

Beneficial Effect of Empowering the Local Community in Disaster Management and Rehabilitation

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ABSTRACT

Background: Disasters still pose a great threat around the globe. Communities and people can more effectively respond to emergencies and crises with their increased access to basic resources and social services, through the Community Based Disaster Management (CBDM) approach. The purpose of this study is to identify the role of local community in disaster preparedness and management.

Subjects and Methods: This was a quantitative observational study using survey questionnaire method conducted from March till July 2017. A 6-item questionnaire was designed for data collection in addition to demographic information. The participants included those serving various non-governmental organizations from Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan. A survey of around 120 medical and non-medical professionals was conducted regarding the need for local involvement or a community-based disaster management. The data was collected by emails, through post, and by hand.

Results: Almost one third (33.33%) of the participants, had participated in the disaster relief activities once and almost equal number (36.56%) had participated twice. The rest of one third were divided almost equally among those who participated more than three times and those who never participated. Most of the participants (37.78%) has participated in earthquake relief. Almost half of the participants (48.89%) think that the most important area to be focused in disaster management is Preparation and Planning while 35.56% of participants think that it's Shelter. Approximately 43% of participants contemplated TVs and radios as the best way to involve the local community in disaster management. On the other hand, 38% of participants believe in Training sessions as the best way to involve the local community in disaster management.

Conclusion: Community should be involved in managing the disaster and rehabilitation efforts positively. Community members were found to play a key role in all the stages of disaster management. Dependency mostly results from lack of involvement of the local community in the disaster plan.

INTRODUCTION

Disasters still pose a great threat around the globe.¹ The expansion of growth among developing countries can easily be hindered and stunted as a result of economic, logistics and communal losses caused by these disasters. The population density, climatic and weather conditions, economic status, and traditions of an area affect and decide the impact of a disaster. Governments, NGOs and other international communities and bodies, including donor agencies consistently make efforts to reduce the risk and minimize the damage caused by disasters. However, these agencies and bodies have failed to be sustainable locally after concluding a project. The participation of local groups of population through contribution, partnership, ownership and

empowerment certifies sustainable disaster management. Local community should be able to participate directly with government officials and other professional groups in such community-based activities and programs. Despite the fact that people suffer more than the disaster damage, they are still the most immediate responders to a disaster. They take effective measures in reaction to disasters before the arrival of external help, and undergo initial preventative procedures as well. Community based disaster management (CBDM) approach focuses on providing disaster mitigation and risk reduction programs, procedures and measures to ensure safety of people living in high-risk areas.² The purpose of this study is to examine how the involvement of local community

can bring about a positive change in the outcome of disaster preparedness and management. Main objectives were to identify the role of local community in disaster preparedness and management and to reaffirm the empowerment of local community in disaster preparedness and management.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

A mixed method observational study was carried over 4 months period from March till July 2017. Survey questionnaire method and a quantitative observational method was employed. A 6-item questionnaire was designed as data collection tool in addition to demographic information (Table 1).

The participants included those serving various non-governmental organizations from Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan. Inclusion criteria comprised those with previous experience in disaster relief activities and community members with both medical and non-medical background. Those without any previous disaster relief and management experience were excluded. A survey of around 120 medical and non-medical professionals was conducted regarding the need for local involvement or a community-based disaster management. The data was collected by emails, through post, and by hand.

