

FACT FINDING REPORT ON ILLEGAL MINING IN KHEDA OF ALMORA DISTRICT IN UTTARAKHAND



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Introduction



On 2nd June 2019 at 3:30 pm, a natural calamity occurred in a village named Kheda which is situated in the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand. A sudden cloudburst devastated the village, causing heavy damage to 3 out of the 5 hamlets that were directly affected. Three of the hamlets, namely Kheda, Jukani and Bajpur comprised of residential and agricultural land.

The cloudburst resulted in extremely heavy rainfall which brought down boulders, heavy stones and sand along with it to the plains, tarnishing the village of Kheda. As a consequence, a man lost his life while trying to save an ox which also got trapped beneath the debris that destroyed two houses along its way to the plains. A total of 8 houses were completely and/or heavily damaged along with 2 cowsheds.

Since adequate measures were not taken, the village still consists of broken houses with debris that are yet to be cleared. It has been 5 months since the disaster but the people of the village have continued to live with the trauma since no measures of rehabilitation and of clearing of the village has been undertaken by the district administration. Consequently, at least four families have relocated to other areas of Uttarakhand as they were not able to cope up with the trauma.

Objectives

The team had received news of illegal mining through the RTI filed by activist and advocate Mr P.C. Tewari along with news reports on the same. The RTI further suggested the failure of the administration in successfully rescuing and rehabilitating the affected population of Kheda, while illegal mining occurred in the garb of River Training. Based on the information received, the team prepared the following objectives:

- To analyse if adequate measures were taken for the rehabilitation of the survivors of the natural calamity.
- To inquire if compensation was distributed as per SDRF rules.
- To analyse if the compensation distributed sufficed the needs of the victims.
- To understand if river training was essential and if riverbed mining had occurred.
- To analyse if the due process was followed and if it was as per the said SDRF rules.

Methodology

Using secondary data, such as news reports and the RTIs which were filed for inquiry into the rehabilitation of the affected people and river training, it was gathered that a cloud burst had occurred in Kheda village in Almora District of Uttarakhand. The cloud burst had caused heavy rainfall which brought down boulders and debris, damaging the village greatly. But despite the passage of 5 months, efforts to rehabilitate the people of the village did not occur in time. Based on this, a team of 3 members comprising of an advocate, researcher and a social worker visited the village to conduct a fact finding on the present condition of the village, speaking to the

various stakeholders.

Before visiting the village, the team did a thorough reading of the documents received from the RTI filed by Mr. P. C. Tiwari, treating it as secondary data. Based on this, a questionnaire was prepared for the residents as well as the district administration.

The team visited Kheda along with Mr. Prakash Joshi, a social activist. They were accompanied by Mr. Trilok Singh, a social activist and survivor of the incident. Additionally, at the village, the team met Mr. Khim Chand (*Pradhan* Candidate), Prem Singh, Kundan Singh, Sher Singh, Paan Singh and Pappu Mehra who had been actively involved since the natural calamity had occurred.

The team conducted a close inspection of all the affected areas and spoke to the survivors using an open-ended questionnaire to conduct the interviews. Apart from the villagers, the team interviewed Laxman Singh Negi (former Pradhan and father-in-law of the current Pradhan), Rajendra Singh Bisht (Station Officer, Chaukhutia), Local Intelligence Unit Officer, Surendra Singh (Registrar, Kunango), Santosh Tiwari (S.H.O. Chaukhutia), Manish Bisht (Revenue Officer), Umrao Singh Negi (Journalist Amar Ujala), B. L. Firmal (ADM, Almora) and Rakesh Joshi (Disaster Management officer).

About the affected Area

Kheda is a village situated in Chaukhutia block of Almora. It is located 78 kms towards west from the District Headquarters Almora and 30 kms from Chaukhutia. It is 128 km from the state capital Dehradun. It falls on the border of Almora and Chamoli districts. The village consists of two rivers that flow through it, namely Ramganga and Vimoli. Additionally, the village consists of seven canals constructed for irrigation. The majorly affected areas of the calamity in the village have been Bajpur, Jukani and Puniyabagad.

Limitations

Limitations of the fact-finding mainly consisted of the refusal of district administration to cooperate with the investigation.

Findings

The following are the observations and conclusions reached from the research conducted by engaging with the various stakeholders.

