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

As it's a well-established fact that the interventions with focus on humanitarian response activities very closely contribute towards the SDGs by reducing the impact of natural disasters in life and livelihoods of affected people, in most of the cases, who belong to the marginalised and excluded communities. As per the project design, that evolved from the findings of the

situation assessment, participation of people from the entire community has remained the key focus. Very strategic attempts were made for addressing the SDGs through various innovative activities during the intervention.

SDGs addressed through the project

- **SDG 1 & 2 (No Poverty)**: Provision of relief kits to help the worst affected families to withstand the immediate impact of the disaster
- **SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being)**: Enhancing the access to healthcare and referral support services through 'Medical camps'
- **SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation)**: Distribution of Hygiene kits with materials to practice safe and hygienic WASH practices
- **SDG 13 (Climate Action)**: Enhancing community awareness on disaster resilience and environment protection activities

Ensuring participation of all stakeholders throughout the project cycle

As already mentioned, ensuring participation from all stakeholders of the project has remained a key strategy adopted. Staring from the phase of project development, community members (women, men, young people and children), local Panchayat and government functionaries and other stakeholders were involved. Regular interaction through community meetings and visits to the local offices and other institutions were made to ensure the engagement of all stakeholders in planning, execution and monitoring phase of the project.



During the impact assessment also, strategic attempts were made to ensure the participation of all stakeholders. Feedback from the community members that were collected through various activities (explained in detail in the next section) and they were incorporated in the present Annual Impact Report (AIR).

2.4. Risks and challenges faced and the mitigation plan for ensuring quality implementation of the project

In case of any humanitarian response intervention, it's a normal practice to identify the key risk areas and integrate the plan for addressing those challenges in the project. Dynamic nature of the project in terms of remoteness and inaccessibility of affected areas, displacement of people and emerging crisis at the field level, make it furthermore important to plan for the mitigation of them on a spontaneous basis. The key challenges that were identified during the situation assessment and the strategies for addressing them could be outlined as follows:

1. **Inadequate connectivity and transportation facilities to reach out to affected areas**: After the devastation of cyclone, it became a tough task to reach out to worst affected areas with support services. Leveraging the strong presence in the affected areas through various projects, Sabuj Sangha ensured to reach out to the field with information, materials and other support services immediately after the disaster.
2. **Ensuring quality of procured materials:** It becomes a tough task to ensure the quality of materials immediately after any disaster, because of multiple reasons. Sabuj Sangha team acted in coordination with the government and communities to identify

most appropriate materials/ items required by the community and ensured the quality of the materials as per the field context.

3. **Ensuring timeliness of relief distribution:** In any disaster situation, it becomes very critical to ensure the timeliness of the distribution of relief materials and provision of support services. Sabuj Sangha team took proactive steps towards ensuring the timely implementation of activities as per the project plan, to ensure the quality and timely implementation of the project.

3. Impact assessment of the project: Understanding the changes created in life and livelihoods of people

To understand the impact of the intervention in life and livelihoods of the target people, a very well- structured assessment was undertaken. The Impact Assessment study was conducted by an external agency, to ensure the objectivity of the activity.

3.1. Methodology followed during the impact assessment study

The impact evaluation of the emergency relief project in response to the Remal Cyclone in the Sundarbans, West Bengal, utilised a **mixed-methods approach**, combining **quantitative** and **qualitative** data collection to comprehensively assess the project outcomes. The quantitative component involved administering **structured surveys** to a representative sample of beneficiaries, aiming to gather numerical data on key indicators such as the quality and adequacy of distributed relief items, accessibility of medical camps, and the effectiveness of house repairing support. The survey used closed-ended questions with Likert scales, multiple-choice options, and rating questions to quantitatively measure beneficiaries' satisfaction, perceived impact, and unmet needs. This data will provide a robust understanding of the extent to which the project objectives were met and will help identify areas needing improvement.

The qualitative component complements the quantitative data by exploring the beneficiaries' experiences, perceptions, and the broader impacts of the relief efforts. **Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs)** were conducted with a subset of beneficiaries and key stakeholders to capture detailed narratives on the appropriateness of the relief items, the effectiveness of the medical camps, and the long-term impact of house repairs on their recovery and resilience. Qualitative data was analysed using thematic analysis to identify key patterns and insights, allowing for a deeper understanding of how the interventions have influenced beneficiaries' lives beyond what can be captured numerically. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative data, this mixed-methods approach provided a comprehensive assessment of the project's impact, offering actionable insights for future disaster response initiatives.

3.2. Data collection for the Impact Assessment

Quantitative Survey (12th to 18th September 2024) – Using the platform, kobotoolbox, a survey form was developed and deployed through the field data collectors (field programme staff members of Sabuj Sangha). For ease of language access, the survey tool was completely bilingual – with all questions and options translated in Bangla in the same form. Field surveyors were trained through a 1.5-hour online (Zoom) meeting using the questionnaire developed for the purpose of the survey. Their inputs greatly helped in attaining a critical overview of the questionnaire, and slight modifications were made based on the inputs, such the list of relief materials provided were further detailed out. Other technical and logistical aspects of the survey, including the sample size to be covered by each of the surveyors was determined in the process of the call.

i) **Focused Group Discussions and Interviews** (19th – 24th September 2024) – An experienced facilitator was engaged to conduct focused group discussions and interviews with the field programme staff members.

For ease of communication, a WhatsApp group was set up during the design stage of the assessment, that included coordinators from Sabuj Sangha, surveyors and the facilitator and MEL lead from the impact assessment team. As the impact team members were both native Bangla speakers, the assessment bridged language barriers.

3.3. Sampling methodology

The sampling approach for this impact evaluation employed both **random** and **purposive sampling techniques** to ensure the representativeness and reliability of the findings. For the quantitative surveys, a random sample of beneficiaries were selected from the total population of households that received emergency relief support, including hygiene kits, shelter materials, medical camp services, and house repairing assistance. Approximately **15 percent of the total population** of beneficiaries (1000 people) covered through the relief distribution was targeted to be covered through the quantitative survey, to ensure sufficient power and precision in estimating the impact of the interventions, accounting for the variability in responses. Random sampling helped in minimizing selection bias, allowing each household an equal chance of being included in the survey. This approach ensured that the findings can be generalized to the broader population of project beneficiaries, providing an accurate assessment of the project's overall impact. Field surveyors were trained through a 1.5-hour online (Zoom) meeting to follow strict randomization protocols, and sampling was conducted using a randomized list of beneficiaries to maintain objectivity and uphold the integrity of the data collection process. For the FGDs, participants were randomly sampled from the larger group of beneficiaries in the area who received the relief support. The key informants, i.e. key stakeholders were purposively sampled, to represent those who were aware of the initiative.

