

Uttarakhand Flood Relief Team From GHRC **Report**

In June 2013, the North Indian states of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, some regions of Western Nepal and their adjoining areas experienced heavy rainfall that triggered devastating floods and landslides. Parts of Haryana, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh, and some parts of Western Tibet also experienced heavy rainfall.

From 14 to 17 June 2013, Indian state of Uttarakhand received heavy rainfall, which was about 375 percent more than the benchmark rainfall during a normal monsoon. This all has been attributed to Cloud-Burst that resulted in hail and thunder, which lasted no longer than a few minutes but created flood conditions. This caused the melting of Chorabari Glacier at the height of 3800 metres, and eruption of the Mandakini River which led to heavy floods near Kedar Dome, Rudrapur district, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Western Nepal, and acute rainfall in other nearby regions of Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and some parts of Tibet.

The Army, Air Force, Navy, Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Border Security Force, National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), Public Works Department and local administrations worked together for quick rescue operations. Several thousand soldiers were deployed for the rescue missions. Activists of political and social organizations are also involved in the rescue and management of relief Centres.

The Medical aid was the pressing need of the hour. So **Global hospital & research Centre along with Brahmakumaris organization from Mount Abu** decided to offer their services to the flood-afflicted people of Uttarakhand.

An urgent meeting was held on 22nd June 2013 at 10 am & paripasu a Medical Rescue Team was formed. The Team consists of a physician (Dr.Sachin), the senior clinical associate from Surgery Dept(Dr.Nabajyoti), a pharmacist (Brother Robin), two expert Nursing Staff including Sister Smita & brother Vikram, three Nursing interns including brother Babu Singh, brother Fatheh & sister Anamika. Two drivers- brother Karthik & brother Kishor -took charge of the ambulance.

It was full-fledged Cardiac Ambulance with facilities to manage all critically-ill patients. The ambulance was packed with whole lot of Medical Drugs, IV fluids, injections, Dressing materials, Plasters, splints Slab

materials, other first aid materials, Tent materials, etc.,. One Senior Brother Ashok Gaba from Brahmakumaris organization accompanied us. Also Van from BK Shantivan followed the Ambulance. It was lodged with food materials, water, clothes, & prasadam from Ashram.

And this way we all set off on our Journey at around 1 pm on 22nd June 2013 for Uttarakhand. Dr.Sachin, Dr.Nabajyoti, & Br.Ashok Gabaji reached a day before Ambulance & Food Van at Dehradun. Immediately they started initial survey & taking stock of the prevailing conditions of flood victims there. It was not an easy task. First they met ADM there & brief him about their intention & purpose of imparting Medical services to victims. The former was highly pleased with offer & he guided us to go to Sahastradhara helipad where helicopter were bring victims from trapped places of Badrinath, Kedarnath, Joshimath, Rudraprayag etc.,.The Very same day we went to Helipad & witnessed myriads of choppers dropping victims safely. There were 2-3 Govt Doctors posted there who were offering first aid to them & referring the serious ones to Grant jolly Hospital (Himalayan Hospital).

We had a word with Tehsildar Mr.Gurnam Singh Dehradun there who was perhaps the most active person on field there. We also met Disaster Minister of Uttarakhand.We informed them about our intentions & there were very pleased with that. But they told us to move ahead & go to Rishikesh Gurudwara Or ISBT relief Centre for there was more need of Medical aid there.

So Next day early morning we started off for Gurudwara, Rishikesh. But on reaching there we found that the entire Gurudwara premises were occupied by Punjab Govt including Government Doctors, policemen, Social workers , volunteers etc.,.And there was no space nor opportunity for us to serve & so we moved ahead to ISBT relief Camp Area.

And lo & behold! We saw a huge relief work being done there. So many religious organizations, different states' counters, 2-3 medical camps, free food services for all victims & Govt busses dropping victims. We met SDM Mr.Ramji Sharma & his men who directed us to a place where we could set our Medical Counter. By that time our Ambulance reached Dehradun & we started our medical Camp by noon.