Situation in Kheda



In Kheda, 2 houses were completely destroyed while eight houses were heavily damaged along with two cowsheds. One of the houses have now been partially reconstructed by the owner to ensure shelter for himself and his family. They used to live in a two-storey house before the calamity destroyed it.



A compensation of Rs.1,01,900 was given to him by the government as per the current SDRF norms. No compensation was made for the cowsheds. A compensation of Rs 20,000 was given for the ox that had died. After the calamity, an immediate *ex gratia* compensation of Rs. 3,800 was made through cheque

to nearly 38 families. Trilok Singh, along with one of the victims spoke to the *Pradhan* (village headman) and the *Patwari* (revenue officer) for the disposal of rent for houses that had been destroyed, but no action was taken.

When the District Magistrate along with the MLA visited the village, they had promised the villagers that the debris would be removed from their houses and the streets in the village. But subsequently, a tender for River Training was released by the district administration and the removal of debris from



village residential area was made to be seen as a favor to the villagers by those who got the tender. Nonetheless, as the work of river training was not carried out adequately, boulders along with debris are still scattered around the village area and it continues to pose a great threat to people's lives as heavy rain can result to floods as well as another disastrous situation.

A plan for a playground was introduced and initiated by the CDO but halfway through its construction, it started to be used as a dumping ground of debris. Additionally, the random dumping of debris in the village has led to water logging in the school premises. The villagers said that the road to the local deity's temple along with the road to school has also been affected.



According to the villagers, the removal of boulders and debris was done only from the sides of the river and not from the centre as recommended by the Geology and Mining Unit of Uttarakhand and as specified within the **Uttarakhand River Training Policy, 2016**. The villagers informed us that no

flood-like situation had occurred in their village prior to this. The villagers also felt that the compensation of Rs. 3,800 given by the district authorities to several families, was not adequate in comparison to the loss they had incurred due to the calamity. Additionally, relief material such as blankets, rations and utensils was distributed by an NGO visiting from Dehradun.

The ration distributor of the village informed that the authorities had asked him to distribute ration to the villagers at the time of the calamity but the payment for the same has not made in the last 5 months. The villagers felt that the relief material was being kept by the Pradhan to be distributed later at the time of elections.

Situation in Bajpur and Jukani



Affected Families:

In Talla Khela Badi (Upper part of Bajpur)	In Bajpur
Anup Singh	Gopal Singh
Madan Singh	Balam Singh
Prem Singh	Kamal Singh
-	Umed Singh
-	Nayan Singh



In this hamlet, the water flowed over the houses along with debris, not completely damaging the house but the rooms had been filled up to the ceiling with mud and water. 4 of the houses had at least 1 room damaged, filling up with debris. The residents of this area informed that the debris did not cross over into the river and it was scattered only across the side of the road. The debris presently on the other side of the road and on the bank of the river was dumped by those employed for river training in the area.



Additionally, the villagers informed that the mining workers were taking the RBM from an area across the river claiming it to be Bajpur. This was ultimately stopped as the villagers protested against it. Furthermore, the villagers claimed that they removed the debris from their houses themselves. They were

also threatened by Station Officer Ramesh Singh Bora when they protested against illegal mining in the river. Some of the debris from the sides of their houses was eventually removed by construction workers employed to build roads but they too did not remove all of it, just the bit that prevented them from working.

In Jukani, a shop built on the side of the road was greatly affected, along with a biscuit factory. The shopkeeper owned a bike which had gotten damaged beyond repair due to the calamity, but he did not receive any compensation for it. Although, for the car that had been damaged,



insurance was claimed. On the same day, another inhabitant of Talla Khella Badi had left valuable belongings along with 9 mules at the shop. He lost all of the belongings in the heavy gush of rainwater but the mules were saved.

Cloudburst

According to some of the villagers, the cloudburst occurred due to the creation of pressure at low altitude in the area, due to which the cloud was unable to contain any more water which led to it bursting upon the village.

However, the **Revenue Officer** of the region felt that the cloud did not burst on top of the village, saying it had burst at some other place. He substantiated his view by explaining that when a cloudburst occurs, the water is supposed to flow from only one end, but the village had several streams of water flowing which brought down debris and boulders with it. Furthermore, he said that it was not even a disaster, since he believes that a disaster occurs only when 10 to 15 casualties occur. Therefore, an incident such as this does not qualify the definition of a disaster according to him.

The **Disaster Management Officer** further said that it was not a cloud burst but a heavy shower.

