

**Report of Consultation Program on
Disaster Risk Reduction-Cum-Leadership Development & Internet Skills**

By Anderson Tokbi, APBAid

Consultation on DRR & Leadership Development and Internet Skills

DATE: March 11 - 13, 2015 **PLACE:** Tura, Meghalaya, NE India
APBAid in partnership with Garo Baptist Convention (GBC)



I. Introduction

During September 21-23, 2014 an unexpected flash flood and mudslides caused severe damages to the properties, infrastructure and standing crops in the Garo Hills of Meghalaya, India. As many as 59 lives were lost, besides destruction of livelihoods for thousands of families. Garo Baptist Convention (GBC) along with the government agencies responded with immediate tasks of search and rescue and with emergency reliefs to the affected villagers. Later on APBAid facilitated assistance from European Baptist Mission/ German Baptist Union (EBM-GBU) to provide a grant of US \$27,672 (IND Rs.1,688,000) to help those severely affected villagers.

A recovery project for severely affected villagers is undergoing and it is expected that it will be over in 2 months' time.

APBAid is actively involved in programs of training in disaster-preparedness, risk reduction and management in the most vulnerable and affected areas thereby increase the capacity of local Baptist churches to respond effectively with any disaster situations. Another felt need subject is on leadership development and communication because these modern tools are crucial for effective disaster management. So, as per the project plan a Disaster Risk Reduction-cum-Leadership Development & Internet Skills training was conducted on March 11-13, 2015 at the GBC office premises in Tura, Meghalaya.

II. Participants

Altogether 30 responsible personnel, i.e. Executive Secretaries of Baptist associations under GBC, pastors of local churches mostly from the affected areas and staffs of GBC including the President and General Secretary, attended this 3-days training program.

III. Resource Persons

1. Mrs Mainora M. Sangma, Deputy Controller, Civil Defence & Home Guards, Govt. of Meghalaya;
2. Mr Bijoy A. Sangma, Chair of APBF Communication; and
3. Rev Kabi Gangmei, Director of APBAid.

IV. Program Facilitators & Devotion leaders

1. Mr R.D. Shira, President of GBC;
2. Rev Janang R. Sangma, General Secretary of GBC; and
3. Mr Anderson Tokbi, Project Officer of APBAid

V. Program

This is a customised training program to make it more relevant and effective in the given context.

1. Rev Janang made the introductory and closing remarks on 11th and 13th of March, 2015. Mr. R. D. Shira led an inspirational morning devotion by referring to King David in Psalms 63:1 as to how he had coped with crisis / disaster situation on March 11, while Mr Anderson Tokbi took a Biblical reflection on Disasters on March 12, 2015. Many clarifications and few recommendations were made during the sessions for panel discussion.
2. On the first day of the program Mrs Mainora took 2 sessions on Disaster Situation in Meghalaya with special reference to Garo Hills. She reiterated on the importance of 3 Ps, namely planning, preparedness and prevention in order to save lives, minimize damage to properties and infrastructures, and maintain continuity of normal activities and production. She along with her team demonstrated the different aspects of search and rescue operation.
3. On the second day, Mr Bijoy led 3 interactive sessions on Leadership Development and Internet Skills. He shed light on factors that make leaders effective and efficient, and on the importance of communication in all leadership activities. Such utilisation of modern information and communication technologies enhance leadership capacity, and save time/effort. He introduced APBF/APBAid website and ADRiMIS to the delegates and encouraged them to make use of Internet-based information and communication system. He highlighted practical usage of the website and ADRiMIS: that it was storehouse of information and resources available to leaders of the churches especially for disaster-related activities.
4. Two interactive sessions on 'Disaster and Role of the Church', and one session on 'Missional Church' were led by Rev Kabi Gangmei. He elucidated on the definition of disaster and technical terms related with it; and on its causes, types and impacts. He further explained on the importance and different models for the Church to play pro-active role in responding to disaster situations and build a resilient community.

V. Outcome of the Program

1. Participants urged the GBC leaders to make policies and mechanism for relief response; and appoint competent staff for the task. The President and General Secretary of GBC have committed to put forward the matter to GBC Committee Meeting for deliberation and decision within 2015 itself. (Note that GBC has functional R&D Unit, this commitment is to streamline the functions of responding to disaster situation)
2. Participants were motivated to make their churches and associations to be pro-active in responding to disaster situation that may occur within or outside their region.
3. Participants have committed to organise awareness and training programs on disaster risk reduction and management both at local church and association levels in coordination with GBC.
4. Participants began to understand that responding to disaster situation is integral part of the mission of the Church. Many of them were encouraged to study biblical events and preach in the churches from the disaster- perspective. For example – the Great Flood, Famines, Wars etc.
5. Participants realised the need to send promising members of the church to undergo intensive training and engage them for handling emergencies, disaster situation and development in a professional way.

Conclusion

Program such as this was organised possibly for the leaders of Garo Baptist Convention for the first time. The training program can be considered successful as it had motivated the GBC leaders to make policies and mechanism (system) within 2015 in order to face the next challenge of disasters. It is hoped that those participants from local churches and association will support and contribute wholeheartedly towards the ministry.

Some of the photos from the Consultation:

