CHAPTER 7

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Introduction

The previous chapters examined the structures and processes that influenced disaster recovery in the study villages. It explored the nature of their interventions and the impact of their interventions on the vulnerability context of the households in the study. The action of households, existing community groups, Government and NGOs were mostly at the level of meeting the survival and physical sustenance needs of the flood affected households. These needs were largely defined within the accepted social landscape of disasters and were aimed at meeting the food, water or shelter needs of the affected households. They functioned within the boundaries of pre-defined norms, and worked at restoring people to their pre-disaster state. This necessitated identification of what constituted the pre-existing state. In the absence of authentic data on pre-existing household vulnerability and loss due to floods, the primary loss indicator used by the state was the most visible shelter damage. Resources were allocated to regions based on the loss of shelter in the area and compensation was fixed in terms of shelter loss – Rs. 5000 for partial damage and Rs. 35,000 for complete damage.

State norms and vulnerability context

The state norms for relief and rehabilitation, with its primary focus on physical shelter damage created an exclusionary context where the needs of people with losses other than shelter damage were not given importance. For instance, Budihala by virtue of its location had lesser shelter damage as compared to other villages, due to which it was considered a ‘non-priority village’ for relief and rehabilitation. But the households in Budihala which were affected by crop loss, livelihood loss, loss of food stock and other household goods were not considered for any relief and rehabilitation measures by the state.

The primary focus on shelter damage in the floods of October 2009 was also a rollback as compared to the earlier flood rehabilitation norms (July 2007) which had included not just those who had lost their shelters, but also those who were homeless.
as part of the rehabilitation plan. The norms had also provided for housing plots of 30’X50’ size for households, which was rolled back to 30’X40’.

These roll-backs meant that homeless households who had been provided a shelter in the temporary shelters where they were living for the past five years would be homeless again, while bigger households would have to live in smaller plots. This would create problem in a rural area where livestock needed to be tethered and agriculture related equipments and food stock needed storage space.

The two vulnerability contexts as described above were created in relation to the state norms on flood relief and rehabilitation. The intervention structures and processes of the state and NGOs did not address these vulnerabilities. In this context, groups emerged within each of the communities which addressed the vulnerability. The emergence, nature and functioning of the groups is examined in this chapter. The following section (7.1) discusses the emergent group in Budihala in the context of perceived exclusion by the state while Section 7.2 discusses the emergent group in the context of conflict over permanent housing in Khyada TS.

7.1 Emergent group in the context of perceived exclusion by the State

The floods of July 2007 and October 2009 were both widespread and caused damages in the study area in terms of loss of crops, soil, livelihoods and infrastructure. However, the floods of October 2009 was more severe and was characterised by partial damage or complete loss of houses. In this context, the government decided that a permanent solution needed to be found to this increasing problem of flooding along the river. They began compiling a list of villages which would be shifted to alternate locations. The criterion for selection of the villages was those villages which had suffered extensive shelter damage (loss of houses). These villages, termed the ‘shifting villages’ were given priority, while households in other villages whose houses were damaged were given money for repairs, ranging from Rs. 5000 in the case of partial damage to Rs.35,000 in the case of complete damage. In the shifting villages, those whose houses were completely damaged were given temporary shelters while the others with partial damage were given money for repairs. No other loss, such as loss of crops or loss of livelihoods was compensated.
Emergent groups in the context of floods

Budihala village, which is located on the Northern side of the main road, away from the river had suffered losses such as loss of crops, household goods, food stock and loss of livelihoods. However, most of the households did not suffer shelter damage since their houses were not close to the river. This feature of the flood loss in Budihala made them ineligible for the disaster relief and rehabilitation package of the government. Though loss of food stock and firewood has caused food shortage immediately after the floods, and health problems were being reported from the village, Budihala did not receive any flood relief assistance from the government.

**Ineffective leadership**

While general discontent was brewing in the village after the floods on the issue of ‘discrimination by the state’, the people turned to the panchayat member from the village to voice their concerns. In a group discussion with the village development committee ([VDC], comprising of panchayat member, representatives of all the self help groups in the village and other community level bodies such as School Development and Monitoring Committee [SDMC] and the water and sanitation committee), the panchayat member reminisced,

‘The whole village was angry. Vehicles carrying food would ply on the road in front of our village, but they would not stop here as we were not on the government list (of affected villages). As panchayat member, everybody expected me to do something. I tried my best. The PDO (Panchayat Development Officer) was unhelpful as he had to listen to what the Government was telling him. He was also never there whenever I visited the panchayat as he was busy with assessments in other villages. I even approached people coming from outside (private persons and NGOs) with relief materials to support us, but because the damage was not seen (in terms of fallen houses), even they refused.’

The other members in the group shared their discontent with the panchayat member. One of them, a representative of the SDMC said,

‘It is true that he went to the panchayat many times. But, tell me, how can a man living in Badami (the incumbent panchayat member has a house in the village but lives in his house in the taluk headquarters, Badami) be involved in the affairs of Budihala. While other members were running around trying to
chase government officials to get favourable terms for their village, he was nowhere to be seen.’

Another member of the VDC, a representative of the dalit women’s SHG shared a similar opinion and said,

‘Three or four days after the floods, we paid for beating the dangura (beating of drums to inform the households in the village about any news) to ask everybody to gather outside the gudi (village shrine) [on the next day]. Everybody came, but the (panchayat) member did not come. We even telephoned him, and he had confirmed (his participation) the previous evening. But he did not show up. It was the same situation in the panchayat. Other members get things done for their village. But our member was not able to get anything done.’

Genesis of the group
Several attempts were made by different community members to initiate a dialogue regarding community level action to be taken on appealing the Government for some relief support.

In a group discussion with the members of the new group which was formed after the floods, an elderly woman from the dalit women’s SHG, who was also a former member of the panchayat, with knowledge about the workings of panchayat politics, provided a different perspective. She said,

‘We cannot blame the man (panchayat member). He tried his best, but when he couldn’t convince the Panchayat Development Officer (PDO), he thought, “let me atleast make something for myself.” Who wouldn’t want to make some money? He was always at the taluk panchayat trying to get orders (contracts) for transporting relief materials. Many people say that he has collected relief materials meant for us and taking them to his house in Badami. After that he was not ready to face anybody. He would agree to come for meetings, but would not show up. Also he is drunk by the evening, and he is (then) useless. We made three or four attempts and met in the (Government) school compound. Each time, the group (comprising of people from all castes) would meet and disperse when the panchayat member would not show up. Finally,
the young people in our community (dalit community) got fed up and said, let us try and do something ourselves.’