3.4. Sample Size

Quantitative Survey: Relief materials were distributed to 1000 affected families. Out of these 1000 families, 158 families were selected for the purpose of the survey. These 158 families were randomly sampled.

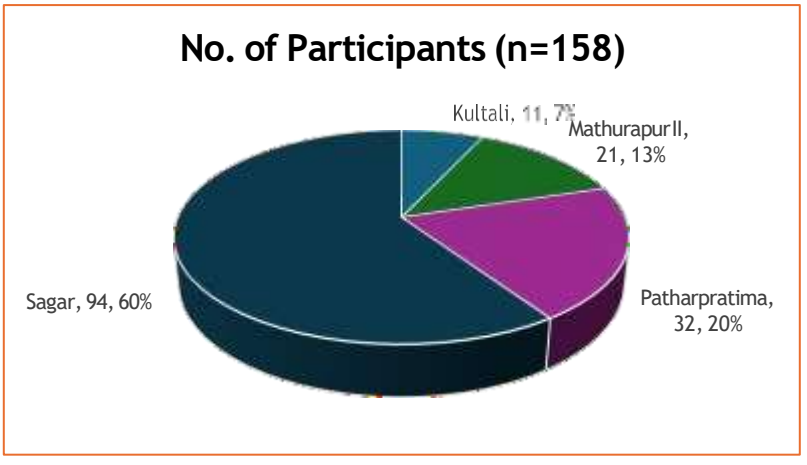


Figure 1: Block wise distribution of participants (n=158)

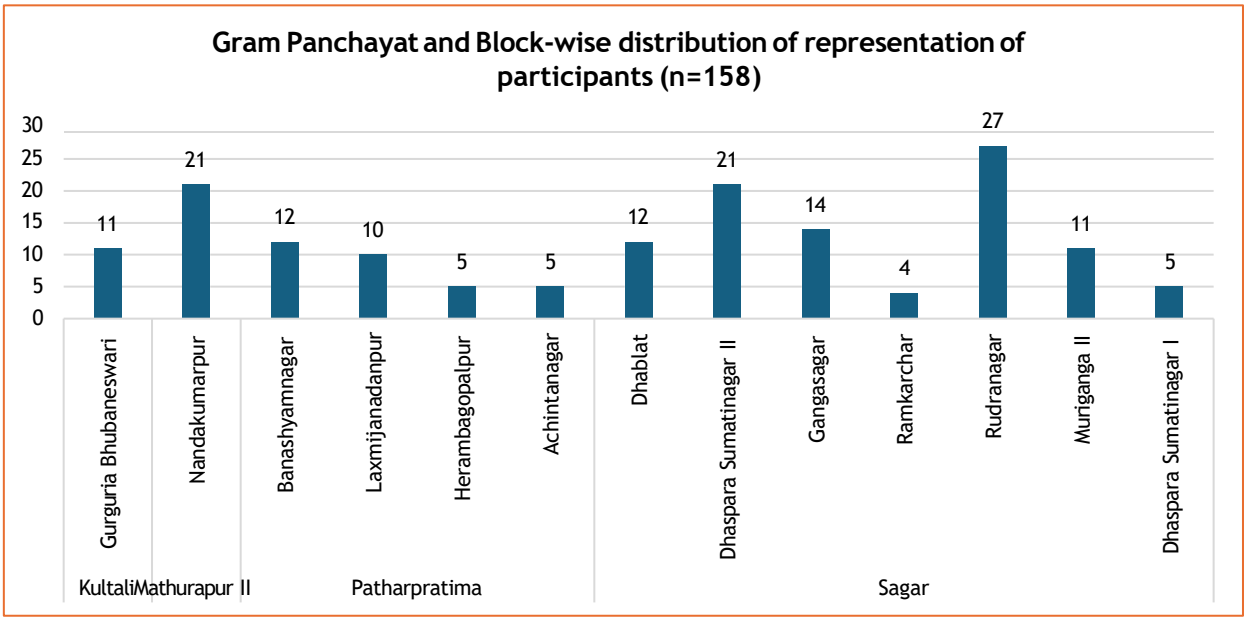


Figure 2: Gram Panchayat-wise distribution of participants (n=158)

Qualitative Data Collected through FGDs: A total of 32 beneficiaries participated in the Focused Group Discussions held in two locations in Sagar and Mathurapur II Block, with 16 participants in each group. In addition, key informant interviews were conducted with a total of seven (7) stakeholders, including two (2) Block Sabhapatis, two (2) Panchayat Pradhans and two (2) Upapradhans, and one (1) community health assistant.

3.5. Impact score card: Findings from the Impact Assessment study

3.5.1. Demographic Details

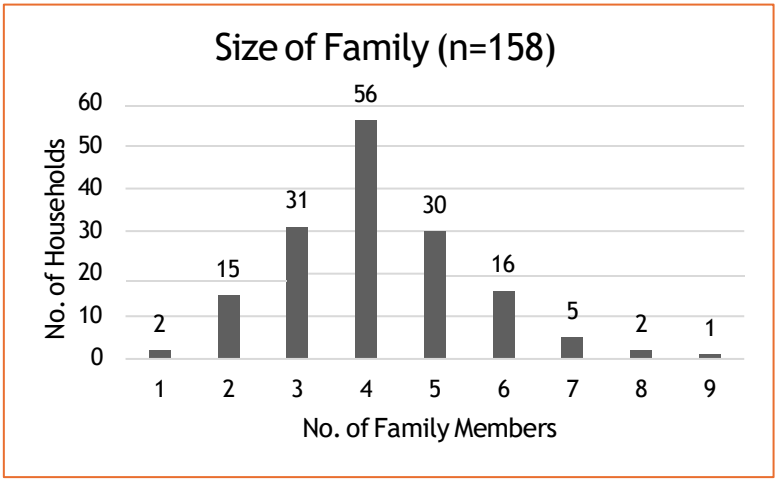


Figure 3: Size of Family

The survey gathered data of the family size of the participants to gain an understanding of the average family sizes and the representative outreach of the relief support (see Figure 3 on the left). Through these 158 participants, the relief materials directly supported 655 individuals (adults and children). The median value of family size of families was four members, reported by 56 participants in the survey.

