

appropriate emergency preparedness programme; (b) Those who first respond to an emergency come from within the community. When transport and communications are disrupted, an external emergency response may not arrive for days ; (c) Resources are most easily pooled at the community level and every community possesses capabilities. Failure to exploit these capabilities is poor resource management ; (d) Sustained development is best achieved by allowing emergency-affected communities to design, manage, and implement internal and external assistance programme (6).

Disaster preparedness is an on-going multisectoral activity. It forms an integral part of the national system responsible for developing plans and programmes for disaster management, prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The system, known by a variety of names depending on the country, depends on the coordination of a variety of sectors to carry out the following tasks (4) :

1. Evaluate the risk of the country or particular region to disaster ;
2. Adopt standards and regulations ;
3. Organize communication, information and warning systems ;
4. Ensure coordination and response mechanisms ;
5. Adopt measures to ensure that financial and other resources are available for increased readiness and can be mobilized in disaster situation ;
6. Develop public education programmes ;
7. Coordinate information sessions with news media ; and
8. Organize disaster simulation exercises that test response mechanisms.

The emergency preparedness and emergency management do not exist in a vacuum. To succeed, emergency programmes must be appropriate to their context. This context will vary from country to country and from community to community.

Policy development (6)

The policy development is "the formal statement of a course of action". Policy is strategic in nature and performs the following functions :

- (a) establish long-term goals;
- (b) assign responsibilities for achieving goals;
- (c) establish recommended work practice; and
- (d) determine criteria for decision making.

While policies tend to be "top-down" that is authorized by higher levels, implementation of the strategies that arise from a policy tend to be "bottom-up", with the higher levels assisting lower levels. The form of emergency preparedness policy varies from country to country. Six sectors are required for response and recovery strategies. These sectors are communication, health, social welfare, police and security, search and rescue and transport.

Personal protection in different types of emergencies (6)

In addition to considering action by rescuers, thought must be given to personal protection measures in different types of emergencies. Making people aware of what is

expected of them in case of an emergency can make large difference to the organized management efforts. By taking precautions, the individual assists the collective effort to reduce the effects of an emergency.

A number of measures must be observed by all persons in all types of emergency:

- Do not use the telephone, except to call for help, so as to leave telephone lines free for the organization of response.
- Listen to the messages broadcast by radio and the various media so as to be informed of development.
- Carry out the official instructions given over the radio or by loudspeaker.
- Keep a family emergency kit ready.

In all the different types of emergency, it is better:

- to be prepared than to get hurt;
- to get information so as to get organized;
- to wait rather than act too hastily.

FLOODS

What to do before-hand

While town planning is a government responsibility, individuals should find out about risks in the area where they live. For example, people who live in areas downstream from a dam should know the special signals (such as foghorns) used when a dam threatens to break. Small floods can be foreseen by watching the water level after heavy rains and regularly listening to the weather forecasts.

Forecasting of floods or tidal waves is very difficult, but hurricanes and cyclones often occur at the same time of year, when particular vigilance must be exercised. They are often announced several hours or days before they arrive.

During a flood

- Turn off the electricity to reduce the risk of electrocution.
- Protect people and property:
 - as soon as the flood begins, take any vulnerable people (children, the old, the sick, and the disabled) to an upper floor;
 - whenever possible, move personal belongings upstairs or go to raised shelters provided for use in floods.
- Beware of water contamination - if the taste, colour, or smell of the water is suspicious, it is vital to use some means of purification.
- Evacuate danger zones as ordered by the local authorities it is essential to comply strictly with the evacuation advice given. Authorities will recommend that families take with them the emergency supplies they have prepared.

After a flood

When a flood is over, it is important that people do not return home until told to do so by the local authorities, who will have ensured that buildings have not been undermined by water. From then on it is essential to:

- wait until the water is declared safe before drinking any that is untreated;
- clean and disinfect any room that has been flooded;
- sterilize or wash with boiling water all dishes and kitchen utensils;
- get rid of any food that has been in or near the water,