Structure and composition

Range: Initially three young men from the dalit community decided to approach the zilla (district) panchayat (ZP) and ask the CEO (Chief Executive Officer) directly about what facilities were available for their village under the flood relief programme. Two of the members of the new group were cousins, while the third person was a resident of the dalit colony who studied with one of the cousins. They roped in a fourth member who was the foster mother of one of the youth, the former woman dalit panchayat member. They approached the ZP and got details about the list of affected villages, norms regarding compensation and got some idea about how relief and rehabilitation was being done in the district. They also visited the taluk panchayat and village panchayat regularly to keep track of the relief and rehabilitation announcements. In the absence of any public announcements on relief measures at the local level, except announcements by the Chief Ministers or ministers at Bangalore, any information could be got only by being physically present at the panchayat offices. Three more people joined them in their activities and took turns in visiting the panchayat and government offices, taking the number of members in the network to eight members – seven men and one woman.

Three weeks after their initial visit to the ZP, one of the relatives of the panchayat member who was not in talking terms with the member joined the network voluntarily. He began hanging out with the group during their visits outside the village. He also had friends in Badami (taluk headquarters) and in the taluk panchayat office, which was useful as the group went to the different offices. The group consisted of seven men and a woman. The men were all in the age group of twenty one to thirty three years, while the woman was fifty two years old (in October 2010).

While more members, including the family members of the members participated in the different activities of the network, the constant group comprised of these eight members.
Density: The network of members worked closely in the first three months after the floods, and were together in most activities. The number of activities they did brought them together. The togetherness of the group was also noticed by the residents of the village. The network was recognised by the village as those who were trying to do ‘something for the village after the floods’.

The SDMC member in the Village Development Committee said,

‘initially nobody wanted to associate with them, because everybody thought it was a waste of time. Some of us thought that they were just trying to play politics and trouble the panchayat member. And when the member’s relative (who was not in talking terms with the member) joined them we were all convinced that it was nothing more than that.’

The member’s relative clarified,

‘I was ashamed at my (cousin) brother’s indifference. Though people knew that our families were not on talking terms, they would ask me, ‘why is your brother not doing anything to help us?’ When I saw how this group was trying to do something, I joined them without any second thoughts. Today people know that we worked for a public cause and not out of selfish motives’.

Boundedness: The members of the network were living close to each other in the end of the village, in the dalit colony, except the new member (the panchayat member’s relative). The households of the seven members were connected to each other closely and shared in their food, celebrated festivals together and went to work (agricultural labour) together. While the seven members were linked on the basis of traditional structures such as kin, work and neighbourhood, the boundedness with the new member of the network was linked mostly by the tasks being done by the group. In relation to the post-flood scenario, it was more of the tasks undertaken that brought the group together.

One of the core group members said,

‘I have known all of them (members of the network) all my life. But today I know who will stand by me when I need something. When nothing was happening (after the floods) the rest of our family and community members
went back to their work. It was only these people and my aunt who stood together and tried to do something.’

**Homogenity:** Of the eight members, three of the young men were the core group members - the two cousins and the relative of the panchayat member. The core group was differentiated from the others in that they met almost everyday in each others’ houses and planned their activities together. While all the rest were primarily agricultural labourers, the three of them had other occupations. One of them was an auto driver, while the other two (including the panchayat members’ relative) were contractors. This allowed them to plan and meet at each others’ convenience, unlike the others who had to go for labour work. After the floods, those engaged in agricultural labour work had to go far away from their villages in search of work, since the crops near the river were destroyed and work was not easily available.

Caste was another factor which was common among seven of the members who were **dalits** (Madiga) while a lone member was from the Ambiger caste. He was also a classmate of one of the members of the group. While he had never been ‘friends’ with the others in the network, the activities after the floods had brought them together. He said,

‘While we were studying, we were never close. All of us studied in the same school. They had their friends and I had mine. We were also not encouraged to mix together or play together (outside the school, due to caste issues). Today, we are all together in this. My relatives chide me by saying hurtful things like, “he has some new-found friends”, but I don’t bother.’

Another member of the network said,

‘We never let caste come in between what we did or how we did it. But we had to be careful many times so that we wouldn’t offend anyone. (Giving an example he said) When we started the community kitchen after the floods, we got a cook from the gudi (village shrine) so that everybody would be comfortable eating the food. Though we were organising it and the first lot of foodgrains came from what we (the dalit community) had collected, we did not cook the food in our houses/courtyards. We got the food cooked next to the gudi so that nobody would have a problem. It was Raju (the non-dalit member
The invisible lines of caste rules were followed in all the interactions to ensure the participation of everybody in the outputs of the network. The non-homogenous nature of the group, though a talking point for those indisposed towards the alliance, was instrumental in keeping the sensitivities of different community groups in the work of the network. An important factor in the network was the trust that they had in each other based on the familiarity with each other, and also the concern for others in the community. A key factor in familiarity was the time dimension in the relationship between network members.

**Time dimension**

**Duration:** All the members knew each other from a long time, as they grew up in the same village. Three of them were related to each other (two cousins and one of them was the son of the lone women member in the network). This familiarity helped in formation of the group and also in decision-making within the group. For instance, the question of why they did not think of organising a separate community kitchen for the *dalits*, especially if they were facing so many constraints in organising a common kitchen was explored among members of the network. The answer was unanimous. It was due to the trust that they had in each other brought about by the long years of knowing each other.

The lone woman in the group, the ex-panchayat member of the village explained,

> ‘We are a small village. Everybody knows everybody. We may have our differences, but when there is a need we forget those differences. We follow certain norms in our daily life. Is that a problem? It is not a problem, but more of a hindrance in the work. Since we had organised ourselves and started this (community kitchen), we knew we had to serve all those who were suffering from shortage of food. When Raju told us that it would be better to cook in a common place instead of our courtyards (of the dalit houses), as we had initially planned, we all agreed, because we have known him all his life. He has studied with my son and I know that he has the best intentions of everybody in heart. And it worked well, because there were no problems.'
Some people from our community objected because they wanted it to be like a house ‘function’ (or ceremony). They said, “if we are giving the food grains, and if we are spending money, then it should be cooked here.” But we convinced them that it (food shortage in the post-flood scenario) was not the time to try new things and create conflict. After all it was a temporary provision for a short time (six-seven) days until our food stocks dried and we could use it again.

**Duration and trust:** The question of whether the decision was made under the influence of the lone non-dalit member who had suggested cooking in another place was explored with the network members. While not dismissing the possibility, the fact that they agreed to the suggestion only because they saw the merit in it was highlighted by the members. The fact that the suggestion was put forth by a person they knew and trusted long enough and who had joined them openly against the wishes of some of his relatives was another key factor.

