



Improving Preparations for Post-Disaster Relief

By: Garima Kaushal

Old Dominion University, Model United Nations Society

"A disaster exposes the cumulative implications of many earlier decisions, some taken individually, others collectively, and a few by default,"...."A deeper questioning of what happened, and why, could prevent a repetition of disasters. Several factors usually contribute to any disaster, some less obvious than others."

- "Natural Hazards, UnNatural Disasters: The Economics of Effective Prevention."

Introduction

What is a natural disaster? Is it simply "any event or force of nature that has catastrophic consequences, such as avalanche, earthquake, flood, forest fire, hurricane, lightning, tornado, tsunami, and volcanic eruption"? To the victims, such definitions do not carry a lot of importance. But for the international community, struggling to prioritize and prepare, definitions are vital. Without them, planning is very difficult. The international community has established a strong record of responding to international disasters, such as the:

- Kobe earthquake of 1995
- Indian Ocean tsunami of 26 December 2004
- United States Hurricane Katrina, August 2005
- Haiti earthquake of 10 January 2010
- Pakistan floods of July-August 2010
- Japanese tsunami of 11 March 2011

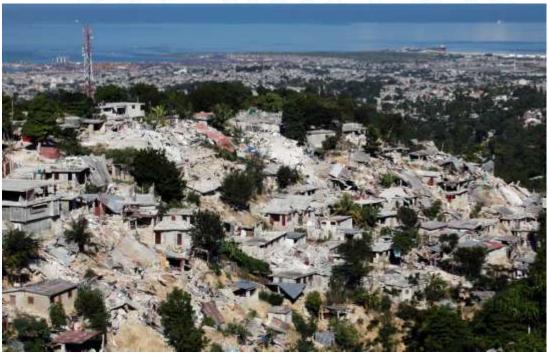
These events and others like them caused tens of thousands, some hundreds of thousands of deaths, and far greater numbers of victims badly hurt or homeless.

But responding well requires preparation. And preparation raises the hope of anticipating, being ready to respond quickly and effectively. All this requires information about what happened and what was the impact. But such information often is inadequate. After the Haiti earthquake, estimates of the dead alone (not including injured or homeless) ranged from 100,000 to 325,000. Without high quality assessments, aid risks being too little. Or aid may be too much, which means opportunities to help needy victims elsewhere were lost.

¹ http://www.nytimes.com/cwire/2010/11/11/11climatewire-un-and-world-bank-report-says-act-now-or-pay-67256.html?pagewanted=all

² http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/earthquake





To the people in disaster prone areas, one part of any definition carries more weight: catastrophic consequences. It is extremely hard to recuperate from an earthquake, a tsunami, an avalanche or a flood. They destroy and ruin lives. A natural disaster rarely gives any prior notice of its arrival. But one thing is definite; no one can stop a disaster from ruining the lives of millions. One can only follow disaster preparedness. Only so much preparation can be done for something so unannounced. That is when post-disaster relief helps people get out of such conditions. Organizations and countries, in the past, have pledged money and human aid at such times. Organizations such as the International Red Cross, United Nations, CARE, World Vision etc. help the people in need, and keep up the hope.

Planning for complex natural emergencies sounds easy, except the international community is poorly organized for the kind of collective action it requires. Instead, international organizations, governments and non-governmental organizations are independently empowered and financed. They often have legal mandates that require them to act independently. And there are serious tensions and suspicions that inhibit cooperation between them. Overcoming these difficulties will be a major challenge for the United Nations World Conference on Disaster Relief and Prevention (WCDRP).

History

Every time any major natural disaster occurs, it not only affects the life of people in the area, but also affects international affairs. Thinking from an international perspective, the reactions of

various countries and organizations impacts their relations with the others. People are only dependent on one contribution: Post- Disaster relief. This contribution has helped save lives of so many people in the recent past. Center for American Progress reports that the U.S. Congress alone spent about USD 136 billion on disaster relief 2011-2013. That sounds like a lot, but when broken down per household per year, it only amounts to USD 400 dollars per household per year.³ And this is exclusively for domestic activity. The United States allocates much less for international activity.