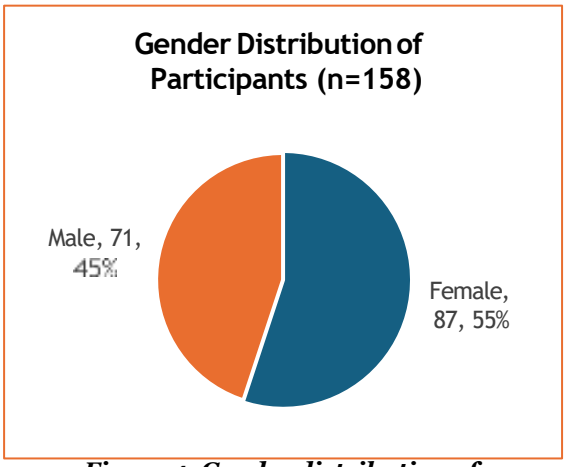


Figure 4: Gender distribution of Participants

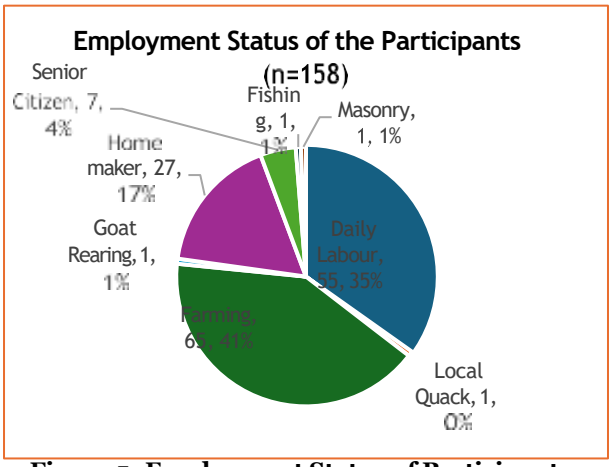


Figure 5: Employment Status of Participants

Out of the 158 participants interviewed, 87 were women and 71 were men who received relief support through this initiative. As an initial demographic mapping, this survey also captured the employment status of the participants. This showed that a significant proportion (41%) was in farming and agricultural activities, and an equivalent proportion (35%) was daily wage earners through labour work. 27 women (17% of the sample) were home makers, engaged in contributing to managing the households and care work for the family. Three (3) of the participants were engaged in masonry, fishing or goat rearing and another participant was a local quack (unregistered medical practitioner). Seven (7) participants were senior citizens, out of whom two were women who were also government pension earners.

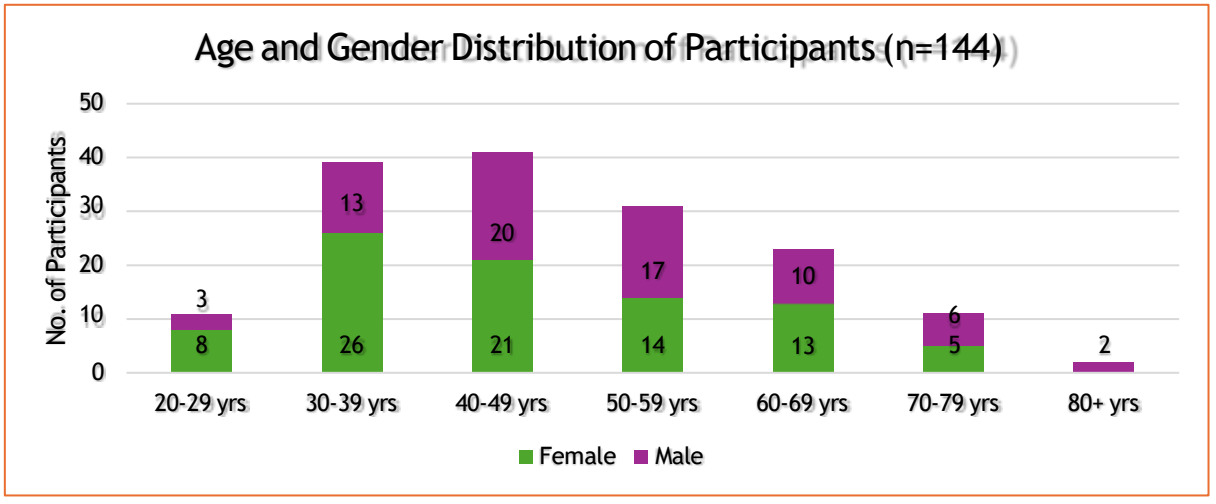


Figure 6: Age and Gender Distribution of Participants

From the above figure, it can be seen that a majority of the participants are in the age range of 30-59 years, with skewed distribution to younger age group of people. The figures below show the severity of the impact of the cyclone and the variation in damages faced by the beneficiaries. In figure 7, a majority of 58 percent (92 participants) have shared that they have been moderately affected, implying the need for basic requirements needed through relief provisions. 22 percent (35 of the participants) shared that they faced severe damages as an impact of the cyclone. Another 20 percent (31 of the participants) shared that the impact they faced was mild and not so significant. In figure 8, out of the 158 participants, 156 had faced damages to their house and household property and 38 of them reported loss of livestock. 87

out of 158 participants had faced loss of livelihoods in the days following the cyclone. 79 of them suffered from fever and cough and 25 of them reported the spread of waterborne diseases. 6 of the participants reported minor injuries happening to them during the cyclone.

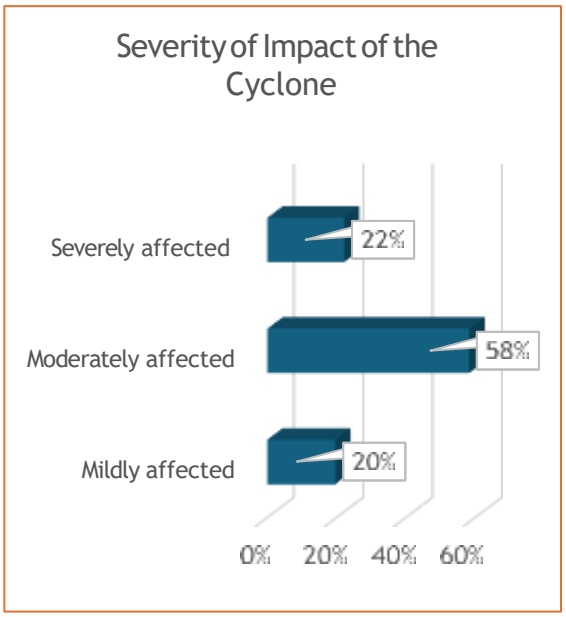


Figure 7: Severity of the Impact of the Remal Cyclone experienced by the participants