The woman member of the network gave another example to show why that case was different. She said,

‘When we hosted the Village Development Committee meetings (which comprises of members of all communities and hosted by different SHGs), it was held in our (dalit) colony and food cooked by us was served. While most of the members ate, some of them did not eat, and they went away. We were not offended. We also did not make any special provisions for them. But the time after the floods was different. A good suggestion was made by a person whom we knew well for long and trusted. So we took it and it turned out for the best.’

**Frequency of contact:** The group used to meet regularly in the days immediately following the floods. One of the members said,

‘we were together almost the whole time, helping each other’s houses in cleaning out the mess, putting out the foodstocks and household goods to dry. We waited for Government’s help in repairing the cracks in the houses. We were not sure if we should repair it. But when we learnt that Government was not going to do anything, we just got together and patched it up ourselves. We
bought the sand, bricks and cement together as we needed small quantities, and shared the cost among ourselves. In the first forty-forty five days, we were together and did a lot of things together – going to different offices, meeting different officials and travelling to different places. After that we had to go back to work and we would meet only in the evenings. Even now, we all meet up at least one in a week.’

The togetherness of the group in its initial days helped the group to bond and forge a common identity. They were known as those who could ask anything about flood relief. This admission came from the panchayat member himself in the group discussion conducted with the VDC members. He said,

‘Thanks to them, people understood the reality of flood relief politics. Initially they thought that the reason we were not getting anything was because I was not active. But these people went and collected all the information from different places. If anybody wanted any information, they would say go and ask Rangappa’s group.’ (Rangappa was a prominent member of the group. Details in the next section).

**Frequency of contact and group identity:** The group spent a lot of time with each other. They were known as ‘Rangappa’s group’ as Rangappa was the most well-known among them because as an auto-driver he was in great demand in the village which did not have any means of public transport. During emergencies such as illnesses, deliveries and social ceremonies which involved travel, people relied on him to transport them. In an interview with the PDO, he referred to the group disparagingly as ‘the Budihala auto driver’s chelas’. He had a grouse against them because they had complained to the PDO’s higher authorities about his lack of response even after repeated appeals for materials such as bleaching powder and chlorine tablets.

While the time dimension was crucial in fostering the relationship between the group members and shaping their public identity, it was the functioning and content or the output of the group which was instrumental in how the group perceived themselves, was perceived by others as well as its general utility.
Functioning and content
The flood hazard and the subsequent exclusion of the community from the relief and rehabilitation process led to the emergence of the group and shaped the structure and composition. The time dimension further helped to strengthen dimensions of the groups’ functioning. This section explores the functioning of the group and its contents with regard to what it was able to achieve – both, for its members as well as other members of the community.

Flow of resources
The emergence and functioning of the group was instrumental in resources flowing to the group members, and, through them to others in the community. For all the members in the group, except the woman, this was the first experience of being and functioning in a group. The emergence of the group during a period of crisis when the community was responding to a hazard shaped the nature and the content of the group. The opportunities for engagement increased as the group stayed together and as they were able to ‘do things’. The visibility of their ‘works’, in the backdrop of the perceived ineffective leadership of the panchayat member was a crucial factor in increasing their influence in the community. But central to the group’s social engagement and influence was the social support they provided for each other and the community.

Social support: An inherent feature of a group is its social nature. The nature of the group in Budihala, which was formed in the context of perceived state exclusion after the floods, had support as one of its central planks.

Emotional support
‘We have lived together and seen each other all our lives, but for the first time we felt like we were from the same house. The week after the floods was very bad. We had lost so much. We were not sure how we would get back to our earlier life. With all the fields being submerged, we were also not sure how we were going to feed ourselves. Our food stocks were totally lost as our storage space in the fields was totally washed out. It was not so bad for the others who still had their food stocks. Though it was wet and damaged, they could still manage to get something out of it after it was dried. But we didn’t
have even that. Without the care we received from the others (group members) we would have lost all hope. My mother who is old was very upset after we had lost everything… She would just sit and cry and refuse to talk to anyone. These people (group members) used to meet mostly at my house so that they could talk to her. Just listening to our talk and what we heard and did used to make her feel better. That’s how she came out of it.’

- One of group members, sharing about the personal care he and his household received from the group.

Other group members also share this view. The ex-panchayat member observes,

‘We are always fighting over small things (in the village). There is no unity. Everybody thinks only about themselves. Being a woman and older to them, they would always look to me whenever there was anger or fights. Those were not fights actually, they were because of the frustrations. When we had to go repeatedly for something or people were not co-operating, they would take it out on each other and shout at each other. But after that they were friends. Even though I couldn’t go out too much, they would always involve me in all decision-making (processes). After my panchayat term, I felt useful only now. People used to come to me and I would try and help them.’

As seen in the statement above, along with the care and emotional support received by the group members, the self-esteem of the group members was positively affected by the support they were able to offer people and the recognition it brought them in the community. This was echoed by another member of the group too,

‘Though I had had to go back to work and could not spend too much time in going around with the others (group members), people still looked at me as somebody who had done something for the village.’

The emotional support received from the group directly and indirectly was another resource that the group brought through their work. There was simmering discontent in the way their village had been ‘excluded by the government from all flood benefits’ (as said by the panchayat member). This was largely due to the fact that a lot of money and materials (flood relief by both Government and private agencies) had
come into the area after the floods but they had not received anything. People in the village who were antagonistic to the panchayat member also fuelled the anger.

One of group members shared,

‘People were really angry with the (panchayat) member. They felt he was not doing anything. He was also not attending meetings called by us in the village or informing us about why we were not receiving any support. Even we were angry. We got together because we thought that he was not doing anything. But as we went and found out the government criteria for declaring flood loss, we realised that even he was helpless. We shared it with the people and they also understood. That brought down people’s anger on the member. The ganji kendra (gruel centre) we organised also greatly helped in calming people.’

The respondent from one of the households which had lost all its food stocks concurs,

‘We were really angry when we couldn’t have food even once a day even three days after the floods. The ganji kendra organised by these people (group members) brought us relief. More than that, we felt calm that we would not die out of hunger.’

Other than the indirect emotional support through the provision of material goods, the group members also acted as local counsellors.

One of the group members quips,

‘people began bringing even their family problems to us. One woman wanted us to talk to her son who was not going for work. Sometimes people would just come and sit and talk about what they lost and how they felt. The most busy person was Hanumavva (the women ex-panchayat member). Women from all over would come to talk to her and share their problems and just sit with her.’

Sharing about how the group would deal with emotional needs and problems expressed by the community members, the youngest group members said,

‘We didn’t do anything. We just listened. What advice can we give people when we are in the same situation?’
The woman member added,

‘Just by talking about their problems, the women would feel better. Whom else could they go and share their troubles. There was nobody else in the village’

The emotional support provided by ‘listening’ on the part of the group members as well as the ‘venting out’ by the community members was recognised by the group as an important need which they fulfilled in the absence of any other source where that need could be met. Their role as the ‘listeners’ was brought about largely due to the fact that their material or instrumental support after the floods established them as ‘people who could do something about the situation’ and ‘people who cared for others more than our own family members’ (couple of respondents’ views about the group).

