



HUMANITARIAN

Humanitarian aid is material or logistical assistance provided for humanitarian purposes, typically in response to humanitarian crises including natural disaster and man-made disaster. The primary objective of humanitarian aid is to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain human dignity¹.

Response

A comprehensive disaster management and crisis response plan is essential to rescue the fatalities in collateral damage and control the extent of economic down turn. A unified and coherent national disaster management plan needs to be developed that would facilitate in dealing with a variety of crisis scenarios. The response phase includes mobilization of necessary emergency services and first responders in disaster prone areas. This would include the first wave of core emergency services.



The response services can be also conducted as military operations, this is termed Disaster Relief Operation and then it can be followed up by what is known as a Non-combatant evacuation operation (NEO). A number of secondary emergency team such as specialist rescue team may also be involved.



A well-rehearsed emergency plans must be developed as a part of the preparedness phase enables efficient coordination of rescue². When required a search and rescue efforts commence at an early stage. Depending upon the extent of the damage vast majority of those affected can get immediate response. Not only government, but



other private organizations may also involve themselves during the initial phases in terms of providing medical support. Moreover, multiple response saves in protecting and promoting a community's ability to engage in its own development and effective response also aims to reduce risk of future crises.

Relief

Disaster relief (or emergency management) refers to the process of responding to a catastrophic situation, providing aid to persons and communities who have suffered from some form of disaster. It involves dealing with and avoiding risks and preparing, supporting, and rebuilding society when natural or human-made disasters occur. In general, any



emergency management is the continuous process by which all individuals, groups, and communities manage hazards in an effort to avoid or limit the impact of disasters resulting from the hazards. Actions taken depend in part on perceptions of risk of those exposed. Effective emergency management relies on thorough integration of emergency plans at all levels of government and non-government involvement. Activities at each level (individual, group, community) affect the



other levels. It is common to place the responsibility for governmental emergency management with the institutions for civil defense or within the conventional structure of the emergency services.

Disaster relief is the money or services made available to individuals and

communities that have experienced losses due to disasters such as floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, drought, tornadoes, and riots³. Relief work is the earliest stages of crisis support and provides infrastructures for resettlement, shelter and governing sectors. Immediate and long term support in situations of crisis will facilitate in promoting greater understanding of and commitment to a Relief-development approach in disaster.

Most countries have agencies that coordinate disaster relief and planning. Many have statutes that define appropriate procedures for disaster declarations and emergency orders. Such statutes also empower relief agencies to utilize local resources, commandeer private property, and arrange for temporary housing during an emergency.

Recovery

The recovery process during a disaster is a complex, unwieldy, routinely involving many different needs, interest and abilities. This is a matter of grave importance in any hazard prone country, especially after a disaster, but seldom attracted attention of disaster management analysts.



When a disaster strikes the recovery process must be a long-term commitment. Financial constraint is a major issue in a recovery process. Recovery is frequently understood in the general public view as consisting primarily in the physical reconstruction of facilities and basic services. However, rapid and poorly considered reconstruction recreates the very conditions of vulnerability that expose people to the possibilities of future loss. In fact, the challenges lie in restoring individual livelihoods.

Therefore, it is important to learn from past experiences in recovering from disasters. Such experiences in their description, analysis, generalization and resulting plans for action can stimulate and engage more people individually, or

work as an entire community and learn lessons from the information that has been acquired. Moreover, there can be individual factors in each disaster that relate to a particular society and hence can provide a useful solution for the recovery process.

Finally, recovery process has two primary areas of learning; reducing risk in recovery that is understanding the issues involving the recovery process and organizing recovery which proceeds into managing operational responsibilities involved. However, there are other important aspects as well that are applicable in wider development principles such as gender equality, widespread public participation etc and they form an important part of the recovery process.

Reconstruction

Reconstruction begins the day of the disaster. Therefore, one of the principal challenges of the policy maker is to work quickly to establish the policy basis for reconstruction, while taking time to confer with stakeholders and plan the reconstruction properly. Reconstruction policy needs to be defined in five principal areas:

- Institutional Strategy
- Financial Strategy
- Community Participation Approach
- Reconstruction Approach
- Risk Management



The following sections summarize the key policy issues within each of the components of the reconstruction policy.

Institutional Strategy

People make reconstruction happen, but they will act mostly through different types of organizations. Beginning with government itself, one of the most critical early steps for the policy maker is to identify who will do what and how the numerous organizations that may be involved in reconstruction will work together.

A second critical set of decisions has to do with the rules under which reconstruction will take place, that is, what are the laws, regulations, and institutional arrangements, both formal and informal, that will apply and will regulate what reconstruction agencies do. For instance, will projects be subject to existing building codes or environmental law, or will exceptions be made? How will nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) be involved, and how formal should their agreements to provide assistance to affected communities be? The institutional strategy must also evaluate the capabilities of the organizations involved and decide how their activities will be coordinated. What reconstruction responsibilities will local governments handle, for instance, and how will they report back? Whether an effective, coordinated institutional strategy is established, and is then monitored and adjusted as reconstruction proceeds, can determine the success or failure of the entire reconstruction program.

