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About 120,000 people in the state will benefit from disaster resilient houses with better capacity to manage and respond to disasters. A \$153 million credit to the state of Odisha in India was approved by the World Bank Board of Executive Directors today to help the state build disaster resilient houses as well as strengthen its capacity for disaster risk management, following a severe cyclone that hit the state last year. On October 12, 2013, Cyclone Phailin hit the coast of Odisha near Gopalpur in Ganjam district. It was the strongest cyclone to hit the Indian coast in the past 14 years, affecting about 13.2 million people in 171 blocks in 18 Districts of the state. The state government in collaboration with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) managed to evacuate over a million people. As a result of this massive operation, loss of human lives was limited to 44. The Odisha State Management Authority (OSDMA), formed after the 1999 Super Cyclone played a major role in improving the capacity of the state in responding to the recent disaster. The Super Cyclone of 1999, which was of similar intensity, had killed more than 10,000, destroyed 275,000 homes and left 1.67 million homeless in Odisha. A Joint World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) team conducted a Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA) at the request of the Government of India to rebuild the states infrastructure and assets lost in the October disaster. The RDNA, conducted in close collaboration with the Government of Odisha, estimated the physical damages across a range of sectors and calculated the cost of reconstruction at about \$1.45 billion. The reconstruction cost for the housing sector alone is estimated at \$480million. The catastrophic event has particularly impacted the districts of Ganjam (where most of the damage took place and the landfall of the cyclone occurred), Puri, and Khordha. The sectors covered in the assessment included housing and public buildings; roads; urban and rural infrastructure; agriculture; livelihood; energy/power and forest and plantations.

"When Cyclone Phailin hit Odisha one million people were evacuated with minimum loss of human lives. We are happy that collectively we were able to achieve a greater degree of preparedness. However, there is still work to be done since despite limited loss of life, the impact on the lives of the people living in these parts was massive and we need to make sure that the physical damage is reduced by building smarter, said Onno Ruhl, World Bank country director in India. "This project will focus on both reconstruction and disaster preparedness. It will help the government of Odisha by rebuilding houses including related infrastructure like roads, water supply, sanitation and power. A very important part of the project will be to help the state to be better prepared for the future, he added.

World Bank assistance has been sought in rebuilding houses, slum improvements, and capacity building of the disaster risk management institutions. In the Ganjam district of Odisha alone, about 90,000 houses were partially or fully damaged along the coastal areas, many of them mud/thatched houses belonging to poor fishermen, farmers and landless. Another key component of this project will be to improve urban infrastructure in Berhampur, the largest city in Ganjam district and enhance the technical capacity of the state for managing future disaster risks. With over 40% of Berhampurs 350,000 inhabitants living in more than 200 slums across the city, the project will focus on improving the living condition of the people living in this city with better drainage system to reduce floods, better streets and street lighting, and access to improved water and sanitation services. Work will be undertaken in about 80 slums in Berhampur city covering a population of about 30,000.

Apart from reconstruction, the project will focus on disaster risk mitigation. It will strengthen the capacity of OSDMA for better risk mitigation, preparedness, and disaster response, in line with global best practices. This component will also help enhance OSDMA's role in coordinating disaster risk mitigation related activities with other line departments and integrate it into the overall development work of the state.

Some of the activities that will be undertaken under this component include establishing an integrated complex comprising of OSDMA, Geographical Information System (GIS) cell equipped with a decision support center, Emergency Operation Center and a training center; enhancing the capacity of the OSDMA by providing them specialized dedicated manpower and hiring technical experts in the areas of disaster risk management, hydro-met systems, risk assessment and financing, structural engineering, remote sensing and GIS; and enabling the affected marginalized communities to cope with survival risks posed by natural calamities through community-based initiatives.

"While reconstruction is a key component of the project, globally there is evidence that some disaster recovery programs have focused heavily on rebuilding infrastructure and not enough on better adaptation and preparedness. This project will also focus on better adaptation and preparedness for the future through complementary investments on enhancing risk mitigation capabilities of the responsible institutions. This can not only help in saving lives and livelihoods but also in long-term disaster risk reduction, said Deepak Singh, senior disaster risk management specialist and the task team leader for the project.

The project will be financed by a credit from the International Development Association (IDA) - the part of the World Bank that helps the worlds poorest countries - which provides interest-free loans with 25 years to maturity and a grace period of 5 years.

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