**Instrumental support and access to resources**

The opening of the *ganji kendras* (gruel centre) was the first tangible output of the group which brought them into the limelight. Speaking about how the idea was formed, a group member explained,

‘Yellappa, one of the group members’ food stocks was completely washed away. As his neighbour, we were providing food for them. Soon the others (households of other group members) also began sharing with them. We used to meet in his house only. His mother was in a bad condition (mentally) and used to feel bad about having to eat food brought by others. One day she got very angry and told us why don’t you go feed all the others who don’t have food. We didn’t get upset because we knew she was very angry and sad at having lost so much... That evening Hanumavva (the woman member) told us that many other houses’ food stocks had been washed away and we should do something to help other households, including those from other castes. We decided to immediately cook some food at Hanumavva’s house and serve it to those households in need. Basappa, who was a friend of ours and a relative of the panchayat member, told us that about sixteen households had lost their food stocks. He suggested that we should cook at a common place so that others would also join in. A few of our (dalit) families objected saying that if people did not want to eat food cooked in our houses (or courtyards) then we should ignore them. But we decided that it was not the time to create...’
differences and we started cooking next to the gudi (shrine). It was good we did that because others (non-dalits) also benefitted and many of them also contributed food grains. We ran the ganji kendra at the gudi for eight days.’

While a lot of food grains and food stocks were washed away, those that remained were wet and unusable as they were submerged in the water. Whole sacks of food grains began rotting and had to be discarded. Some of the grains could be dried and had to be used up with a short period (as they had begun sprouting and couldn’t be stored for long). The group collected these grains from their houses and from the community and gave it to those who had lost all their food grains.

A respondent household which received the food grains said:

‘We have never had to ask anybody for anything in our lives. We always had enough to eat. When all our food grains got washed away, we didn’t know what to do. These people are like gods. First they gave us cooked food. And then without even asking us they brought some sacks of food grain and left it in our house. We could dry it and use it. From salt to firewood, they gave us everything. Nobody from our family and (caste) community even turned back and looked at us.’

The repair of houses and clearing of debris from the houses and fields was a time-consuming and ubiquitous activity in the flood recovery process. Households with fewer hands contributing to the clean-up process, including households with immobile elderly persons, people with physical impairments or chronically ill persons would find it difficult to get the job done. While in villages such as Thaminala, the scramble for getting paid labour to help in the clearing up efforts has been discussed in the previous chapter, in Budihala, it was mostly done by individual households. A group member explains the difference,

‘The number of households in the village is very less. And since everybody is involved in clearing their own house and fields, it is very rare to see people working in others’ house or property.’
Another member explains,

‘Our is a small village. We don’t have big landlords like in the other villages. Everybody toils in the field and works. We work in each other’s fields depending on the crop and the season, but we don’t go to work in other’s houses for payment. Our people go to cities and work there in others’ houses, but here nobody will work.’

That tradition made it difficult for households which needed help in find a helping hand. While community feeling were strong, the wide-spread damage ensured that everybody was busy salvaging whatever they could, and were busy in their own households. The group saw that need and helped in clearing houses which had nobody to help them.

One of the houses belonged to an elderly woman whose son and family had gone to Mangalore for work only a couple of weeks before the floods. She said,

‘I used to think that nobody cared for me. Even during the rains, I just sat inside the house watching the water rise. A day after the rains stopped, Rangappa came to my house and scolded me for not asking anybody for help. Everybody is busy with their own work and I didn’t have the energy to do anything. He came with the other boys and took things out of the house to dry. Hanumavva also came and helped me to sweep the place. They gave me food and called me to stay with one of them. I refused. What they did was more than what anybody else would do for an old woman. I didn’t want my son to leave and go. His wife’s insistence was the only reason they went away. If they had been here, I would not have to trouble anybody else. That is fate.’

The instrumental support was most often accompanied by the emotional support that came through the feeling that one was not alone and that somebody cared for them. This reaction was not only linked to instrumental support, but also in situations where the support was non-tangible, such as in cases relating to providing relevant information and appraisal support where the help was in terms of decision making, giving appropriate feedback, or help deciding which course of action to take.
Informational and appraisal support

One area where the group felt ‘successful’ was in getting at least some compensation from the government in an indirect manner. While all the other affected villages in the neighbourhood were included in the list of flood-affected villages, the residents of Budihala felt ‘cheated’ as they were not in flood-affected village because of lack of complete shelter damage. That made them ineligible for any kind of compensation. However the group members decided to press for some kind of compensation. They discussed the matter with the officials of the village and taluk panchayat. However they were not successful. Within a period of ten days after the floods, they had collected information a lot of information with regard to the type of government intervention in the floods. But the village did not fall into any of the categories as the main criterion was permanent shelter damage and proximity to the river (in case of relocation of villages).

A group member explained the situation,

‘We didn’t know as to what we should be doing. Everywhere we went, the norms were against us. The officers were sympathetic but there was nothing they could do. On a hunch, we asked every household with the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGA) job cards to put an application to the government, asking for work in clearing silt from houses and fields. Initially the officials refused because the list of works had already been decided. But all the people listened to what we suggested. All of them applied for work. We met the Deputy Secretary and Zilla Panchayat Chief Executive Officer. We told them that there were forty eight households with job cards requiring work. They knew that we had not received any compensation. They spoke to the gram panchayat officials. And we were given eleven days wages per household which was approximately the number of days we had lost wages due to floods. They also told us that they would include clearing of silt from individual fields in the next action plan. Though the amount given was not too much, everybody felt happy that we had received something from the government.’

When the panchayat member refused to attend any meetings in the village or even visit the village, the residents were frustrated at the lack of information. Collecting
information was one of the primary tasks performed by the group. However, it was not a planned strategy. Some of the group members would visit the taluk panchayat while the others would visit the gram panchayat office and stay there for almost the whole day. Their idea was to appeal to the visiting state officials to consider inclusion of their village in the flood affected villages list. They also would meet NGO representatives and individuals who would come to the panchayat for information on list of flood affected villages.

One of the group member observed,

‘Just by hanging around the offices we learnt a lot. Initially we would get frustrated as our work was not getting done. But we realised that we could get information which would be useful even later as there was discussion about the different schemes that were available, and how we could apply for them. For us it was the first time that we even heard of schemes like subsidy loan for self-employment, special money set apart for SC/STs [Special Component Plan (SCP)] and free trainings. Many of the people working there were very helpful.’

