

## Main Findings

LWF is ECHO's operating partner, but RDRS is the implementing partner of LWF responsible for the implementation of the two ECHO funded projects.

RDRS is currently the leading NGO in Northern Bangladesh where it has been working for more than twenty years. It is well respected at all levels for the quality and professionalism of its work and the commitment of its staff. It is also known as being a "Thinking and Innovative" NGO willing to pioneer new concepts and at present has the necessary management capacity to implement its range of projects.

The region is particularly prone to recurring natural disasters such as flood and drought but relief and rehabilitation work offer no permanent solution to cope with the aftermath of every disaster.

RDRS has therefore focused on systematically building appropriate community disaster preparedness and pre-disaster planning into its core development programme (CP). The two ECHO funded projects "Sustainable Community-based Disaster Management through appropriate Social and Economic Infrastructure" (ECHO/TPS/B7-516/94/0708H) and "Community-based Disaster Preparedness Training and Disaster Management System" (ECHO/TPS/87-516/94/0705E) which have just been completed, have enabled RDRS to launch a pioneering integrated

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Community-based Disaster Preparedness Programme (CBDP). This programme aims to help some of the most vulnerable groups in four particularly disaster prone districts - Panchagarh, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram and Nilphamari - to develop the capacity to better withstand the effects of recurrent flood and drought.

The RDRS approach recognises that in Northern Bangladesh natural disaster is part of peoples lives to which there is no real permanent solution. The project target groups represented by the Federations and household groups have been selected because they are most at risk. In practical terms, the best that can be done is to help these communities survive better by strengthening traditional coping mechanisms and building greater self-reliance.

Given the short timeframe (10 months) since "Operational" project implementation began in January 1995, the project has successfully achieved its major objectives. Immediate results or achievements in terms of direct inputs to out puts can be positively quantified.

Moreover, project staff and target groups have had a "Baptism of Fire" because they have had to manage one drought relief operation (March/April), and three flood relief operations (June, July, August). so far this year when the effectiveness of the various activities were severely put to the test. There are clear indicators to show that communities who were involved in the project were better prepared and coped better than those who were not!