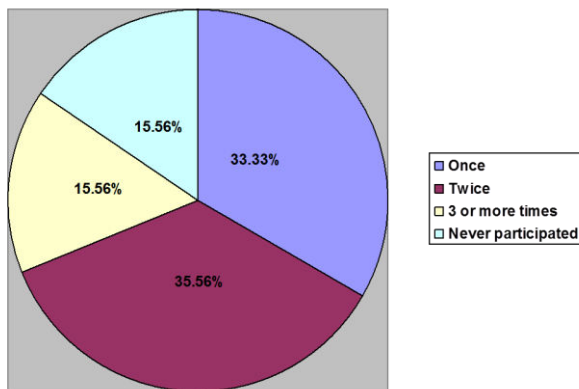
Table 1: Data collection tool

Name:		Age:		Gender: M / F			
Profession:							
Instructions:							
1) Please mark the appropriate choice and specify answers wherever required (double click of the selection box and select checked).							
2) Please do not give more than one answer.							
3) Please be free to comment wherever required in the space provided.							
No	Question	A	B	C	D		
1	<i>Have you participated in any disaster relief activities, if yes, how many times?</i> A= Once; B= Twice; C= 3 or more; D= Never participated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
2	<i>The nature of Disaster relief you have participated may include:</i> A= Earthquake; B= Flood; C= War-torn/man-made; D= Others, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
3	<i>Which of the following, do you think is the most important area to be focused in disaster management?</i> A= Preparation and Planning; B= Immediate care-medical, food, shelter; C= Rehabilitation; D= Others, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
4	<i>The involvement of local community in the disaster management plan will have a:</i> A= very good result; B= Good result; C= some result; D= Negative result	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
5	<i>Which do you think, is the most important area where local community can play a major role in disaster management?</i> A= Preparation and Planning; B= Implementation; C= Rehabilitation D= All stages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
6	<i>Which is the best way to involve the local community in disaster management?</i> A= Notices, pamphlets and newspapers; B= TVs and radios; C= Training sessions; D= Others, please specify	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

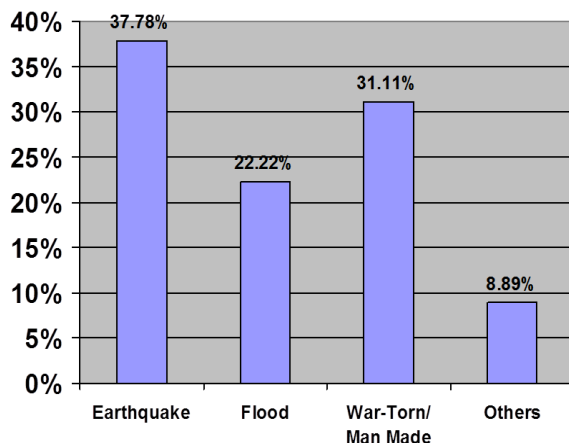
RESULTS

Eighty percent of the survey came from medical background. Balance 20% included businessmen, logisticians, and engineers, and others. Break up of study participants included International Non-Government Organization (NGO) 40%, Governmental 25%, Local NGO 20%, and Individuals 15%.

Q1: *Have you participated in any disaster relief activities, if yes, how many times?*



Q 2: *The nature of Disaster relief you have participated may include:*

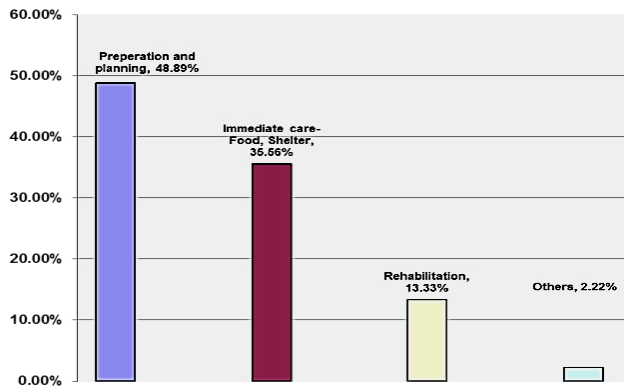


DISCUSSION

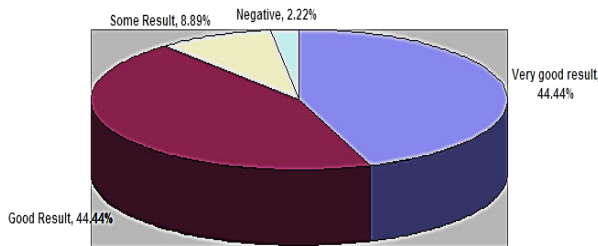
Disasters continue to pose a great threat around the globe. By necessitating people's engagement and stretching it into strategy, approach, procedure and policy, people should be able to own complications, and be able to bear consequences.

Such procedures grant a sense of ownership to people certifying their long term involvement and resolute commitment to these activities. Therefore, the involvement of people is vital in pre-disaster extenuation and post-disaster recovery process.³ It is essential that local people are involved in the initial programming stage of sustainable disaster management, as these people are the direct target of disasters. This gives way to communities to be at the vanguard of community-based disaster management project.⁴ Command and control structure are the main categories of most disaster response, top down with logistic centre approach. Consequently, unnecessary demand of external resources increases as a result of lack of community participation-resulting in failure to meet vital humanitarian and charitable needs. Considering these limitations, the Community Based Disaster Management (CBDM) approach reduces these difficulties by promoting a bottom up approach working in harmony with the top down approach. In order for it to be effective, local communities must be supported into examining and evaluating their perilous conditions, liabilities and vulnerabilities, and their potential and capacities.⁵ The CBDM approach believes that maximum investors should be involved in the process, with the final aim of attaining results and capacities, and shifting resources to communities in mind, and thus embracing the highest responsibility in disaster mitigation.^{6,7} Inadequate and inefficient respond by a community after a disaster may result in need of external help whose delay may prove to be fatal. Henceforth, it is important that most lives are saved within the first 24 hours after a disaster. It is greatly beneficial for a community to adopt disaster risk management measures, as local people are most informed about native conditions and recovery procedures in case of an event. The purpose of this study was to examine how the involvement of local community can bring about a positive change in the outcome of disaster preparedness and management. Almost one third (33.33%) of the participants, had participated in the disaster relief activities once and almost equal number (36.56%) had participated twice. The rest of one third were divided almost equally among those who participated more than three times and those who never participated. In other words, it is a very small number of participants (15.56%), who never participated in disaster relief activities.