The information gained was shared by the group members. They even made attempts at applying for the subsidy loan program. A group member said,

‘The idea for using the MGNREGA also came from the taluk panchayat office. We met many contractors who knew how to get money from the program. They were very sympathetic to us and told us not to waste our time at the taluk panchayat. They told us to meet the zilla panchayat officials directly, and it worked.’

As the group’s contacts grew, they not only received more useful information, but their influence in the community also increased.

**Social influence**

‘When we started we wanted to help ourselves. Then we thought we will help those who didn’t have food. But soon, we were dealing with other problems like loans, and applications for subsidy. Some people also have put in requests for housing plots as there is no land in the village for them to construct
houses. Even the EO (Executive Officer) of the Taluk Panchayat calls us when he wants some information from the village. We don’t know how he got our mobile numbers.’

- one of group members talking about the influence of the group in the village and with government officials.

The activities of the group also influenced the practices followed by the community. Community members approaching the zilla panchayat and state government offices directly was a practice adopted after the group started getting things done at the higher levels of the panchayat system. This has also upset some power relations in the village. The panchayat member from the village admits candidly,

‘Now-a-days, everybody spends money and a whole day and goes directly to Bagalkote if they need anything. The adhyaksharu (Gram Panchayat president) told me that people from Budihala visit the zilla panchayat office more than he does. Now, they think they don’t need me. But unless things get passed in the gram panchayat nobody will get anything….. No, I am not against people approaching the panchayat to get the work done. But there is a system for everything and that should be followed. If they need something, they can come and ask me, and I cannot say I won’t do it. I am the elected representative.’

The group’s work has also contributed to influencing certain norms in the village. After the first ganji kendra was opened, many smaller ones sprung up with people sharing cooked food and catering to their relatives and neighbours in need. A man who lost all his food stock said,

‘In the beginning (after the floods), our relatives would not turn and look at us thinking that we would be a burden on them. But when we began eating at the ganji kendra, which was organised mainly by the Madiga community, they suddenly felt bad and offered food to us. They asked us if we were going to eat there (ganji Kendra) to embarrass them. We stopped going to the ganji kendra after that.’
A group member said,

‘Many people came and told us that their relatives were helping them because we had started this (ganji Kendra) first. They didn’t want to seem small-hearted. Some of them said that even relatives who were not on talking terms with them had offered them food and shelter until their houses could be set in order.’

The social influence exerted by the group was in part due to the direct demonstrative effect, as seen in the practice of directly approaching the zilla panchayat, and partly due to the indirect pressures created on the community members to share food and accommodation with their relatives or neighbours. The fact that the group members were people like them who had also lost their food stocks and had partially damaged houses made the influence even starker.

An elderly woman respondent quipped,

‘Nobody noticed them at first. The ganji kendra was the first thing they did, and everybody thought that they were doing something good. Nobody expected them to continue, as they had to get back to their work and also earn something. They had to look after their houses. But they spent a lot of time going to different places and helping others. They moved around with everybody, and everybody talks to them. Their houses were among the first to get damaged as they are located at the end of the village. But they worked not just for themselves…’

As the woman noted the influence of the group was also due to the fact that they participated in activities with others while not being restricted to their own problems and life situations.

**Social engagement**

The group emerged as an entity or a grouping of individuals by participation and engagement in real-life problems that existed around them, starting from their own households and then extending to the other group members who were close to them. The response to floods gave the group an opportunity to bond and fulfil their role as friends, kinfolk and same community (caste) members. But as the group began
looking outside and seeing similar problems that lay outside their circle, their
engagement with the others also grew and so did the size of their group which
included a non-dalit member. This companionship outside the circle was valuable in
expanding the reach of the activities, in terms of people who benefitted from their
work, as in the *ganji kendra*, the information that they collected, and in increasing
their influence.

A group member said,

‘As we began going out of our village and people began identifying us as
“those youth from Budihala” we would feel very happy. We were recognised
as part of our village and not as from that family or that caste. But we were
recognised as people trying to do something for the good of the whole village.’

Another group member concurs,

‘When I joined them (the group members) in going to different places, it was
only for the happiness of being with them and going out together. But today,
we have become like a family and many people in the village also consider us
as part of their family, and are willing to do anything for us.’

**Reciprocity**

The cordiality in the group and between the group members and the community
members was visible. Within the group, the members had complete trust that they
would stand for each other in the case of any need. They had already helped each
other in rebuilding their homes and lives after the floods. Within the community, the
group members felt confident that the community would stand by them, especially
those who had benefitted from their support.

One of the group members said,

‘When we worked, we worked without expecting anything. But tomorrow if I
need anything I have so many people to whom I can go. I hope I won’t have to
go, but I know people will be there for us.’

Though there had not been any opportunity for testing this confidence in the
reciprocity of ties, the fact remained that the group members felt confident that they
had people to whom they could go to in times of need. And this was not from a sense of weakness, but from a position of having helped them first.

**Multiplexity of ties and experiences**

In a discussion on what had been the most fulfilling experience on being part of the group which had responded to floods, different members highlighted different aspects of their ties and experiences. The most common view was related to the connectedness they felt with each other and the village. A couple of the members shared that the benefits they provided to the community and the recognition they got in return was very gratifying. Some members spoke of the widening of their social network and their increased engagement with people outside their social network as the most fulfilling experience for them.

As seen above, the ties between the group members and between the group members and the community were complex and linked to the ties between each other and the experiences that they shared. The feeling of reciprocity was strong among group members, while remaining largely untested between the group members and the community. The perception of ties between the members was closely linked to the nature and utility of the support flowing through those ties, while the ties between them was satisfying in itself for all of them.

While the experiences of the group in Budihala had been relatively homogenous and free of intra-group conflicts, the experience of the emergent group in Khyada, which emerged in the context of a conflict on permanent housing, was in many respects just the opposite.

### 7.2 Emergent groups in the context of conflict over permanent housing

**The context:** Several households in Khyada had suffered severe loss in the floods of July 2007. Many houses were washed away while several others were damaged. Thirty six households received temporary shelters. They were promised permanent *pucca* houses in housing plots within six months of moving into the temporary shelters. The floods of October 2009 further damaged the remaining houses in the village in addition to causing loss of standing crops, silt formation in the fields, and
loss of livelihoods and infrastructure. The households in the temporary shelters too suffered damage to household goods, food stock, crops and loss of livelihoods.

The villages which suffered extensive shelter damage (loss of houses) were selected by the government to be fully shifted to a safer location. Khyada was one such village where the entire village would be shifted across the main road away from the river. Infrastructure such as roads, storm water drains, electricity and water supply would be provided.