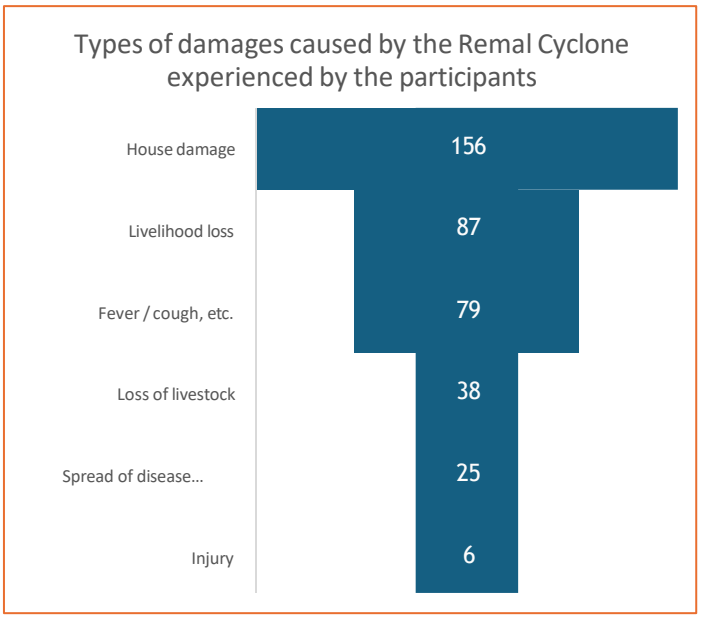


Figure 8: Types of damages caused by the Remal Cyclone experienced by the participants









3.5.2. Beneficiary satisfaction and perceived quality

The table below depicts the types of relief support distributed through this initiative. The beneficiaries received the following items in the relief packages: (1) a kit containing hygiene materials, bathing soap, washing powder, sanitary napkin for women etc. – received by all the 158 participants; (2) a bucket with lid and mug. – received by all the 158 participants; (3) tarpaulin and rope for house repairs. – received by 157 participants. In addition, 130 out of the 158 beneficiaries received health checkup through health camps and 120 out of 158 beneficiaries attended the awareness sessions held on rehabilitation measures, recovery and resilience building.

Types of relief support received	No. of Participants receiving the relief support
Kit	158
Bucket with lid and mug	158
Tarpaulin and Rope	157
Health checkup through health camp	130
Awareness camp	120

Table 1: Types of relief support received by the beneficiaries

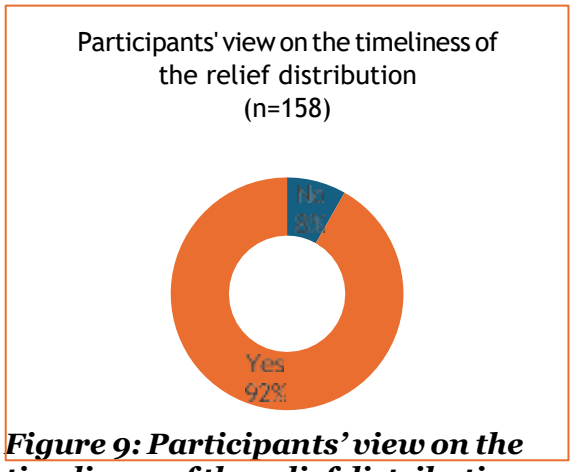


Figure 9: Participants' view on the timeliness of the relief distribution

In summary, **92% of participants** felt the relief distribution was **timely**, reflecting a strong success in delivering aid when it was most needed. The **8%** who wished for earlier distribution suggest that a small portion of beneficiaries may have faced immediate post-cyclone challenges that weren't addressed quickly enough.

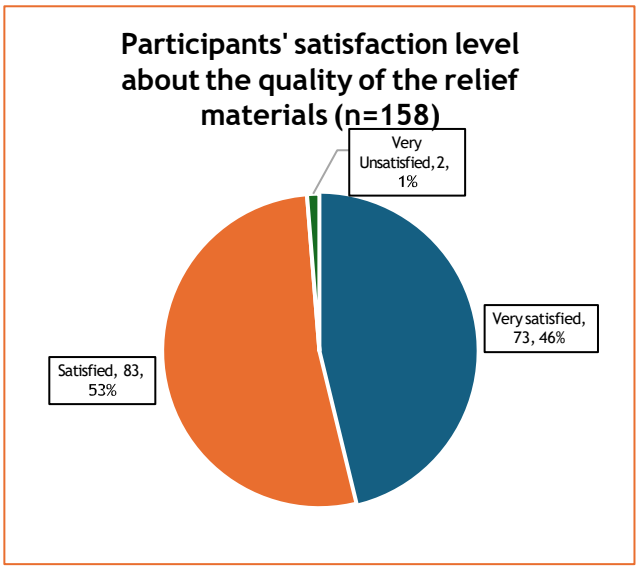


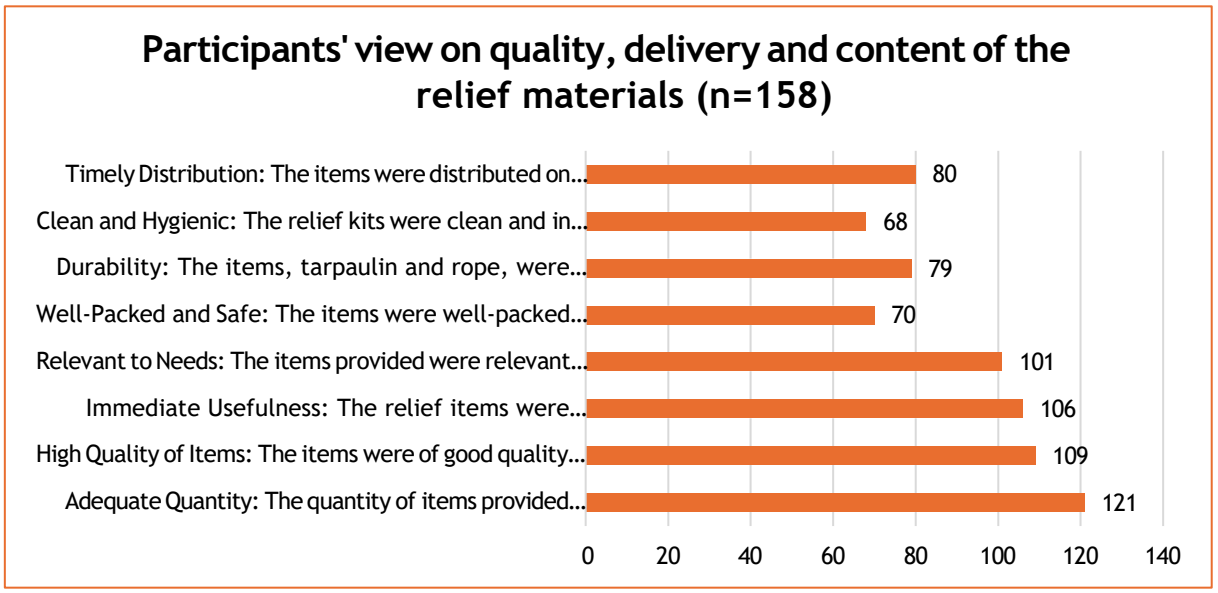
Figure 10: Participants satisfaction level about the quality of the relief materials

53% of participants reported being satisfied with the quality of the relief materials, and **46% (73 participants)** indicated they were **highly satisfied**. Together, this means that **99% of the participants** expressed some level of satisfaction, demonstrating a strong positive reception of the relief materials. This suggests that the materials provided met the participants' expectations in terms of quality, and the distribution efforts were largely successful in delivering reliable and useful items.