Financial Strategy

Without financial resources, there will of course be no reconstruction. But a shortage of resources is not the greatest risk in managing the financial aspects of reconstruction. Greater risks are found in the lack of control of financial resources and in the lack of effectiveness of the resources that are spent. Most of the resources spent on reconstruction are not-government. Yet once they are pledged to the reconstruction effort, good post-disaster financial management requires that these commitments be taken into consideration in planning and that their expenditure be tracked. This points out once again the importance of coordination among agencies involved in reconstruction, as well as the need for systems that will permit accurate programming and tracking of expenditures, no matter the funding source.

Resources must not only be mobilized, programmed, and tracked, but some must be allocated and delivered directly to those affected by the disaster. For this population, the design and execution of the assistance strategy for housing is their principal concern and may be the sole metric by which they evaluate the policy framework, since it is the decision that will most directly affect them. Yet for the policy maker, this is, in fact, a complex set of decisions that have social, economic, and logistical implications. The assistance strategy must be tailor-made to the

country and the disaster, and take into account existing social policy, as well the social equity and development objectives established for reconstruction. Lastly, preventing the misuse of resources must be a priority of policy makers, and anticorruption measures must be planned for and implemented throughout the reconstruction process.

Community Participation Approach

What is the role of affected communities in reconstruction and who decides on that role? Government cannot control what people do after a disaster, but the reconstruction policy can establish an approach to communication and interaction with affected communities that puts them in the centre, capitalizing on the community members' wisdom, experience, and energy, or, alternatively, an approach that frustrates and dis-empowers all involved. Engagement with affected communities begins with communication, and a two-way consultative form of communication is strongly encouraged. Affected communities should have the opportunity to participate in policy making, including in the institutional and financial elements described above. Working "as a community" in reconstruction will be a foreign concept in many places, and there can be capture of these processes and the resources that are provided. Therefore, facilitation and oversight are critical to ensuring that community-based efforts are effective, properly governed, and truly participatory.

Reconstruction Approach

If reconstruction begins the day of the disaster, what does it mean for government to define the reconstruction approach? This element of reconstruction policy addresses how physical reconstruction will be carried out at the community level, starting with the important issue of the role of affected households in the actual reconstruction. Depending on the respective roles of households and reconstruction agencies, different forms of support will be needed, whether it is finance, training, or community facilitation. One critical issue that the reconstruction policy must address is whether transitional shelter will be provided to affected households. Transitional shelter can smooth the transition from disaster to permanent housing, but it has difficult cost and logistical implications that must be analyzed.

The reconstruction policy may need to create incentives to ensure the coordination of housing and infrastructure reconstruction. It will absolutely need to establish the goal of improving the safety of rebuilt housing and infrastructure, starting with defining standards to reduce the vulnerability to future hazards for all reconstructed and repaired housing and establishing the means for implementing these standards as broadly as possible. This must apply to housing built with public reconstruction funds, and should ideally extend to all rebuilt and repaired or retrofitted housing, no matter the funding source. In some cases, risk reduction will imply relocation of households or entire communities, and the policy must define the conditions for this. Again, coordination among agencies on these issues is key, so that households cannot circumvent the safety standards by seeking an alternative funding source.

Land use is almost always a difficult issue in reconstruction, and the reconstruction policy should anticipate this. The issues that may arise include, among others, (1) the need to replan land uses for housing and infrastructure, (2) the demand for tenure security, (3) the need for land for reconstruction, and (4) price escalation of land⁴. In countries with extensive informal settlements and poor land administration and land use planning, solving these problems can hold up reconstruction. The policy should identify solutions or at least the means of reaching them.

Risk Management

Finally, the reconstruction policy must ensure proper risk management in a number of areas, including (1) governance and corruption risk, (2) environmental risk, (3) disaster risk reduction, and (4) social risk⁴. This is a disparate set of risks, but they share the common characteristic that poorly managing them during reconstruction can result in unforeseen or undesirable outcomes, delays, and loss of credibility for the individuals and institutions involved. These risks can be anticipated and measures can be taken to reduce vulnerability to them. This begins with establishing a culture of risk management in reconstruction and ensuring that tools to analyze and mitigate risks are widely understood and diligently applied.

References

- ¹ http://saarc-sadkn.org/theme_social_hospital.aspx#
- ² <http://emergency.oregonstate.edu/emergencymanagement>
- ³ http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Disaster_relief
- ⁴ <http://buildingtrustinternational.org/SaferHomesStrongerCommunitites.pdf>