The Haiti Earthquake of January 2010, a 7.0 magnitude earthquake, exposed the strength of international goodwill and weakness of actual capabilities. It does take one major event to bring people together. Where, on one hand, families were being separated in Haiti, on the other hand, the world was coming together to send help to these same families and everyone else who had suffered nature's wrath. USD 200 million were raised within a few days. Yet this was highly insufficient and could not stop the after effects of earthquake, including enormous suffering. Nor could it help with long-term recovery, such as rebuilding destroyed cities. Haiti hit rock bottom again when cholera broke out, apparently imported inadvertently by Brazilian peacekeepers. By December 2010, about USD \$10.2 billion had been pledged to Haiti. That money could have been used to employ people, build trees, get the government back on track, but sadly, not a lot of that actually happened. Only 2 percent of the rubble had been cleaned, and only 116,000 people were employed. Pre-earthquake Haiti already had a population of about 9.8 million, half of which was unemployed. Post- earthquake made it worse.

So what came out of the Haiti Earthquake? What lessons were learned? Were lessons even learned, or did the world think that they had perfectly aided Haiti in their relief efforts? According to an article in Foreign Policy, five very important lessons were learned:

- "Jobs are everything": People need food water and shelter, and until they find a job, someone has to fund all three.
- "Don't Starve the Government": Government is very important, because at the end of the day, if the government is content, it will try to keep the people content. About \$2 Billion Humanitarian aid was pledged, out of which, about 0.3 percent is with the local authorities. Some say the government is corrupt, but at the same time, there is no technology, and personnel for that matter, to track the aid, and make a working budget out of that.
- "Give them something to go home to": By December, about 1.3 million Haitians were living in tents. But they did not want to go back home. Why? because most of them did not own homes before. They just rented homes, and had to pay a high price for that and other medical and education benefits. Going back home meant going back to the old conditions, whereas, they were being provided with medical relief and a shelter through these tents.

³ http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/04/29/the-government-is-spending-way-more-on-disaster-relief-than-anybody-thought/

⁴ http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/01/12/haiti-earthquake-relief-h n 421014.html

⁵ http://www.givewell.org/international/disaster-relief/haiti-earthquake

⁶ http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/11/29/5 lessons from haitis disaster

- "Waste not, want not": Sadly, all the money pledged never makes its way through to where it is needed. From all the money that was pledged, merely USD 732.5 million made their way through to help by December 2010. It is hard when the whole world is recovering from a financial crash, but it is as frustrating for the people in need.
- "Relief is the easy part": There is a difference between relief and reconstruction. Giving 1.1 million people access to drinking water, or building 11,000 latrines is nowhere close to rebuilding Haiti. Yes, building schools, and providing medical facilities is an important part in rebuilding a country. But the most important part is economic growth. That is rebuilding, relief is merely giving temporary access to permanent needs.⁷

The Haiti Earthquake was a major turning point in the post-earthquake relief practices. It set new standards for post-earthquake relief based on the recent price hikes and recent demands of the public. It brought back into the light the monetary gap between the rich countries and the poor countries. The current situation of post-earthquake relief actions is based off of the Haiti earthquake. It was this earthquake that made the international community realized that relief efforts that were being made were not enough or well organized.

Another major recent disaster took place in Pakistan in 2010. The floods of 2010 were also a big turning point in the history of post-disaster relief. It brought the world closer. On 29 July 2010, about 10 inches of rain fell in the largest city in Pakistan, Peshawar. About 2,000 people drowned and about 20 million were displaced.⁸ About a month later, IMF issued its statement regarding the flood. The IMF stated that this flood is a huge economic challenge to the Pakistani government and the world. About 6.5 million acres of crops were washed away, and a fifth of the country was underwater. The National Disaster Management Authority estimated that nearly one million houses suffered damage (or were either washed away). The Punjab government stated that about USD 1.3 billion were needed for immediate relief. The UN appealed for about USD 459 million, only to cover the first 90 days of disaster. This is a good example of how a massive disaster can keeps on taking its toll way after the event itself. People's houses and livelihood were gone, and it is extrordinarilly difficult to recover from the shock and depravation. It is not only difficult for the victims, but also the government, which is usually considered as the 'responsible adult' who is expected to help people recover, financially and mentally.⁹ Japanese Tsunami of 11 March 2011 was another such event. One of the main concerns was the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power facilities, where four power-generation reactors were badly damaged in this Tsunami. This was a turning point because it taught yet another lesson to the authorities. Chemical effects of a disaster are often overlooked in cases of floods or earthquakes. But in this case, the after-effects required dealing with long-term nuclear dangers. Showing the need for versatility in post-disaster relief, the UN International Atomic Energy Agency was also heavily involved in the same. 10

dyn/content/article/2011/02/13/AR2011021302479 2.html?sid=ST2011021302562

⁷ http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/11/29/5 lessons from haitis disaster

⁸ http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-

http://www.radionz.co.nz/news/world/54885/pakistan-floods-seen-as-massive-economic-challenge-imf

¹⁰ http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?newsid=37762&cr=japan#.UkUv0laTjF8

Some other important disasters that served as the turning point in the history of disaster preparedness and disaster relief are: Christmas Tsunami of 2004, the Kobe earthquake of 1995, the Cyclone Nargis (Myanmar) in 2008, and the Indian floods in 2013.