The **Station Officer** at Kheda on the other hand said that 2 to 3 clouds had burst and hence, the calamity occurred in different parts of the village.

Testimonials: Administration



The **former Pradhan** of Kheda and the father-in-law of the current Pradhan, Laxman Singh Negi, informed us that the channelising of the river was essential. The royalty for the material removed from the river had been given to the government. Additionally, the RBM removed was crushed completely, claiming that this

activity was misunderstood by the villagers as mining. Mining is banned in Uttarakhand. Furthermore, he felt that the calamity occurred due to man made issues, such as the cutting down of trees. In the context of river Vimoli, he said that the debris had reached the river, but no extra material was removed.

The team met the Station Officer of Chaukhutiya, sub-division of Almora. He did not have adequate information about the incident since he had been given charge of the station a few months after the incident had occurred. However, we met the **Local Intelligence Unit Officer** present at the police station who informed us that he had intervened as soon as the information was registered by informing the control room within the district. A Joint Protection Team, comprising of the Police, SDRF, Disaster Management Unit, NDRF, PWD, Tourism, Medical Staff, Revenue Officer and the Water Department was sent to the location. The priority was to rescue people who were buried beneath the debris and to provide First Aid to them. It was a joint effort by several district departments.

The **Registrar Kanungo** at the Tehsil office shared information regarding the payment of relief to various survivors of the calamity. The amount of compensation under SDRF Scheme was paid to the families affected by natural calamity and the family of the deceased person. Furthermore, as per the information received from the Registrar Kanungo Office, an amount of Rs 4,000 per month for 4 months was sanctioned by the District Administration for three families, namely Govind Singh (s/o Narayan Singh), Jayanti Devi (w/o Kundan Singh), Bala Devi (w/o Kuwar Singh). Following is the data on compensation as per the documents available at the Tehsil Office:

1. Ex-gratia payment to families of deceased persons. (Rs 4.00.000/-)

S.No.	Deceased	Father's Name
1.	Ram Singh	Dungar Singh

2. Full damaged (Rs 1,01,900/-)

S.No.	Aggrieved	c/o
1.	Bala Devi	w/o Kumar Singh
2.	Jagat Singh	s/o Khim Singh

3. Severely damaged houses (Rs 1,01,900/-)

S.No.	Aggrieved	c/o
1.	Govind Singh	s/o Narayena
2	Trilok Singh	s/o Kesar Singh

3.	Jayanti Singh	w/o Kundan Singh
4.	Madan Singh	s/o Gopal Singh
5.	Anup Singh	s/o Chandra Singh.
6.	Govindi Singh	w/o Jashod Singh
7.	Ramesh Singh	s/o Gopal Singh
8.	Khimuli Devi	w/o Nain Singh

4. Partially Damaged (Pucca) Houses (Rs 5200/-)

S.No.	Aggrieved	c/o
1.	Nanda Singh	s/o Veer Singh
2.	Ratan Singh	s/o Jasod Singh
3.	Bhopal Singh	s/o Ganga Singh
4.	Prem Singh	s/o Mohan Singh
5.	Umesh Singh	s/o Diwan Singh

5. Cattle Loss (Rs 20,000/-)

S.No.	Deceased	Father's Name
1.	Ram Singh	Dungar Singh

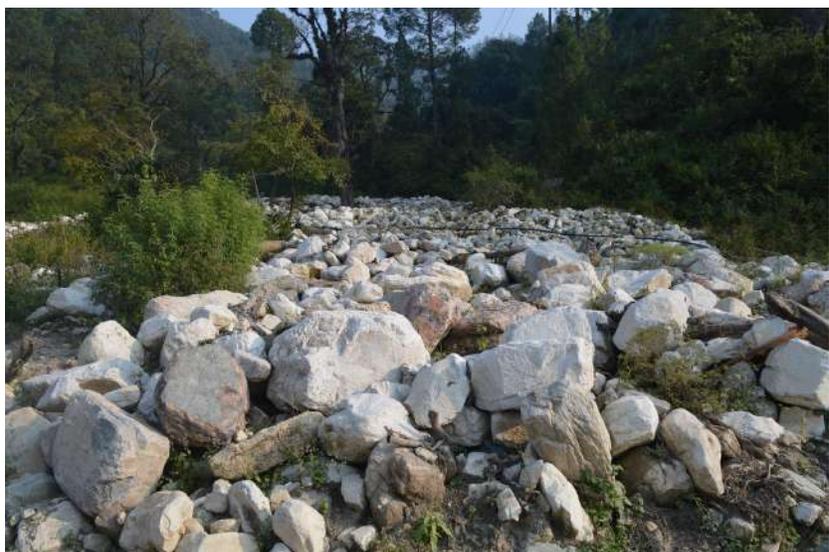
Note: Gratuitous Relief of Rs 3,800/- for clothing and utensils was given to 45 families whose houses had been washed away, were fully damaged and/or severely inundated for more than two days due to the calamity.