While a significant **53%** were satisfied, **46%** took it a step further by being **highly satisfied**, which indicates that nearly half of the participants felt the relief materials exceeded their expectations. The presence of this large group of highly satisfied respondents shows that many found the materials to not only meet basic needs but to surpass them in terms of quality or appropriateness.

The slight difference between the satisfied and highly satisfied groups suggests that while the overall quality was appreciated, there may have been a variation in how different individuals perceived the materials. For instance, certain items or specific contexts (like family size or specific damage incurred) might have influenced this differentiation in levels of satisfaction.

Only **two participants** (a very small minority) expressed dissatisfaction, with their reasons being **delayed distribution** and **insufficient quantity**. This indicates that their dissatisfaction wasn't solely related to the **quality** of the materials but to operational issues such as **timeliness** and **quantity** of the relief supplies.



Based on the inputs received from the participants on the quality, delivery and content of the relief materials (see figure above), a few key insights were drawn as below:

1. Adequacy of Relief Quantity:

- **121 out of 158 participants (76.6%)** mentioned that the relief items were sufficient in quantity to meet their family's needs. This suggests that the relief providers successfully estimated the quantity of supplies needed per family, addressing a key concern during emergency relief operations. The high percentage reflects the participants' general satisfaction with the volume of supplies provided.

2. Quality of Items:

- **109 participants (69%)** felt the quality of the relief materials was good, indicating that not only were the supplies sufficient, but they were also durable and useful. In emergency contexts, poor quality materials can quickly undermine relief efforts, so the high satisfaction with quality speaks well to the appropriateness and reliability of the relief materials.

3. Relevance and Immediate Usability:

- **101 participants (63.9%)** found the items relevant to their needs, and **106 participants (67%)** noted that they could use them immediately. These figures are significant as they highlight that the relief items were well-chosen based on the recipients' immediate post-cyclone requirements. The fact that many could put the supplies to immediate use shows effective alignment between the provided materials and the urgent necessities of the beneficiaries.

4. Timeliness of Distribution:

- **80 participants (50.6%)** appreciated the timely distribution of relief materials. While this is a lower percentage compared to other factors, half the respondents emphasizing the importance of timeliness highlights how crucial prompt relief distribution is during a disaster. Late distribution, even if the materials are adequate, can significantly reduce the impact of relief efforts. Timeliness here appears to have positively contributed to overall satisfaction.

5. Durability of Key Items:

- **79 participants (50%)** specifically commended the **durability of the tarpaulin and rope** provided. These items are essential for temporary shelter construction and house repairs after the cyclone, and their durability is critical for their usefulness in the relief process. Half of the participants recognizing this factor shows that these items were likely critical to their recovery process, providing shelter and stability in the aftermath of the disaster.

6. Packaging of the Items:

- **70 participants (44.3%)** appreciated the packaging of the items, which suggests that the relief materials were well-organized and easy to handle. In an emergency, proper packaging can make a significant difference in terms of ease of transport, protection of items from environmental factors, and preventing wastage.

7. Cleanliness and Hygiene of the Kits:

- **68 participants (43%)** noted that the cleanliness and hygienic condition of the kits were satisfactory. Given the public health risks post-disaster, ensuring that relief materials, especially sanitation and personal care items, are hygienically packaged is crucial to prevent illness or contamination. This focus on hygiene was well-received by nearly half of the participants.

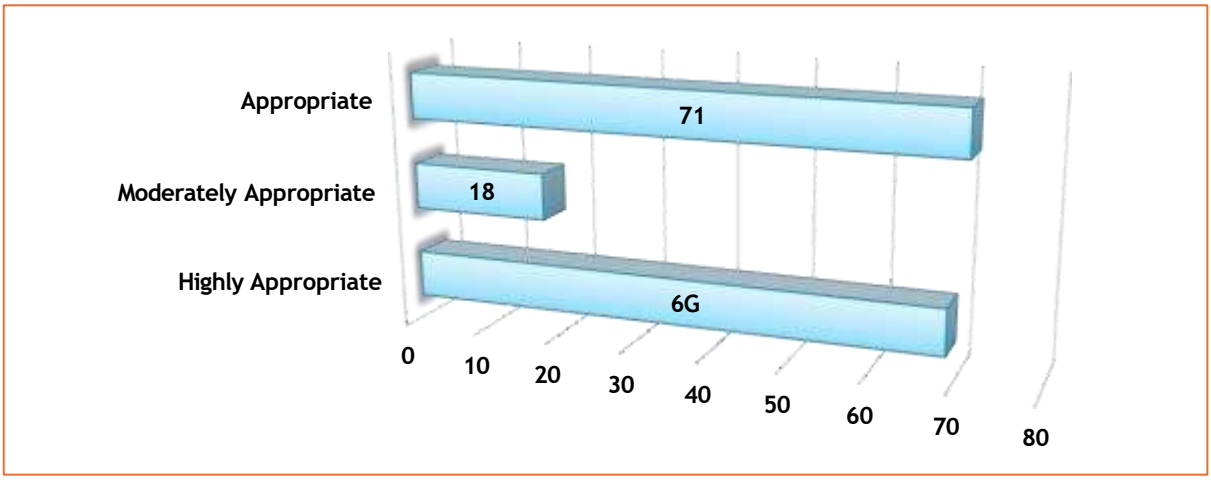


Figure 12: Participants' perspective of the appropriateness of the relief items

Another rating-scale based question was administered with the participants in this survey, to gauge what they felt about the appropriateness of the relief items distributed. Once again, a wide majority of 140 participants shared that the relief items were either appropriate or highly appropriate. 18 participants felt that the relief items were moderately appropriate.