Current Situation

Events like Haiti earthquake and Pakistani flood set standards for preparedness and relief for the future disasters. Not only did these teach people a lesson about pre-disaster preparedness, but also post-disaster relief. Countries globally have started being more equipped as far as permanent needs like water and food are considered. UN passed some statements, and NGO's and other organizations have apparently given more time and preparation for natural disasters, such as an earthquake. Issues that require resolution include:

- For all its importance, disaster relief must compete for resources with more traditional long-term development aid.
- Governments prefer to control their emergency resources and prefer to hoard for possible domestic emergencies rather than actual foreign ones.
- Planning is essential to insure better readiness and prompt responses. But planning typically is not combined with authority to insure recommendations are implemented.
- Long-term reliable pledges of financial, material and logistical support, fulfilled by governments and NGOs, are essential to better relief. Governments tend to find it easier to pledge than actually give.
- NGOs are suspicious of governments, with whole they often have antagonistic relationships, and often seek to avoid their authority.

Managing such tensions is the reason the United Nations was created. But will governments and NGOs be willing to cooperate to insure greater success in the future?

Role of the United Nations and Landmark UN resolutions

UN and other NGO's such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent have taken actions to battle the issues mentioned above. United Nations, post Haiti, launched their largest ever appeal for that earthquake. About USD 1.5 billion was immediately called out for 11. Since a similar action was never taken before, people, and in fact the UN never realized that it was capable of something that huge. One thing it certainly did was increase the authority and the integrity of the UN in the eyes of the world. After Haiti, came the Guatemalan earthquake in 2012, but enough lessons were learned earlier, and that definitely helped in making relief efforts better for Guatemala. UN and other IO's helped people get access to the basic needs. The basic United Nations body for responding to complex emergencies is The UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). Like all UN agencies, it relies on UN member states for support. 12 While the UN Secretary-General has the authority to direct CERF to assist in

¹¹ http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=33815#.UgiFiJislw5

http://www.iom.int/cms/en/sites/iom/home/news-and-views/press-briefing-notes/pbn-2012/pbn-listing/uncerf-backs-post-earthquake-re.html

emergencies, there is no independent mechanism for getting CERF engaged. CERF also suffers from relatively limited budgets and capabilities. It depends on donor countries for logistical support and stockpiling facilities, for example.

In 2011, the United Nations and the World Bank conducted a joint study that concluded "Annual monetary losses for natural disasters are expected to rise to \$185 billion worldwide by the end of the century, even without factoring in the anticipated negative impacts of climate change." This means that when climate change is considered along with other factors, the global annual losses will go up by about USD 28 billion to about USD 64 billion. But if governments put logical thought into it, and go ahead and take some preventative steps and change their infrastructure for the better, those mortality rates can be highly reduced, and for a lot cheaper than the losses mentioned above. Post-disaster cleanup will be lesser and easier. ¹³ There is only so much that the UN and other IO's and NGO's can do. Until the country governments take some major steps, the UN and every outside force have limited decision making and helping capacity. The UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) was "was approved by consensus by the United Nations General Assembly on 15 December 2005 to achieve the following objectives: promote early action and response to reduce loss of life; enhance response to time-critical requirements; strengthen core elements of humanitarian response in underfunded crises."14 CERF makes sure that the funds are allocated appropriately, to where they are needed the most. Usually the most experienced UN organizations and NGOs get the most funds from CERF. 15

The United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC), is another vital organ for disaster relief. Funding and donations during the post disaster recuperation are very important. Another part is manpower. How should one put the donations to use? How much disaster did the disaster really cause? UNDAC is what covers that side of the disaster relief. Specialized teams are sent, free of charge, to the affected countries within 12 to 48 hours of request. These are very learned and equipped team members who assess the disaster and assist in recovery. When a disaster strikes, a lot of NGO's come together and send in their donations. Many countries are willing to donate money. There are a lot of other humanitarian agencies who also help after disasters. Who coordinates these organizations and agencies? That is where the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) comes in. It gets together the major humanitarian organizations from outside the UN, and within the UN as well. The Emergency Relief Coordinator chairs this committee, and this progresses the various relief policies, coordinates agreement on the division of responsibilities among the organizations, and makes sure that the process is as effective as can be. ¹⁷