Each household listed in the panchayat records were to receive a separate house. Norms were fixed for provision of new houses. All homeless people and people living in houses upto 1200 sq. ft. would receive housing plots with an area of 1200 sq. ft. Anybody with plots above 1200 sq. ft. would receive bigger housing plots (subject to a ceiling of 2400 sq. ft.). The houses built on all the plots would be of uniform dimension consisting of a hall, bedroom and kitchen. A bathroom and toilet would be built separately outside the house. The announcement left most people dissatisfied. The ones who were happy with the announcement were the ones who were homeless and those with housing plots much lesser than 1200 or 2400 sq. ft., as they would receive housing plots bigger than what they possessed earlier. Those who possessed houses with built up areas of 1200 or 2400 sq. ft. were unhappy since they would only receive plots of the said area. The houses on those plots would be smaller than the houses they were residing in currently. In the village, each household had space outside the house for their livestock as the space between the houses was much bigger. This was a further cause for consternation as in the planned layout for the new colony there would be no place in front of the houses for the livestock, just a 30 ft. road and storm water drain.

**Discontent in the temporary shelters**

There was great discontent in the temporary shelters since they had all been promised housing plots of 2400 sq.ft. in 2007. However under the revised norms after the floods of October 2009, eighty percent of them were eligible only for plots which were half the size. A resident of the temporary shelter voiced her disappointment,
'We lived like pigs in this shed thinking that we would at least have a good house after all this suffering. What they are planning to build is much smaller than what we had earlier.'

Background of the conflict
Several attempts were made by different community members to initiate a dialogue with the government for relooking at the norms. But they were not successful. All the households in the temporary shelters decided to oppose the reconstruction project. Hanumantha who was instrumental in getting the households together reminisced,

'We met everyday to share with each other what we had learnt about the plans of the government and to plan our action. We all decided that at no cost we would allow the government to build these small houses for us.'

A resident of the temporary shelters added,

'We would get to know from our friends in Badami taluk panchayat office that bulldozers were being sent to level the ground the next day. We would immediately organise ourselves and be present when they arrived. All of us would give up our days’ wages and remain at home. When we heard the bulldozers approaching, all of us would go and stand in front of the bulldozers.... everybody......... women, children, men, and not let it reach the (proposed) site. We sent back the bulldozers at least six to eight times.'

The construction of permanent houses had been allotted a prominent Mutt (religious order) in Karnataka. Due to the protests from the community, they decided to withdraw from their commitment and the Government reallocated the construction to the Karnataka Land Army.

Pressure was building up at the state level, since reconstruction work had not started in most of the flood-affected areas across the state and the media was highlighting the plight of those who were living in the temporary shelters. Each of the district commissioners (DC) in the flood-affected districts had been given orders to begin reconstruction at all sites immediately.
The Executive Officer (EO) of Badami spoke of the pressures they were receiving from the public as well as their higher-ups in the bureaucracy,

‘The media had started a campaign to show that no work was happening and that people were suffering in the temporary shelters. When people saw the news in the papers, they became even more angry. Everyday we would have different groups protesting in front of the “panchayati kacheri” (panchayat office). We were asked to begin construction at all sites at any cost. We had to report on the situation twice a day to the CEO’s (Chief Executive Officer of the Zilla Panchayat) office.’

Speaking of the reasons for delay in construction, the CEO said,

‘It is very well for the press people to write stories about our inefficiency. Let them come and do this job for one day… and then let them write. We had to acquire land for building houses. When people knew that we were going to acquire land, they asked for more. Government had allotted a budget for each district and we couldn’t pay more than what was allotted. If we put pressure on people, they would immediately get the MLA or MP to chastise us. If we still went ahead, they would go and get a stay from the courts. We had to be very careful in each case, and use all methods to get land owners to part with their land. I have personally gone to so many villages and talked to the land owners to convince them to sell their land. I used to tell them to think that it was part of their contribution to the flood relief. When people from across the country were donating money, as people from the same village, they had an even greater responsibility.………. It was like a barter system. They also had a list of demands related to other things. We had to promise them all sort of things to get them to sell their lands. All this is a time consuming process…..’

Rehabilitation under the shadow of the gun

The media publicity on the delay in construction of permanent houses went against the people of Khyada, as the district administration was not ready for any dialogue. When a group of people from Khyada went to give a representation to the DC, he said that he would issue ‘shoot-at-sight’ orders if they continued to block the reconstruction work.
The next day, bull-dozers were sent to level the grounds in Khyada under the protection of two vans full of armed police. The police vans were stationed in front of the reconstruction site and armed police men stood on all sides to prevent any outsider from entering the work site. One of the community members remarked,

‘They were building houses for us by keeping us away and scaring us with their guns. Nobody from our village was employed at the site. All the workers were brought from outside. Is this how they build homes for us? We will die rather than live in these houses.’

But that view was not shared by all. Some of the households moved away from the consensus on the issue of opposing construction until their demands were met. The issue created clear divisions among households in the temporary shelters. Those who wanted to stop the construction and the others who did not want to oppose it. Among the others, there were some who felt that they it was better to get something rather than nothing at all, while some others felt that there was no point in fighting with the government.

One of those who was not opposed to the construction said,

‘We have lived in this shed for long enough. If we keep fighting with the government, then construction will get delayed and we will have to live here longer. It is not that we don’t want more land. Who doesn’t want more space? But by fighting for that we may even lose what we they have promised now.’

Hanumantha believes that the government has created this fear among people that if they oppose the construction they won’t get anything. He said,

‘Our people will believe anything. Last time when we went to meet the DC, he said, give me a list of all those who don’t want the houses we provide, and we will cancel the allotment. And now they are all scared.... what if he actually cancels our name from the list. Who is he to cancel our names? Is he bringing the money for all this from his father-in-law’s house? My blood boils when people just listen to what these people (officials) say and wag their tails and come back.’
Emergent groups in the context of floods

Conflict among the residents

The temporary shelters were located next to the site where the construction of permanent houses was taking place. The work was creating conflict among the residents of the temporary shelters. Those who opposed the construction felt that the others had betrayed them by not joining them in their efforts to oppose it.

After almost a week of work in levelling the ground and marking the various plots, the bulldozers left the scene along with the police vans on a Saturday evening. They planned to be back on Monday. On Sunday evening, the residents of the temporary shelter met to plan their next steps. Hanumantha and his friends asked the community to protest and court arrest. However, many of the residents were opposed to the plan. Through discussion they finally arrived at a consensus that they would wear black bands on their arms and mouths and sit in the temporary shelters in silent protest. Hanumantha also informed stringers connected to different media groups and reporters of TV news channels, and requested them to cover their protest. The stringers and reporters asked Hanumantha to call them when the bulldozers came to the village, as they were not sure of the time when they would show up.