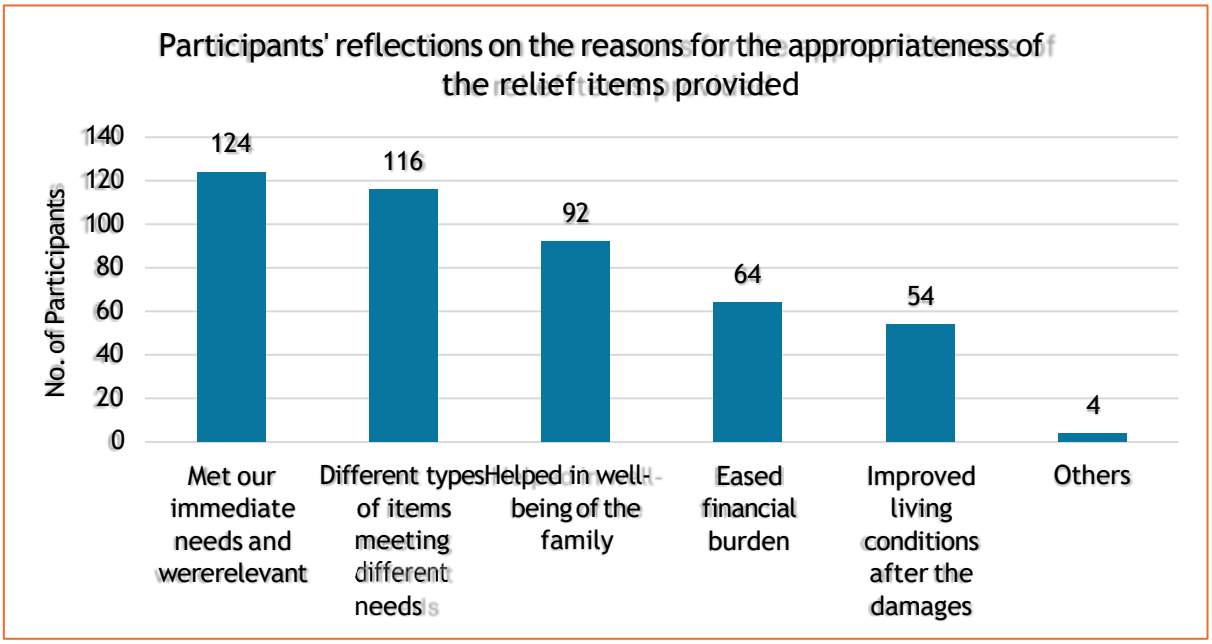


Figure 13: Participants' reflections on the reasons for the appropriateness of the relief items provided

From the above figure (13), the following key insights can be derived:

1. Overall Relevance and Satisfaction:

- **124 out of 158 participants (78.5%)** felt that the relief items were relevant and met their immediate needs. This indicates that the majority of the beneficiaries found the relief to be timely and essential, pointing to **effective needs assessment by the relief providers (the team and management of Sabuj Sangha)**.

2. Diversity of Relief Items:

- **116 participants (73.4%)** felt that the diversity of the items provided was crucial in meeting their varied needs. This highlights the importance of delivering a broad range of relief materials that can address multiple types of requirements, such as shelter repair, hygiene, and other essentials. It suggests that a one-size-fits-all approach would not have been as effective, and tailoring the relief package to include diverse items was a successful strategy.

3. Impact on Family Well-being:

- **92 participants (58.2%)** indicated that the relief items helped improve their family's well-being. This emphasizes the psychosocial and emotional value of the relief items beyond mere material benefit. Having basic needs met likely contributed to a sense of security and stability during a time of crisis.

4. Financial Burden Relief:

- **64 participants (40.5%)** said the relief helped ease some of their financial burden, particularly in light of the losses incurred, such as livelihoods. While a lower percentage compared to the overall relevance, this still represents a significant portion of the participants. This suggests that while the relief provided immediate support, it may not have fully addressed the financial losses or longer-term recovery needs of many families.

5. Improvement of Living Conditions:

- **54 participants (34.2%)** shared that the relief improved their living conditions after the cyclone, especially in light of damages to homes or possessions. Though this is the smallest percentage among the reasons cited, it still reflects a meaningful impact for about one-third of the respondents. It suggests that perhaps additional focus on shelter and infrastructure repair could have been beneficial.

In addition, the participants shared their views on the **access to the relief distribution process**, as below:

- All the beneficiaries said that they learned about the relief distribution being conducted from the representatives of Sabuj Sangha who visited their houses.
- 154 out of 158 participants in the survey shared that they faced no such challenges in accessing the relief distribution point.

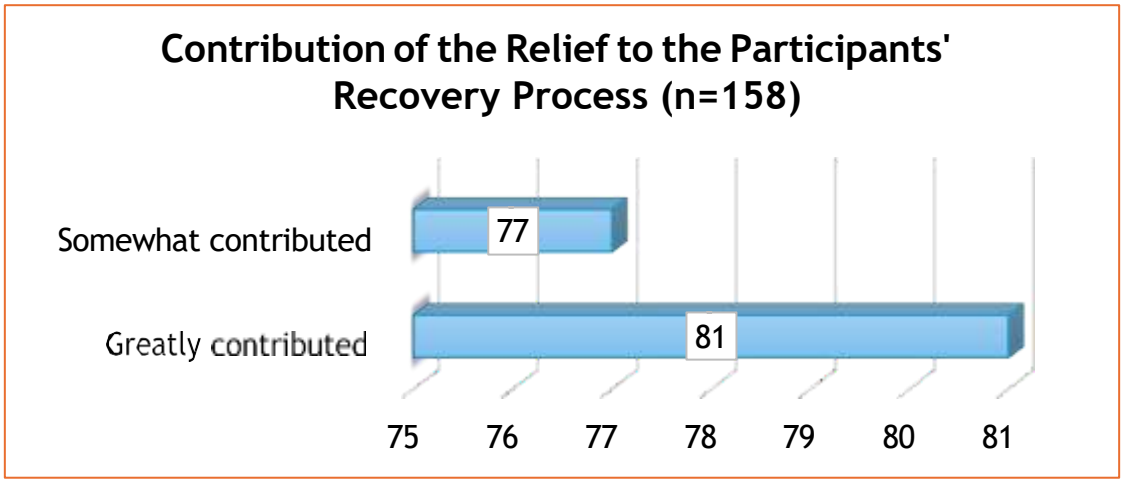


Figure 14: Contribution of the Relief to the Participants' Recovery Process (n=158)

81 out of 144 participants, higher than the majority, shared that the relief contribution greatly contributed to their recovery process after the cyclone. The materials received through the relief process were appropriate and timely, enhancing their resilience post the damages borne by their households. While the rating-scale based question also had the option of selecting "no impact", i.e. no contribution, none of the participants opted for this option.

