

Fire incident in Bawana, resettlement colony in Delhi - A brief report

The Fire incident

On 29th April 2009, JAGORI- Shivalik office received a frantic call from one of its field staff that there was a massive fire break in E and F block of Bawana. Both the blocks in this resettlement colony mostly consist of *kutcha* house and *jhuggies*. We were informed that the community people are desperately calling at the fire station but not getting any response. To this JAGORI team immediately rang up the higher officials of the fire department and informed of the incident.



Fire brigade reached Bawana after 2 hours of the mishap. By the time community had fumed with anger that they started stoning at fire brigade which delayed the rescue operation process. Finally after two hours of struggle the fire could extinguish. The entire E block and few houses of F block got affected in which around 400 houses lost their belongings. Luckily no loss of life was reported.

These blocks were one of the working areas for JAGORI in Bawana. We have been working on the issues of Public Distribution System and violence against women in these blocks for the past two years. JAGORI took some immediate actions in response to this incident.

Actions taken by JAGORI team

Quick survey to mobilize relief actions - JAGORI did a quick survey of affected families on 30th April, the next day of the incident. We covered the entire area of E and F block. According to our survey **391 houses** had turned down into ashes and about 2500 people got affected and the residents (majority of Bengali Muslim families lives in this block) were left homeless, without any clothes, food or vessels to cook.



Data shared with SDM to facilitate the relief mission – The survey data has been submitted to the SDM Narela who assured that all the families would be receiving the relief assistance immediately. Zonal SDM, Sub divisional District Magistrate, also did a survey which appeared to be incomplete as in their survey 37 houses got left out. They received the JAGORI survey copy and assured that they would use it for the relief mission in order to meet people’s need. SDM took quick action and provided the basic facilities of food, water and tent. They promised to continue assistance to the affected families till they all get their relief money.

A copy of this survey has been also sent to Sanjha Manch, a network of NGOs and CBOs working on eviction and urban issues in Delhi, so they too could mobilize necessary assistance to affected families.

Collaboration with Goonj for meeting people’s clothing needs - JAGORI took the initiative to collaborate with Goonj, an NGO collects old garments through a large social awareness campaign, for the cloth distribution in Bawana. We did another round of survey to assess family's clothes requirements and the exact figure were sent to Goonj.

Adult women – 595

Adult men – 637

Boys (age group 15 to 10) – 270

Girls (age group 15 to 10) – 248

Boys (below 10) – 250

Girls (below 10) – 330

The distribution work went on till seven days and we are still getting requests from the community. Sanitary pads were also organized to be distributed to women and young girls.



Follow-up plans

- As the community has lost their important documents such as ID cards and ration cards, our team is going to conduct *gully* meetings so that people start filling the FIRs and start the process of procuring duplicate ration cards.
- Team is monitoring the relief mission being provided by the government. Advocacy with government to release the relief money is our next step.
- Planning for organizing a workshop through the Fire brigade department on 'prevention from fire in future' for the community.