The International Committee of the Red Cross and Red Crescent (ICRC), the parent organization of national groups like the American Red Cross, started in a major new disaster relief program in 2011. The ICRC plays a model role for many NGOs; they tend to follow its initiatives. If the

http://www.nytimes.com/cwire/2010/11/11/11climatewire-un-and-world-bank-report-says-act-now-or-pay-67256.html?pagewanted=all

¹⁴ http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a2d00606.html

http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a2d00606.html

http://www.unocha.org/what-we-do/coordination-tools/undac/overview

http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/humanitarian/

ICRC will commit to a new global system of emergency relief planning and preparedness, others can be expected to follow.

Leading Countries

One common action has been taken as a part of 2010 realization (post the earthquake and the flood) of the importance of natural disasters. That common action is better preparedness and attempts at making food and water more accessible. If one is prepared enough or not is never found out until after the disaster strikes, and unfortunately, preparedness is never enough.

The United States has taken many actions for domestic emergency response since the disaster of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, which exposed widespread incompetence among federal and state agencies. The government is better equipped domestically as far as funds are considered. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) had a major hand in spreading more knowledge about earthquakes. As far as donations are considered, the problem is never the amount of funds; the issue is the accessibility of funds. One thing that can be done is increasing appropriations for at least the national disaster fund. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has also taken similar actions. EPA made information about the post-earthquake debris clean up and removal information more widely available. But one thing is for sure, the more one can prepare the better. Less has been done to support international assistance. Much of the American public remains skeptical and often hostile to the needs of foreigners.

China was influenced by its 2008 Sichuan earthquake, long before Haiti. It was after that earthquake that China started to improvise their disaster reduction awareness and capacity. A rescue team by the name of Sichuan Provincial Rescue Team was established. In 2009, May 12 was designated as the nation's Disaster Reduction Day. Statistics show that more than 1,200 counties and 500 communities held disaster reduction training sessions on last year's Disaster Reduction Day. After the Wenchuan quake, risk prevention and disaster reduction became compulsory courses in local schools. Emergency evacuation, fire prevention and earthquake rescue exercises are regularly held in schools. China not only improved its post-disaster relief plan, but went a step ahead and improved their earthquake preparedness. It also has begun to show more willingness to help finance international activity.

¹⁸ http://tremor.nmt.edu/faq/prepare.html

http://www.epa.gov/naturaldisasters/earthquakes.html#after_earthquake

²⁰ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-05/06/c_13862621.htm

²¹ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-05/06/c 13862621.htm

In Germany, disaster and post disaster management was considered a public task, more like a central task, until the task was shifted to the 16 states, or the Lander. According to B. Domres, HH Schauwecker, K Rohrmann, G Roller, GW Maier, and A. Manger, the authors of The German Approach to Emergency/Disaster Management:

[a] lot of official and private relief organizations are responsible for the execution of disaster relief tasks. In Germany the following organizations exist: Official (GO): Technisches Hilfswerk (THW/Federal Technical Support Service), Feuerwehren (Fire Brigades/professionals and volunteers) Academie of Emergency Planning and Civil Defense Private (NGO): Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Deutschland (ASB/Workers' Samaritan Association Germany), Deutsche Gesellschaft zur Rettung Schiffbruchiger (DGzRS, German Lifesaving Association), Deutsches Rotes Kreuz (DRK/German Red Cross), Johanniter-Unfall-Hilfe (JUH/St. John's Ambulance), Malteser Hilfsdienst (MEID/Maltese-Relief-Organization). ASB, DRK, JUH and MHD are specialized in the field of rescue, medical and welfare services and medical disaster relief. 80% of the German rescue service and 95% of the German disaster medical relief are realized by these NGO's. NGO's and GO's employ more than 1.2 million volunteers and approximately 100,000 professionals. Rescue service is carried out by professionals, disaster relief by volunteers. The German constitution allows to call the federal army in case of disaster, to support the disaster relief organizations (for example: flood Oder River 1997, train-crash "ICE" 1998).²²

France has its disaster management planned out by division into different levels. But as a nation, at the national level, the Minister of the Interior is the more responsible figurehead. He/she is the one who sets up and makes the rescue measure plans and also brings together the various emergency resources "coming under the State, territorial communities and public establishments throughout the territory. He is assisted by the defense senior civil servants and the Interdepartmental Crisis Management Operations Centre in fulfilling his task of coordinating emergency resources."²³

Russia's national disaster management is controlled by the National Crisis Management Center (NCMS). This center is a Federal State Budgetary Institution, and is the main body of the Russian Unified System of Prevention and Elimination of Emergency Situations. It was established in 2008. According to the EMERCOM (the Ministry of the Russian Federation for Civil Defense, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters), one of the many tasks of the NCMS is "the acceleration and optimization of emergency response activities with the use of modern technologies."