Santosh Tewari, **Station Officer**, Kheda Chowki was present at the station at the time of the incident. He informed us that the cloudburst affected parts of Gyari, Puniya Bagad, Kheda and an area near Garhwal border. The incident had taken place around 3:30 pm on 2nd June, 2019. His team was

informed about the destruction caused by the calamity by a taxi driver while coming back from the village. They proceeded to then send the information through wireless to other agencies.

He recalled that he, along with two of his juniors proceeded to walk towards the village as the roads had been blocked by debris. Consequently, PWD was asked to send JCBs to aid with the rescue operation. On the second day, an Ox was found dead under the debris. The body of the man was found only on the third day of the rescue operation by a Pokland machine. The Medical team present along with the veterinary team conducted the post mortem of the bodies.



The S.O. informed us that before the SDRF team could reach, a police team from Dwarahat had reached the spot. The police then made arrangements for food and shelter at GIC Kheda for the survivors of the disaster.



According to him, not one but two to three clouds had burst. Additionally, he added that the debris near the shop in Jukani were removed with the help of JCB. The debris had crossed over to Ramganga and Vimoli river banks through the road. As per the situation, the District Magistrate gave orders for River

Training. It was decided that 100 metres upstream and downstream, removal of debris would be conducted from the centre of the river. The tender for river training was issued by the Revenue Department and the demarcation of the area was conducted by the Revenue Officer. The tender passed was for the river and not for the removal of debris from the houses but the Station Officer insisted that the debris be removed from the houses as well.

On asking about the number of trucks involved in the mining process and the amount of RBM removed, the Station Officer could not provide any information, saying that the police remained busy and could not keep a track on the number of trucks going and coming from the village. Lastly, the team inquired from the S.O. if any villager had been threatened during the process of River Training, which he refused saying that he had not received any such information. We were informed by an old woman who had lost her house to the incident that she had been threatened by the workers as well as people within the administration.

Manish Singh Bisht, **the Revenue Officer**, took charge of the area a month before the calamity had occurred. On speaking about his jurisdiction, he showed his concern saying that although the post of a revenue officer is almost equivalent to an S.H.O., the resource crunch makes it difficult for him to work in full capacity.

Along with the SDM, he had visited the village and undertaken the initiative for the rescue work. They had walked around the village, inspecting the affected areas where the people were provided intermediary relief on the spot. Furthermore, a tender for river training was issued. River



Training was done to make arrangements for the river to flow in its natural path, which it had lost due to the debris that had flowed in due to the disaster. The work was done under the supervision of the Revenue Officer, SDM and Tehsildar. According to him, river training was being done for the good of the people since Kheda frequently faces flash floods. He added that he tried to explain the process of River Training to the villagers by undertaking meetings with the residents. Additionally, he even got the debris from the village removed at their own risk, even though the tender was only for the river and not the village and yet, the villagers did not agree upon river training and the channelising of the rivers.

He further showed the team pictures of himself putting down red flags to denote the demarcation for the river training. The villagers later informed us that the markings had flown away with the wind soon after they had been put down.

Explaining the process of river training, he said that an online receipt is generated that specifies the amount of material to be taken. The police or the revenue department can check the supply of the material while it is in transport. He told us that the data on the amount of material removed is available on the state's mining department website along with the details on the royalty received by the state government but the data on the same could not be found when checked. The royalty to be paid to the government is with regards to the damage done to the natural environment. On being asked about the CCTV footage for the same, he said that he was not aware that CCTV footage was one of the requirements as per the rules for river training.



The **District Magistrate** refused to meet the team. We met B.L. Firman, the **Additional District Magistrate** who refrained from sharing any information with us. He further said that he had not visited the site at the time of the incident and

hence, he could not share any information without consulting the SDM who had been on leave for a few weeks. Nonetheless, he did inform that the data on the amount of RBM collected and the royalty received by the government should be available online on Uttarakhand's Geology and Mining Department's website. He further blamed the people for constructing houses near rivers and water streams. About the man who had lost his life, the ADM said, "his time (to die) would have come; his time would have ended."