To their surprise, on Monday morning, the bulldozers and the workers arrived without police protection. [Since there had not been any trouble for a week, the police had withdrawn their presence. There was also a foundation stone laying ceremony of relocated houses elsewhere in the district in which the Chief Minister was also expected to attend. The police personnel had been deputed for that meeting.]

Seeing that there was no police protection, the plans for the silent sit-in protests at the temporary shelters quickly changed. They decided that they would shift their protest to the approach road leading to the construction site and not allow the bulldozers to move in. Hanumantha and his friends had called the media persons by then. On hearing the news, the local stringers and the TV news channel reporters rushed to the spot. They sat in front of the bulldozers shouting slogans against the government and against Karnataka Land Army (KLA).

When the media started arriving and the TV cameras were rolling, some of the people in the group began arguing with the representatives of the KLA. Soon, some stones
were thrown and the fist-fights began. The KLA called the district administration. The CEO arrived at the scene with police protection. He warned the residents that in case they caused any further trouble they would arrest them under the ‘Goonda Act’. A few members from Hanumantha’s group were charge sheeted and booked for disturbing the harmony and obstructing the work of Government servants.

Box 7.1

**Genesis of the emergent group in Khyada**

‘The throwing of stones was done by some other people, while case was filed against us because we are the ones who went and submitted the memorandum. The people who threw the stones sat at home saying that that is why they didn’t want to oppose the Government. Opposing the Government does not mean you have to throw stones against the workers. Anyway, the incident brought all of us together as a group. Case has been filed against eleven of us and we have to go sign in the police register at Badami every Wednesday. They have brought us closer together.’

- Hanumantha explaining how the group was formed.

**Structure and composition**

**Range:** The group primarily comprised of the eleven members against whom the case had been filed. While some of the other households were not totally opposed to them, they preferred to not join them in their activities. The presence of the police post which was set up permanently in the construction site added to the fear of the residents. They felt as if they were under the scanner at all times. One of the residents said,

‘We feel very bad for Hanumantha and the others. We know they are doing all this for the good of everybody, but we are also scared that if we join them or if we are seen with them the police will also put a case on us. Once the houses are built we don’t want to find that we didn’t get a house because of all this trouble.’

The group also found support from many of the residents of the main Khyada village. But not many were willing to speak out in the open. The situation created a sense of
distrust in the society. Nobody was sure who belonged to which camp and discussion on this topic was always in hushed tones.

**Density:** The group came together even before the incident, where cases were registered against them. They visited the MP’s house, MLA’s house, DC’s office and the CEO’s office many times over three-four months to impress on them the need for relooking at the allocation. All the members spent their own money for travel and food. After the case was filed against the members, their anger against the establishment and frustration at things not going their way was increasing. One of the members aid,

‘It was as if our entire lives revolved around this. When we slept and woke up and met each other, this was all we talked about. It was good that there were others who also thought and felt the same way, otherwise we would have gone mad.’

Some of the group members expressed how they felt detached from the temporary shelter, the place they called home until then. Many of them referred to the shelter as ‘aa jaaga’ (that place) instead of the usual ‘mane’ or ‘vasathi’ (house/home). A member said,

‘We hated going back to that place (temporary shelters), with the police playing cards and staring at all of us. Even our relatives and neighbours with whom we had stayed all our lives seemed distant to us. We all just went out of the place in the morning and went back only at night to sleep. Many times we didn’t even go back in the evenings as we slept at friends’ places in Badami. Three of four times we also went together to Dharwad (to meet a lawyer). Once we went to Bangalore…’

The distance from the temporary shelter reduced the gap between the members and brought them together. Some of the members spoke about how they had also lost interest in finding work and just liked to be with the other group members.

**Boundedness:** The members of the network were living close to each other in the temporary shelters. The households shared in many milestones which was common to the different households, such as loss of their houses in the floods of 2007, shifting to
temporary shelters, undergoing the struggles of living in the temporary shelters with minimal facilities, having members migrating out of their household due to lack of opportunities for work or sometimes due to space, and again suffering loss in the floods of October 2009.

The group presented the most unusual combination of members with regards to caste, especially in the context of the study villages where social life and institutions, and access to institutions are structured by caste. Of the eleven members of the group, eight of them were from the SC community (four Chaluvas and four Madigas) while the remaining three were from the general community (two Kshatriya and one Maratha).

Speaking of the caste combination, one of the members from the Kshatriya caste said,

‘The floods brought us to live together with each other in the temporary shelters. Now they (other caste people) are more of a family than our other relatives in the village. The jagala (fights, referring to the opposition over permanent housing) has shown (exposed) everybody’s true behaviour.’

A member from the Madiga community also shared a similar view but highlighted a different dimension of the relationship. He said,

‘We are together and we worked together as friends… as one family. But when we go back home it is different. They have their own practices and we have ours. Now when the new houses are built, will anybody agree to have houses of different communities together? No, they won’t. It is better that way……… if people who are similar are together. There won’t be too much difference….’

The same member added,

‘…when we are together we don’t see which caste or religion anyone belongs to. When we protested or when we got taken in by the police, did they ask which caste we were? No….. We all want to get a fair piece of land, and others want it too. We work together for that. That’s all.’
That statement sums up the boundedness of the group quite aptly, which is that, the group is more of a functional group. The goal binds them together along with the weight of circumstance which locked them together in the same case.

**Homogenity:** Of the eleven members, three of the men from the Madiga community were related – two were brothers while one was their cousin brother. All the members in the group were men aged between seventeen years to forty four years. Hanumantha who was seen as the initiator of the group was a farmer, while all the rest from the SC community were primarily agricultural labourers. The three members of the general caste among them had other occupations. Two of them were farmers, while the other person was a contractor. As in the other emergent group, those engaged in agricultural labour work had to go far away from their villages in search of work, since the crops near the river were destroyed and work was not easily available.

In terms of economic position, Hanumantha was similar to the people from the general community. In terms of education he had studied more than the others, dropping-out only in first year degree (B.A.) while all the others had dropped out before tenth standard.

The non-homogenous nature of the group, was not as much a talking point for the community as it was in the case of the emergent group in Budihala, since the whole community was part of the process through which the group evolved (conflict of permanent shelters) and distilled out from the rest of the community.

**Time dimension**

The time spent together by the group members had its impact on the lives and outlook of the members. It helped in fostering a good relationship between the members of the emergent group as expressed by one of the members,

\[\text{We would have spent so much time together that my family members asked me if I was married to them. But our relationship is even better than marriage…} \]

Some of the other impact of spending time together with other members of the group as expressed by the group members are given below.
**Learning:** The group members spent a lot of time together in the main village, trying to meet others and to garner their support. They also met local NGOs, through whom they got introduced to a lawyer who agreed to take up their case in the high court. They filed a Right to Information (RTI) application seeking information regarding the norms for rehabilitation.