3.5.3. Key Impact of the intervention (Impact Scorecard)

- **99% Satisfaction Rate**: The overwhelming satisfaction rate (99%) indicates that the relief materials were well-received, both in terms of **quality** and appropriateness to the beneficiaries' needs.
- The majority of participants (over 75%) were satisfied with both the **quantity** and **quality** of the relief materials. This reflects strong operational management in terms of assessing and fulfilling the immediate needs of families.
- The fact that a large number of participants (50-67%) found the materials **relevant**, **timely**, and **durable** suggests that the relief initiative was both well- targeted and well-executed, meeting crucial survival and recovery needs after the cyclone.
- **Packaging** and **hygiene** received positive responses from around **44%** of participants, indicating that the logistical aspects of the relief operation, such as organization and cleanliness, were well-regarded by almost half the beneficiaries.
- **Durable items**, particularly **tarpaulin and rope**, were highlighted by 50% of respondents, showing that such essentials were instrumental in meeting critical needs like temporary shelter or protection.
- The data shows that the relief efforts were largely successful in addressing the **immediate needs** and **well-being** of the majority of participants. However, there is room for improvement in terms of **long-term financial relief** and **living condition improvements**.
- The diversity of items was a particularly appreciated aspect, underlining the importance of addressing **varied and multifaceted needs** in emergency relief operations.
- Around **40%** still struggled with financial losses, pointing to the potential benefit of integrating **livelihood recovery** or **financial assistance** into future relief efforts.
- **High Overall Impact**: The fact that more than **half** of the participants saw the relief as having greatly contributed to their recovery, and **none** reported it had no impact, suggests a well-executed relief process that met critical needs. It underscores the value of providing tailored, timely relief to disaster-affected populations.
- **Reinforcement of Resilience**: The relief materials were not only essential in the immediate aftermath but also in **building resilience**. This suggests that the materials were durable and multifunctional enough to support recovery beyond the initial phase of the disaster.

No Negative Feedback: The absence of participants selecting "no contribution to their recovery process" (refer Figure 14) indicates that the relief had universal acceptance in contributing to recovery. This suggests that the relief materials were perceived as necessary and relevant, even if they contributed to different extents depending on individual circumstances.

3.6. Analysis of Beneficiary and Stakeholder Feedback

Qualitative insights from interviews and FGDs

Focus Group Discussion 1

Location: Sabuj Sangha Office, Sumatinagar, Sagar Block
No. of Participants: 16
Date: 19th September 2024

The first **Focus Group Discussion (FGD)** was conducted with **16 participants** at the Sabuj Sangha Office in Sumatinagar, Sagar Block. The group reported **severe damage to homes** and the loss of cattle and other livestock. The participants mentioned that the relief materials addressed their most **urgent needs**. The relief kits included items such as a bucket with a lid, a mug, tarpaulin, and rope. Additionally, essential medicines such as halogen tablets, cough syrups, paracetamol, and antacids were distributed, which helped the recipients recover from common ailments like fever, cough, and cold.

Beyond material assistance, Sabuj Sangha members provided **technical guidance** on constructing temporary but sustainable tarpaulin shelters. The participants expressed overall **satisfaction** with the relief support they received, noting that critical needs, such as access to water and medical aid, were adequately met. The relief items were of **high quality** and the quantities provided were sufficient to support their families' immediate requirements. The **timely distribution** of these materials was also highlighted as being crucial to their recovery process.

However, none of the participants in the FGD had attended the **awareness or medical camps** organized as part of the relief program. They stated that they did not receive adequate information about these initiatives.



FGD with beneficiaries help on 19th September 2024 in Gangasagar



Key Informant Interview with Block Development Officer of Sagar Block



Key Informant Interview with Community Member in Sagar Block

Focus Group Discussion 2

Location: Maheshpur Multipurpose Community Centre, Laxmijanardanpur, Mathurapur II
No. of Participants: 16
Date: 19th September 2024

The second **Focus Group Discussion (FGD)** was held on 23rd September 2024 at the Maheshpur Multipurpose Community Centre, in Laxmijanardanpur GP. A total of **23 women and men participants** attended the discussion. All participants had received relief assistance from Sabuj Sangha. They shared their experiences, noting that while the **Amphan cyclone** had a much higher intensity, the **Remal cyclone** brought severe downpours, even though the storm itself was less intense. Most participants lived in **kaccha (mud) houses**, many of which were swept away by the heavy rainfall. The relief materials provided by Sabuj Sangha, including **tarpaulin, rope**, and other essential items, significantly **accelerated their recovery process**.

Participants mentioned receiving **early warnings** about the cyclone from the Panchayat via leaflets and public announcements, which enabled them to promptly move to safer shelters. One participant shared that she was unable to relocate due to caring for her 2-year-old grandchild, but most others, particularly women, sought refuge in nearby school buildings. Some villagers with **pucca (brick) houses** also offered shelter to those more severely affected. This **shelter assistance** provided through this relief initiative had a positive impact on the families' living conditions, providing **security** and alleviating immediate concerns about housing.



FGD with beneficiaries help on 23rd September 2024 in Laxmijanardanpur Gram Panchayat

The group expressed **high satisfaction** with Sabuj Sangha's role, as reflected in their feedback. They recounted how **Sabuj Sangha representatives conducted door-to-door visits** to assess immediate needs and inspect the condition of affected households. Even after distributing relief materials, they followed up to ensure that every family in need had received assistance. This **emotional support** was invaluable in reducing feelings of despair and helplessness.

An important insight from the discussion was the **community's resilience**. Despite their geographical vulnerability, which makes them more susceptible to natural disasters, the islanders have learned to **adapt and cope** with calamities like cyclones and heavy rainfall. While relief assistance is crucial in overcoming sudden crises, the group recognized that in case of certain natural disasters such as earthquakes often provide no early warnings, further highlighting their reliance on external aid.

Fortunately, participants shared that daily life had resumed, as agricultural lands were less affected by Remal's lower intensity, and **saline water intrusion** into the fields was minimal. During the discussion, participants reflected on how they could develop their own **coping mechanisms** in the absence of external support. They committed to **planting and maintaining trees** and acknowledged that **environmental preservation** is a shared responsibility. They emphasized that **no single institution**, whether an NGO or government body, can bear the full burden of protecting the environment. The community pledged to contribute to the **sustainability of forest areas**.