Rakesh Joshi, **District Disaster Management Officer** met the team at the ADM office. Having visited the area, he said that temporary water supply was restored at the earliest after the calamity had occurred. Electricity supply along with roads were restored within 24 hours. Red Cross

Society distributed relief packages at the village and the relief fund was distributed as per SDRF guidelines by the district administration.

He further elaborated upon the loopholes within the SDRF guidelines, saying that the guidelines have several limitations. For instance, it provides compensation for the demolition of a house but not for the demolition of the verandah or walls surrounding the verandah. At times, an ex gratia of Rs. 5,200 is given for minutely damaged houses. Compensation for the loss of crops is given only if more than 30% of the crops have been damaged and it is further categorised with regards to irrigated land. Similarly, compensation is given if cowshed is built attached or next to the house but not if it is built farther away from the house. It was also derived that compensation under SDRF and NDRF is not adequate for the people residing in higher altitudes since the schemes and rules have been drafted with regards to the people residing on plains.

The District Disaster Management Officer further emphasised that the relief measures and compensation should be area specific. He also mentioned that their department has submitted such recommendations before to the central and the state government. He further emphasised on the fact that Uttarakhand is the first state to give mitigation fund, which is further allocated for every district. The state government from the concurrent financial year has started to allot a separate fund for roads that do not get covered under the SDRF scheme.

Interestingly, he felt that the incident in Kheda was not due to a cloud burst but simply because Kheda received heavy rainfall. He said that the area has been witnessing such rains from the past 3 years. He had received a phone call from the control room, informing them about the calamity. Thereafter, he informed the Station Officer at the Kheda police chowki. He further said that the Red Cross Society had distributed 55 kits within the village, comprising of blankets, bedsheets, towels and food.

With regards to rehabilitation and the removal of debris from the village, he said that the villagers did not cooperate through the process and the use of machines to remove the debris would have damaged people's houses. Additionally, he had spoken to the villagers about

providing labour to remove the debris which would be paid under the MNREGA scheme. There was no clarity on records for the river training process.



While speaking to a **journalist** from Dainik Jagran who had widely written about the calamity, we were informed that in Ramganga river, the debris had crossed over to the centre of the river while Vimoli was filled upto 25% with debris

from one end. According to him, the district administration was not at fault since they had distributed compensation to all the affected residents under the current scheme. Although, the government is required to make necessary amendments to increase the amount of compensation.

In the context of river training, the tender passed encompassed removal of debris from both the rivers. The residents of the village had further requested the authorities to remove the debris from the village as it further endangered their lives. The villagers had protested later but river training was essential and it was greatly hurried.

Measuring the amount of RBM removed from the river was not done at the location, as stated within the norms for river training. On the contrary, the amount of material removed was based on rough estimations made in accordance to the trucks carrying the materials. Lastly, he recommended that river training should occur every year in order to maintain the flow of the river.

Testimonials: Residents of Kheda

1. Bala Devi



Bala Devi, wife of Late Kunwar Singh, is one of the oldest women in the village who lived alone in a house which was completely destroyed. The calamity took away everything that Bala Devi had built during her lifetime, including her documents and other essential things. Her house was one of the two houses that got completely demolished following the cloudburst. Bala Devi had donated her land to build a government hospital in times when she was financially sound, but presently she has been living in a neighbour's house on rent. According to her, the authorities that visited the site on the day of the calamity gave her verbal assurance of providing her with rent for six months, but she has not received it. Some compassionate villagers wrote applications on behalf of Bala Devi to further provide her a house under the PM Indira Awaas Yojna but they had not received any response.

