

Latur Earthquake Rehabilitation and Housing Reconstruction Project

Latur and Osmanabad Districts, Maharashtra (1993–1996)

In the aftermath of the devastating **Latur Earthquake of 1993**, popularly known as the **Killari Earthquake**, Maharashtra Social Housing and Action League (MASHAL) played a significant role in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of earthquake-affected communities in Latur and Osmanabad districts of Maharashtra.

The earthquake claimed the lives of nearly 10,000 people, completely destroyed 54 villages, and severely damaged more than 100 additional villages. The scale of devastation necessitated an unprecedented rehabilitation effort involving government agencies, technical institutions, civil society organizations, and community groups. The disaster also created an opportunity to explore innovative and community-centered approaches to reconstruction that would not only rebuild physical structures but also restore livelihoods, dignity, and social cohesion.

Project Background

As part of the post-earthquake rehabilitation programme, Maharashtra Arogya Mandal, under the leadership of Shri Dada Gujjar, mobilized support from a German donor organization to rehabilitate families from two severely affected villages that had not been adequately covered under government rehabilitation programmes.

Recognizing MASHAL's commitment to community participation and sustainable development, Maharashtra Arogya Mandal entrusted the organization with the responsibility of planning and implementing the rehabilitation of these villages through innovative, cost-effective, and locally appropriate construction technologies.

Project Objectives

The project aimed to:

- Rehabilitate earthquake-affected families through safe and resilient housing.
- Promote community participation in reconstruction activities.

- Utilize locally available materials and traditional construction knowledge.
- Build local skills and capacities for long-term sustainability.
- Restore social infrastructure and community institutions.
- Develop village-level planning models responsive to local cultural and environmental conditions.

Community-Centered Reconstruction Approach

MASHAL adopted a participatory rehabilitation strategy that emphasized community ownership and local resource utilization. Instead of relying solely on external contractors, the project mobilized local communities and engaged them directly in reconstruction activities.

The organization identified skilled artisans from affected and neighboring villages and integrated them into the reconstruction process. Particular emphasis was placed on utilizing the expertise of the traditional **Burud community**, known for its bamboo craftsmanship.

Five experienced bamboo artisans were engaged as master trainers and played a pivotal role in building local capacities. Under their guidance:

- Thirty local youth, including young women and men, received hands-on training in bamboo construction and joinery techniques.
- Community members actively participated in construction activities through voluntary labour contributions (Shramdaan).
- Traditional skills and local knowledge were integrated into modern rehabilitation practices.

The project also encouraged social solidarity and collective action. Community kitchens were established to provide meals for families participating in reconstruction efforts, thereby strengthening social cohesion during the recovery process.

Housing Reconstruction

During the first phase of implementation, MASHAL successfully rehabilitated two hamlets comprising approximately **200 housing units**.

The houses were designed using a combination of:

- Recycled debris from collapsed structures.
- Locally available bamboo.
- Lightweight roofing materials.
- Community sanitation facilities.

The construction methodology emphasized affordability, speed of implementation, and resilience while making maximum use of locally available resources. The project demonstrated how disaster-affected materials could be effectively reused to create safe and dignified housing solutions.

Expansion of Rehabilitation Support

The innovative and successful implementation of the initial rehabilitation phase gained recognition from district authorities and rehabilitation agencies. Consequently, MASHAL was entrusted with additional responsibilities involving the planning and rehabilitation support for **14 earthquake-affected villages**.

The expanded role included:

- Village settlement planning and layout design.
- Community consultations on housing clusters and neighbourhood planning.
- Facilitation of participatory decision-making processes.
- Orientation and mobilization of communities for Shramdaan activities.
- Incorporation of community preferences into housing and settlement design.

Participatory Housing Design

One of the key features of the project was the development of housing designs based on extensive consultations with affected families.

MASHAL worked closely with communities to understand household requirements, cultural practices, family sizes, and livelihood needs. Based on these discussions, a range of house prototypes were developed, including:

- 300 sq. ft. housing units.
- 450 sq. ft. housing units.

- 600 sq. ft. housing units.

These designs provided flexibility while ensuring structural safety, functionality, and compatibility with local lifestyles.

Promotion of Traditional and Climate-Responsive Architecture

The project actively promoted traditional building techniques and local architectural practices that were well-suited to the climatic conditions of Latur and Osmanabad.

MASHAL collaborated with architecture students from Pune, providing them with practical exposure to rural housing construction and traditional building technologies. Through this process, students learned techniques such as:

- Construction of traditional timber-supported roofing systems.
- Preparation of Malwad roofing structures.
- Use of thick earthen walls for thermal comfort.
- Integration of locally available building materials.
- Application of indigenous construction practices adapted to local environmental conditions.

This approach ensured that reconstructed houses were not only structurally sound but also environmentally appropriate and culturally acceptable.

Social Infrastructure Development

Beyond housing reconstruction, MASHAL extended its technical expertise to the development of community infrastructure and social institutions serving earthquake-affected populations.

The organization provided architectural and planning support for the establishment and strengthening of:

- Community development centres.
- Educational institutions.
- Non-governmental organizations engaged in rehabilitation activities.
- Schools and training facilities serving affected villages.

Several local organizations and educational institutions benefited from this support, enabling them to address the long-term social and developmental needs of rehabilitated communities.

Outcomes and Impact

The project achieved several significant outcomes:

- Rehabilitation of earthquake-affected families through community-based housing reconstruction.
- Construction of approximately 200 housing units during the initial phase.
- Preparation of rehabilitation and village development plans for 14 additional villages.
- Capacity building of local youth and artisans in construction skills.
- Promotion of sustainable and climate-responsive building technologies.
- Strengthening of community participation in disaster recovery processes.
- Support for the development of educational and social infrastructure in affected areas.

Project Significance

The Latur Earthquake Rehabilitation Project became one of MASHAL's landmark initiatives in disaster recovery, participatory housing, and community-based reconstruction. The project demonstrated that post-disaster rehabilitation can be transformed into an opportunity for community empowerment, skill development, and sustainable development when affected populations are placed at the center of planning and implementation.

The initiative established important models for participatory reconstruction, disaster-resilient housing, local capacity building, and environmentally appropriate architecture. The lessons learned from this project continued to influence MASHAL's subsequent work in housing, habitat development, disaster risk reduction, and community resilience across Maharashtra and other regions of India.