Key informant interview (KII) with Mr. Jay Bhusan Bhandari, Sabhapati, Mathurapur II Panchayat on 23rd September 2024



Key Informant Interview (KII) with Upopradhan of Laxmijanardanpur Panchayat on 23rd September 2024

3.7. Comprehensive analysis of Stakeholder Feedback on Relief Efforts

The feedback from stakeholders regarding relief efforts following the cyclone in Sundarbans, West Bengal, offers valuable insights into the efficacy of these initiatives. A total of **7 stakeholders** participated in the interviews, representing different communities and Gram Panchayats across the Sagar, Mathurapur II and Patharpratima Blocks. Their perspectives, recorded through structured questions, help assess the impact of the relief distribution, identify unmet needs, and highlight areas for future improvements.

Key Themes from Stakeholder Responses

- **Effectiveness of Relief Assistance in Stabilizing the Community:** Most participants expressed that the relief assistance was timely and crucial in addressing immediate needs. Stakeholders frequently mentioned items such as **tarpaulin, rope, buckets**, and **medicines** as essential for recovery. For example, stakeholders from **Rudranagar Gram Panchayat (GP)** conveyed that the materials were particularly effective in providing temporary shelter and maintaining hygiene. Many respondents underscored the importance of **medical supplies**, particularly **halogen tablets**, **cough syrups**, **antacids**, and **paracetamol**, which helped mitigate health risks in the aftermath of the cyclone. The ability of the relief items to address both shelter and health concerns contributed to a quicker stabilization process.
- **Satisfaction with Relief Content:** There was a general consensus that the relief materials met basic expectations. The distribution of **soaps, sanitary napkins**, and **personal hygiene items** was seen as well-thought-out, particularly in terms of health and sanitation needs. However, some stakeholders pointed out areas for improvement. For instance, participants from **Sagar** indicated that while the materials were sufficient for immediate recovery, there was a demand for more **food items**. This highlights an unmet need, where the focus on non-food items may have left certain communities struggling with food insecurity.
- **Awareness and Communication Regarding Cyclone Preparedness:** Stakeholders appreciated the early warnings about the cyclone, which were primarily disseminated through **miking** and **leaflets** by the **Panchayat**. This awareness allowed many community members to relocate to safer shelters in time, as seen in Maheshpur GP, where participants reported a prompt and organized evacuation to **local school buildings**. However, a notable observation from the interviews is that not all stakeholders attended awareness programs or medical camps post-cyclone.

Several participants mentioned that they were unaware of these initiatives, suggesting that communication regarding **awareness campaigns** could be improved to reach a wider audience.

- **Role of Local Governance and NGOs:** The collaboration between local governing bodies (Panchayats) and NGOs like Sabuj Sangha was consistently highlighted as a positive factor. Stakeholders noted that **Sabuj Sangha representatives** went beyond providing materials by visiting affected households to assess specific needs and ensure equitable distribution. This personal engagement helped build trust and provided emotional support to families during the recovery process. The **Gram Panchayat representatives** also played a key role in coordinating relief efforts, such as providing lists of families in need. Their collaboration with Sabuj Sangha ensured that the relief distribution was targeted and effective.
- **Local Resilience and Environmental Consciousness:** A key insight that emerged from the discussions was the local communities' growing understanding of environmental issues and their willingness to contribute to **sustainable practices**. Stakeholders recognized the role of **mangrove plantations** in mitigating cyclone damage and emphasized the importance of preserving these ecosystems. They also expressed a commitment to **tree planting** and **forest area maintenance** to enhance the resilience of their communities. Furthermore, the participants highlighted the need for shared responsibility in environmental preservation. They acknowledged that while NGOs and government bodies play an important role, local communities must also take ownership of conservation efforts to ensure long-term sustainability.

4. Recommendations from the Impact Assessment Study

Potential areas for future focus

- **Continue Focus on Timeliness and Appropriateness**: The strong positive feedback on timeliness and appropriateness should be maintained. These aspects are critical to the success of relief operations and continuing to prioritize rapid and needs-based distribution will likely ensure similar positive outcomes in future disaster responses. While the overall timeliness was well-received, there's room for improvement in delivering aid even faster, particularly in the immediate aftermath of the disaster, to address critical needs.
- **Maintain High Standards for Quality**: Given the high satisfaction with the quality of materials, continuing to prioritize the procurement of durable, relevant, and high-quality items will likely lead to continued success in future relief efforts.
- Continuing the focus on **durability, packaging, and hygiene** will likely maintain high levels of satisfaction in future relief efforts, as these aspects seem to resonate with recipients.
- This analysis suggests that while the relief efforts met many immediate needs, future interventions might focus more on long-term recovery, particularly in **financial aid** and **living condition improvements**.

Recommendations based on Stakeholder and Community Feedback

- **Incorporate Food Supplies in Future Relief Kits**: A recurring theme in the feedback was the lack of food supplies in the relief kits. Incorporating **dry rations** or **ready-to-eat food items** in future distributions would address this gap and ensure that families have access to sustenance during the critical recovery period. Simi
- **Provision of Solar Emergency Lights**: With frequent and prolonged power outages, particularly during cyclones, the distribution of **solar emergency lights** would provide a much-needed source of lighting. This not only addresses a basic need but also promotes the use of **renewable energy** in these remote and vulnerable areas.

- **Strengthen Communication Channels for Awareness Programmes**: While early warning systems were effective in this case, many participants were unaware of post-cyclone awareness programs and medical camps. Enhancing communication efforts through **multiple channels**, such as **text messages, community radio**, and **local networks**, could ensure that more people participate in these important initiatives.
- **Encourage Community-Led Environmental Initiatives**: The growing awareness of environmental preservation presents an opportunity for community-led initiatives. Sabuj Sangha could facilitate **training programs** and provide resources for local groups to take ownership of **mangrove plantations** and **forest conservation efforts**, thus strengthening long-term resilience against climate-related disasters.

5. Conclusion: Foundation for a resilient and sustainable community

In conclusion, the quantitative data indicates that the relief operation was generally well-received, with specific praise for the **quantity**, **quality**, and **durability** of key items. Areas like **timeliness**, **packaging**, and **hygiene** also contributed positively to the overall satisfaction of participants. The feedback gathered from stakeholders offers a comprehensive view of the **strengths** and **areas for improvement** in Sabuj Sangha's relief efforts. While the relief assistance was timely and met many critical needs, incorporating additional items such as **food supplies** and **solar lights**, along with advocating for **permanent housing solutions**, would further enhance the effectiveness of these programs. The community's increasing resilience and environmental awareness also provide a strong foundation for future interventions aimed at building **sustainable**, **disaster-resistant** communities in the Sundarbans.

Date: 03/09/2025

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