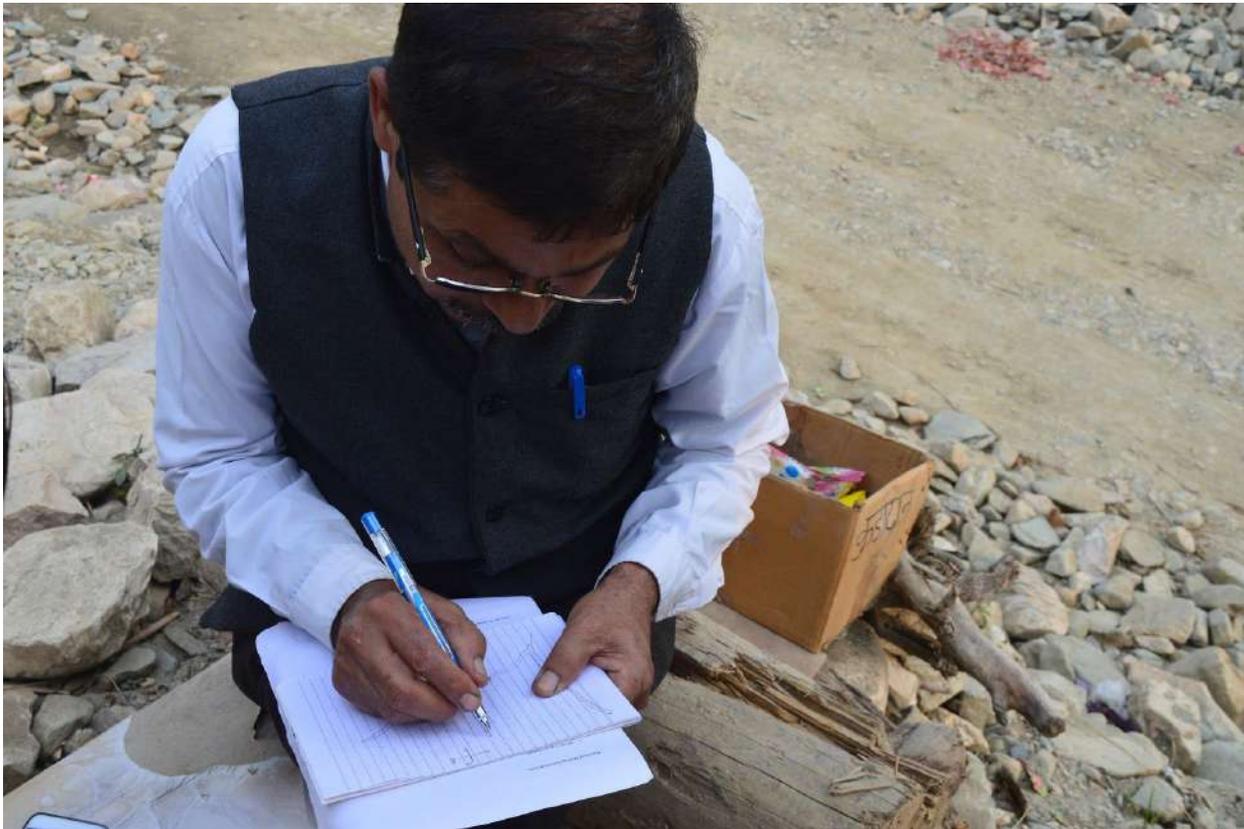
Bala Devi narrated the painful and traumatic details of the entire incident and the trauma she has endured and continues to live with. All of her belongings and documents are now submerged under the debris that have still not been cleared. She also informed that she had requested the authorities to let her keep the remnant of her house to then build a house using it. However, they refused the same and she was further threatened by the labourers employed for river training as well as a neighbour who told her that they will throw her into the river if she continues to bother them.

Bala Devi informed her that since she has no children, her only source of income is through the elderly pension which amounts to Rs.1000 which she gets under the government scheme. She has appealed to the authorities to provide her accommodation within the government building in the village.

2. Trilok Singh

Trilok Singh, aged 51 years, is a resident of Kheda where the calamity had occurred on 2nd June, 2019. Trilok Singh, belonging to unreserved category, is an ex-Hawaldar of Kumaon Regiment and is an active pensioner onto which his family of six is dependent. On the day of the disaster, he managed to rescue himself from the deluge by the skin of his teeth. His house witnessed severe damage from the inundation caused by the waters of Jukani Gadhera (*rivulet*) in the wake of the calamity. The fact finding team was briefed about the entire incident by him.

He informed us that no *chalkhals* (water conservation tanks) were erected at the slopes that could have played a formative role in stopping the sudden cascading gush of water that ensued. The official document, however, bore a separate story, mentioning specifically the presence of *chalkhals*. We were further informed that the markings were made cursorily; two flags were placed on the river banks 200m upstream and downstream from Jukani Gadhera and Dumri Gadhera in rivers Vimoli and Ramganga respectively. The villagers were kept in the dark about river training. The administration came for site inspection and thereafter, they had assured the denizens of getting the debris removed, but instead, an order for river training was passed.