The Patients started pouring in. On the first day we saw about 40 patients. Almost all of them needy one who needed medical help badly. We hear from the victims the saga of their sufferings in those trapped conditions. Most of them had to go without food for many days. Many had lost their near & dear ones. Some of our patients were those people who had come in search of their relatives who had been to pilgrimage & never returned. Many

recounted that they had last talked with their relative some 5-7 days back. We saw such a picture of pain & sufferings that we can never forget. And each surviving victims had a horrific tale to tell. Each one was praising the services & valor of soldiers who saved them & at the same time blaming the Indian Government.

We also distributed clothes to many who had lost everything & were wearing the self-same clothes from last few days. We saw small children who had to walk many miles & now they had blisters on their feet. We dressed them & gave medicines. Many had minor injuries; some had body aches; while some had fever & various other unaddressed complaints. There were some whom we had to start IV drip & give injections. We made lie down on the available bench & started the drip hanging around the window sill.

One thing which was very sticking was that all of them were worn-out & weary. Their eyes were tele-tale signs of the hardships they had gone through. Many had bruises here & there. Also there were many who were hypertensive & Diabetics & heart patients who had lost all their drugs in the Floods & now they come to us for getting the same. Actually we never thought of keeping those sort of drugs (as these are not emergency drugs). So we asked our Pharmacist to & get these drugs from local medical stores.

The entire place where we were stationed was chock-a-block with people. There were shouts & shrieking voices...a sort of chaos...numerous long-drawn-out announcements, horns blowing ceaselessly, police-men wielding their sticks to maintain law & order, food & water supplier searing for takers etc.,.

We also gave interview on Dordardhan & Aastha TV Channel. Also Mrs. Bahuguna (Wife of CM, Uttarakhand) visited us & was all praises for us.

We worked till 7 pm & then returned home. We had a good accommodation facility at BK Centre where the in-charge sister took good care of us & also served us with sumptuous food at all time. The next day dawned which was 25th June. We saw almost 100 patients. There were many victims from Rajasthan & adjoining areas who were elated the very moment we told them our identity & whereabouts.

Third day... by noon we decided to proceed further. By now brother Rishi from GHRC had come & joined us. He is OPD coordinator & has a refined sense of interacting with people from all walks of life & making them feel at ease. He started the service of making announcements on mike. We agreed on to go to Devprayag. We wanted to go even higher where there were more needy people. But all roads were blocked & the terrains were treacherous. By noon we were at Devprayag. But to our disappointment we learned that

there were no victims there. We the Sangan (confluence) of 2 rivers: Bhagirathi & Alaknanda to form river Ganges from here. While coming back we halted at one place for rest & lo! Busses coming down had many victims & we started our OPD roadside.

Next day we decided to go to the same place. And so many busses full of victims we attended. Many other medical vans gave us their medicines. Not only that but many others shared food & water with us & we distributed all to the needy one. We also attended many local patients.

Every one of the team had a deep sense of satisfaction after doing all this service. Every departing patient showered us with blessings. Many dropped their cards and asked us to visit them in future.

Every day we would update ourselves with the latest news about flood victims & the recent happening in the areas. We had heard about another cloud burst near Devprayag few days back. 3 people had died & one had minor injuries. Also we heard a Chopper crashed & 20 people on board died. We expressed our heartfelt condolences for the same.

When coming back on one or two occasions we visited Ram jhula & Lakshan jhula, Triveni ghat, & Har ki pauri. We saw river Ganges in different forms, colors, phases & names.

On 28th June we kept a Medical Camp at the BK Centre. There were around 30 patients there. Since almost the evacuation process was about to complete & surviving victims were safe & either going home or taking treatment in the Jolly Gant or other local Hospitals we decided to go back home.

And with the memories of those unforgettable moments we reached Mount Abu on 29th June 2013.