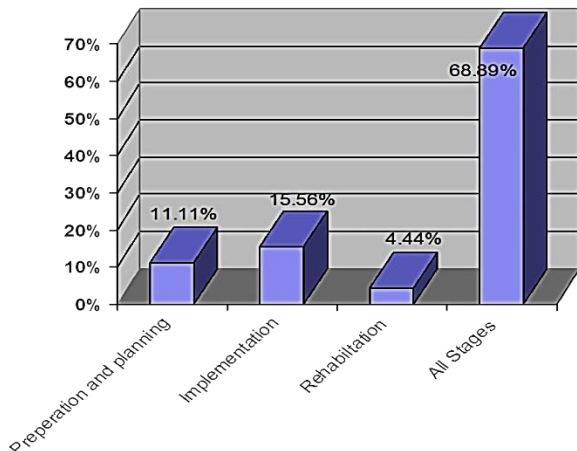
Q3. Which of the following, do you think is the most important area to be focused in disaster management?



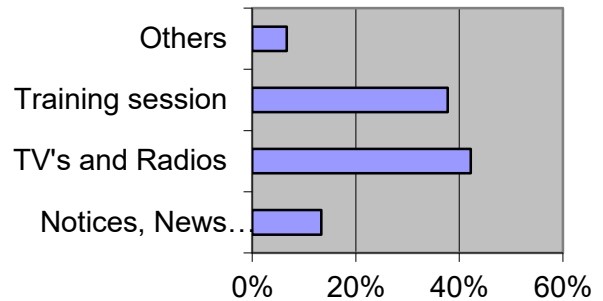
Q4. The involvement of local community in the disaster management plan will have a:



Q5. Which do you think, is the most important area where local community can play a major role in disaster management?



Q6: Which is the best way to involve the local community in disaster management?



Most of the participants (37.78%) had participated in earthquake relief, while the number of participants, involved in Flood Relief activities was almost half (22.22%) than those involved in Earthquake relief. The number of participants, involved in man-made or war-torn Disasters was almost the same as that of Earthquake, while a small number (8.89%) participated in other kind of disasters. Almost half of the participants (48.89%) thought that the most important area to be focused in disaster management is Preparation and Planning while 35.56% of participants thought that it was Shelter. About 13% participants thought that Rehabilitation was an important aspect whereas a very small number (2.22%) considered that other aspects, for example, counselling should be focused. Almost half of the participants (44.44%) considered that the involvement of local community in the disaster management plan would have very good results and another almost equal half (44.44%) were of the opinion that the involvement of local community in the disaster management plan could have good results. About 8.9% of the participants expected some results from the involvement of local community in the disaster management plan. Another, very small number (2.22%) voted against the involvement of local community in the disaster management plan. Some 68.89% of the participants contemplated that the local community involvement in disaster management should be at all the stages, whereas a small number (11.11%) had a belief that the local community involvement in disaster management should be at the stage of Preparation and Planning. Almost equal number of participants (15.56%) agreed upon the local community involvement in disaster management during the

stage of implementation. A very small number (4.44%), considered the local community involvement in disaster management at the stage of Rehabilitation. Approximately 43% of participants contemplated TVs and radios as the best way to involve the local community in disaster management. On the other hand, 38% of participants believed in Training sessions as the best way to involve the local community in disaster management. Almost 13% of participants considered print and electronic media, notices, newspapers and pamphlets to be the best way to involve the local community in disaster management. A small number (7%) of participants claimed that there should be some other methods to involve the local community in disaster management. However, they could not identify the best method suited for their claim.

CONCLUSION

It is obvious that the community should be involved in managing the disaster and rehabilitation efforts positively. The community members were found to play a key role in all the stages of disaster management. It was also revealed that the dependency results from lack of involvement of the local community in the disaster plan.

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