Ever since the incident, the villagers have been suffering with acute mental trauma. Their agricultural activities have been on a standstill since the removal of debris accumulated has not occurred and the river has sustained damage owing to the illegal mining done in the garb of river training, impacting irrigation in the village. Additionally, adequate rehabilitation measures have not been taken by the district administration. Moreover, the river mining operation under the garb of river training was carried for nearly two months, wherein the tenderer made use of two pokland machines and 15 to 16 dumper trucks.

Each day, nearly 30 to 40, and totalling down to 300 to 350 trucks containing RBM were seen making the egress. There was no instrument placed at the site of river training to measure the amount of RBM that was extracted by the tenderer. Furthermore, due to the calamity and the inordinately excessive RBM that was mined out, the irrigation channels for agriculture got damaged and have been failing to supply water because of decreasing water levels.

On the note of Kheda being disaster prone, it was informed that the village had not seen natural calamities in decades. In total, the calamity affected an area of 25 to 30 *nali*¹ within the village, out of which debris from 5 to 6 *nali* was cleared by the villagers. Trilok Singh, further informed that when the villagers began to protest for saving the river, demanding the clearance of debris from the village, the authorities including the S.O., district administration and local police tried to intimidate the villagers and further tried to offer settlement to fizzle out the issue.

3. Ramesh Singh Negi



Ramesh Singh Negi had rented a shop in Bajpur and built his house right at the roadside. He ran a tea stall along with a grocery shop. After the calamity struck, he lost the shop along with several of his belongings. Ramesh Singh now runs a small shop which he built on the remnants of the shop and house which had sustained heavy impact during the disaster.

¹1 nali = 2,160 sq. ft.

Ramesh Singh Negi lost everything he had stocked within the shop along with tea glasses and stove which got washed away during the cloud burst.



He said he could hardly manage his expenses even earlier and now with the bare minimum money he had left, it was very difficult for him to start his business again. He had lost material amounting to Rs. 4 to 5 lakhs. As compensation under the SDRF scheme of Uttarakhand, he had only received an ex gratia of Rs.

3,800 which was handed over immediately through cheques. His house had gotten filled with mud and debris and he had to spend much more to buy everything that used to be there, such as school books and clothes for his son and so on. Furthermore, the public school in the village is built 2 kms away and since debris have not been removed from the road, it has become difficult for children living in the village to get to school everyday.

He further added that majority of the cleaning and removal of debris within the village was carried out by him and other villagers, while some of it was removed by the company employed to build roads in the village but the work was left midway.



He felt that the intention of the authorities was to mine and remove RBM from the centre of the river and no villager was informed about the river training process. On the contrary, he told that

the debris had not reached river Vimoli and therefore, river training was not required. They further spoke to the District Magistrate about constructing a safety wall to save them from any future disasters but no heed was paid to this suggestion. The authorities instead threatened them for obstructing the work. Ramesh Singh added that when the villagers had tried to make a video of the illegal mining occurring in their village, they were threatened by the Station Officer of Chaukhutiya.

The villagers had proposed that the remaining material should be given to them for reconstructing their houses and that the village residents should receive 10% of the share from the sale of the debris but they were not heard by the authorities. The Tehsildar along with local MLA tried to pressurise the people by asking them for papers of their houses and told them that they will render them homeless. The trauma sustained through the disaster and the added pressure of the authorities compelled at least 4 to 5 families to move out of the village.

The work for river training started around 15th June and it was stopped on 14th August, 2019. Two poklands and 30 to 35 dumper trucks were brought to conduct river training in the rivers, Vimoli and Ramganga. According to him, the dumpers roughly made 3 trips per day, estimating over 20,000 to 21,000 tonnes of RBM which was removed from the river. The river training has further affected the quality of water within the river due to the machines which were used and the illegal mining which had occurred. Lastly, he said that, “*agar unke kaam ke hote, toh humein bhi le jatey* (if we were of any use to them, they would have taken us as well)”.

Analysis

The natural calamity which had occurred in Kheda and the following claims against illegal mining, essentially denote a phenomena of Disaster Capitalism². Speaking to several stakeholders further presented several dichotomies within the testimonies. This can be understood through the varying positions on the occurrence of the cloudburst, river training,

²The practice of taking advantage of a major **disaster** to adopt neoliberal economic policies that the population would be less likely to accept under normal circumstances.

mechanisms followed during river training and the royalty which was to be paid to the government along with the compensation given to the affected villagers.