One of the group members said,

‘Earlier I was just angry and wanted to do something. But by being with all these friends for so long I have learnt a lot. We may or may not get what we are asking for. But now we all know how to file an RTI application, we know how to file a case. We even tried to meet the Governor to ask for his help.’

**Duration and sharing:** The time spent by the group members together helped in bringing them closer and the members shared with each other in their times of need. One of the members said,

‘After the case, we had to be back in Badami every Wednesday (to sign the police register). So, we would plan our week from one Wednesday to the next. We met NGOs in Badami and got their help in finding a lawyer. For three or four weeks in a row, most of us went to Dharwad to meet the lawyer. Sometimes one of us didn’t have money, the others would pay for him. Now, we even plan who will go to work and bring the money for us to travel.’

**Coming to terms with the outcome:** The group was conceived in anger at the conflict over size of permanent housing plots (half the size of what was promised almost three years ago) and nurtured by the events surrounding the conflict (such as filing cases against the protesters). The anger was brought to the group with the group members talking and planning various actions to get some reprieve. The act of discussing and trying out different options itself was therapeutic to the group members. Explaining his view of the time spent together with the group, Hanumantha said,

‘When we started we were angry with everybody. It was a challenge to do something about our situation. All the time spent with each other has calmed us down. We can atleast be happy that we tried all that we could. The rest is
fate. We didn’t sit back and feel sorry for ourselves. We have spent more than fifty thousand rupees as a whole in all our travels and meetings different people and preparing documents for the lawyer. We are ready to spend even more. Even if things won’t happen like what we want, its ok.’

Another member adds,

‘People see us as “men” who fought. We have been telling each other that we now know the full history of the village and each and every house. We have collected all the documents and met so many people. None of this will go as waste….’

**Functioning and content**

The life in the temporary shelters and the subsequent change of norms with regard to the permanent housing norms, more than two years after people lived in the temporary shelters led to the emergence of the group and shaped the structure and composition. The time dimension further helped to strengthen dimensions of the groups’ functioning. This section explores the functioning of the group and its contents with regard to what it was able to achieve – both, for its members as well as other members of the community.

**Flow of resources**

In terms of instrumental support and access to concrete, visible, tangible material resources, the group had nothing to claim, since their fight for getting the Government to keep the commitment had not been met. (The commitment made to them in July 2007 was regarding giving each of them houses on housing plots of 2400 sq. ft.). However, the members identified other resources which were important to them.

**Social support**

The social support provided by the group to its members and others who were hurt under the sudden change of norms was the key contribution of the group as expressed by its members.
Emergent groups in the context of floods

Emotional support

‘I was even willing to sell everything I had, to fight the people who had gone back on their word after making us suffer all this time in the temporary shelters. When we went to speak to the DC he told us that he would issue shoot-at-sight orders if we raised our demands. We did not raise any demands. This was the promise they made two years back. And after they neglected us for two years, they go and reduce the size of the plot by half. I was mad. In this group I met others like me who was also mad. But by talking to each other and trying to do something we were able to get over our anger.’

- One of group members, sharing about the emotion support that was shared in the group.

Informational and appraisal support

All the group members were visibly proud at the information which they had collected about their village from the gazettes and from the panchayat. The lawyer had asked them for whatever background information they could collect, to strengthen the case. Along with the Government Orders, some of them had gone to Government Press in Bangalore and Raj Bhavan to get a copy of the Government order issued by the Governor (since Karnataka was under President’s rule at the time when the previous order had been passed).

Speaking of his experiences, Hanumantha said,

‘I have studied upto degree first year but I had never seen such libraries and did even know that such places existed. After we collected all the information, even the panchayat people came to my house asking if they could get a copy of what we had collected. The school headmaster was also interested. We gave them all copies of whatever we had collected, excepted those related to the case like details of land records, allocation list, and so on.’

Another member said,

‘Most of the people do not even know if their names are on the list, what is the allocation, or if there is any mistake in the list. In fact even we didn’t know until we asked for the list using RTI and received it. Many people, even those who opposed us came and asked us for the list. But since we wanted to file a
case using these information we didn’t share the list with everybody. But when we found big mistakes or if people’s names had been excluded we informed them so that they could immediately file a complaint in the panchayat.’

Social influence

‘These people have gone to so many places and collected information. As a teacher I tell my students to learn from them. Most of the people in the village don’t have records and in case of any sale or loss, they greatly suffer because their names are not on the list. And the common excuse is that they are not educated. Other than Hanumantha, I don’t think any of the others are educated much, but they have been able to do so much. They even brief the lawyers. I heard that the panchayat officers are also asking them for information which they have collected…. (laughs)’

- the school master talking about the influence of the group in the village and with panchayat officials.

Social engagement

The group members listed their interaction with people outside the village and the recognition that they gained inside the village as one of the key benefits of being part of the group. The youngest group member said,

‘We met so many people and went to so many places. Today I am not afraid to travel alone and go to a new place alone. I can manage. I wish I had studied some more, then I could have understood things better. I ran away from school when I was in the sixth standard as I could not take it anymore. Today even the school master talks to me with respect and asks me about what I did in Dharwad and Bengaluru.’

Reciprocity

As in the emergent group in Budiha, the cordiality in the group and between the group members and the community members in Khyada was visible. The bitterness of the conflict has been blunted. Within the group, the members had complete trust that they would stand for each other in the case of any need. One of the group members said,
We have shared everything from money to food to house, and slept in the bus stops because we didn’t have money to pay for a lodge. We are like one family now’

Multiplexity of ties and experiences
The ties between the group members were built on the basis of time that they spent together and the anger which they felt at being ‘let-down’ by the government. The temporary shelter experience has brought the group together cutting across caste and economic and education divides. Yet, as some of the group members anticipated, when things got back to “normal” the usual divides would take over and they would be separated by the divisions within the society. However, as individuals who had shared some experiences together as a group, the members had complete trust that they would stand for each other in the case of any need.

Emergent groups in floods
As seen in the literature review, the emergence of groups and behaviours have been studied in the immediate aftermath of a disaster situation (Chapter 1). The groups in the study villages too emerged in the immediate aftermath of the floods, but their consolidation as a unit and a major part of their work took place later. The genesis of the group can be traced back to the links and boundedness of the members in the pre-flood phase. This points to the strengthening of pre-existing social networks of the group members. The external situation of perceived discrimination coupled with the willingness of the members to take action was seen in both the groups. A longitudinal study of these groups would provide insights into the structure and functionings of these groups in other crisis situations. It needs to be seen if the experience and learning from the flood response experience gets taken forward either as a group or by its individual constituents to aid further in the disaster recovery process.