Furthermore, it was derived that in the aftermath of the disaster, heed was given more to the tender and the process of river training as compared to rehabilitating the affected villagers and providing aid to them to reinstate normalcy within the village. Interviews with the district administration such as the Station Officer at Kheda and Chaukhutiya each, the Revenue Officer, Sub-Inspector of the Local Intelligence Unit, District Disaster Management Officer and the Additional District Magistrate substantiated the fact that the authorities were aware that the tender was issued only for River Training and not for the removal of debris from the village at large. Furthermore, it was made evident that the authorities as well as the contractor on whose name the tender was issued, bypassed various rules listed within the River Training scheme as well as the Notification issued by the District Magistrate's office itself in the aftermath of the calamity.

It is also to be noted that the compensation scheme under the State Disaster Relief Fund is not adequate. The creation of such schemes has not been in proportionate terms to the geographical regions where the disaster occurs. Uttarakhand as a state is disaster-prone and since the terrain mostly consists of a hilly region. It is, therefore, imperative that transport costs and such are considered before schemes and policies for compensation are created.

Recommendations

- As denoted by the RTI filed by Advocate P.C. Tewari, it is necessary that an inquiry into the river training process in Kheda takes place. In the context of River training, along with the inquiry, it is necessary to note the violations that had occurred. No video recording by CCTV as listed within the rules was taken or allowed to be taken. The villagers were not informed about the process nor were proper markings laid down. Contrary to this, the rules of River Training as listed under the scheme and the District Magistrate's Order state that markings should be done in accordance to satellite imagery

using GPS coordinates. The inquiry further needs to clarify the amount of RBM taken from the river and the assessment of royalty towards the government should be assessed accordingly.

- State Disaster Relief Fund should be reviewed and amended as per the requirements of different regions. The need for area specificity would further channel increment in compensation.
- Rehabilitation for the people should be the priority in the aftermath of a natural disaster. It is further suggested that the people affected by disasters should be provided aid under schemes to rebuild their houses.
- The compensation schemes should include and address the loss of crops and damage to other structures such as cowsheds built away from the houses, in addition to the pre-existing directions within the SDRF scheme.
- Disaster management training should be organised twice a year by the concerned authorities since the first responders are often villagers themselves. People living within disaster prone areas should be made aware of the calamities.

Media Reports



बादल फटने से चमोली, अल्मोड़ा जिलों में तबाही, प्रशासन का अलर्ट जारी

उत्तराखण्ड के कुछ हिस्सों में रविवार को बादल फटने से नुकसान की खबर है। राज्य के चमोली और अल्मोड़ा जिलों में बाढ़ फैल गई है।

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तबाही मचाई थी।

चमोली के रामगढ़ेरी नाले के मलबे से करीब आठ हेक्टरपर जमीन बर्बाद हो गई है। वहीं, इसके के माईधन चौखुटिया मार्ग 100 मीटर तक ध्वस्त हो गया है। वहां एक बुजुर्ग व्यक्ति की मौत हो गई है। अल्मोड़ा के चौखुटिया क्षेत्र के खेड़ा और अखोड़ी में बाढ़ल फटने से कई घरों के बह जाने की खबर है। हालांकि, प्रशासन ने तबाही की पुष्टि नहीं की है।

प्रदेश में इन दिनों पड़ रही भीषण गर्मी से लोग बेहद परेशान थे। रविवार को दोपहर बाद कई जगह बारिश होने के साथ ही तेज हवाएं चलने लगीं। गढ़वाल में चमोली, रुद्रप्रयाग, धिंधरगढ़ और उत्तरकाशी में तेज बारिश हुई। देहरादून और हरिद्वार में भी बौछारें पड़ीं। कुमाऊं के कई इलाकों में बारिश और तेज हवाएं चलने से कई क्षेत्रों में बिजली गुल हो गई।

अंधड़ से कोसी घाटी स्थित खेला बोराला पर पांपुलर के पेड़ की टहनियां ताड़ने पर आ गिरीं। टहनियों की चपेट में जाने से बिजली की साइनों क्षतिग्रस्त हो गईं। नतीजतन इलाके में बिजली की आपूर्ति ठप हो गई। हवाई पर भी घंटे भर आवाजाही ठप रही।