All of these countries have different ways of dealing with the post disaster activities and funding. One of the more important factors in the global post-earthquake relief is the aid from NGO's and IO's. Organizations mentioned above have been very active in getting funding and getting donations for the people in need.

http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11117024

http://ec.europa.eu/echo/civil protection/civil/vademecum/fr/2-fr-1.html

But these countries, and a lot of other major powers of the world, do have one common thing about their disaster relief programs, their dependence on United Nations. With the assistance from the World Food Programme (WFP) and Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), UN is able to feed the starving people. Along with these, UNICEF and World Health Organization are also very helpful in recovery assistance, especially anywhere where medical help is needed.

Preparedness is essential to decrease the post disaster chaos. If preparedness leads to proper

Conclusion

evacuation, a lot of lives can be saved. But at the same time, a natural disaster still leads to destruction of the land it strikes. Along with the aid from various internal and external organizations mentioned throughout this brief, the whole structure of the UN is effective in disaster relief. But organizing the system is difficult, without a single authority in control. The often chaotic combination of UN agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and state (national) emergency response agencies makes organization extremely difficult. Planning for complex humanitarian emergencies often is based mostly on tacit knowledge, on the shared experiences of aid and emergency preparedness of officials around the world, used to working together in various situations. They often know each other informally and anticipate each other's capabilities and priorities. But just as often they face situations their individual organizations are too small to address themselves, for which large-scale cooperation is essential and slow in coming.

The lack of a central planning authority makes efficient response hard. With global relief and preparedness resources dividing among so many relatively small actors, coordination is essential. But it often is impossible to arrange. Many governments do not like to cooperate with each other; many regard the United Nations as a preachy nuisance. Others dislike working with nongovernmental organizations. Virtually all actors—UN, state and NGO—prefer informal cooperation rather than losing authority and control.

Planning is essential to insure efficient use of resources. Planning involves prioritizing which emergences to respond to first, which agencies are responsible when, and what to keep in reserve. All planning requires authority to be effective. But few relief actors are willing to surrender such control. Many government agencies are extremely jealous of such power, which they insist on monopolizing themselves. Many are worried that international authority will be viewed critically by their governments and voters.

Country positions are heavily influenced by these concerns: The United States, most Middle East countries and some Asian governments are especially worried about such loss of sovereign control. Others, especially European, some African and most Latin American countries, have fewer reservations about advanced planning and allocation of responsibilities, although they insist it be done well.

Figure 2. Major relief Non-Governmental Originations (NGOs)

Organization	annual income (million USD)	annual spending (million USD)	transparency on disaster relief activities	transparency on everyday activities
American Red Cross	479.0	245.0	Slightly above average	Average
Americares	16.2	4.8	Slightly above average	Average
CARE	45.0	23.2	Average	Average
Catholic Relief Services	196.0	62.7	Average	Average
Direct Relief International	6.3	2.6	Above average	Above average
Doctors Without Borders (MSF)	134.9	102.5	Above average	Above average
Feed The Children	1.2	1.2	Slightly above average	Average
Food for the Poor	20.7	20.7	Average	Average
Habitat for Humanity International	20.5	13.0	Average	Average
Heifer International	1.9	1.0	Average	Average
International Federation of the Red Cross	1,147.9	280.3	Average	Average
International Medical Corps	6.7	4.1	Average	Average
International Rescue Committee	13.1	5.1	Average	Average
Islamic Relief USA	2.5	1.7	Average	Average
Mercy Corps	16.8	5.1	Average	Average
Oxfam	98.0	68.0	Average	Average
Partners in Health	81.8	25.4	Above average	Above average
<u>PSI</u>	0.4	0.3	Average	Strong
Salvation Army	48.0	17.0	Average	Average
Save the Children	87.0	52.2	Average	Average
UNICEF	300.0	112.0	Average	Average
United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR)	43.1	3.6	Average	Average
United Way	3.9	0.7	Average	Average
World Food Programme	461.0	Unknown	Average	Above average
World Vision	192.0	60.0	Average	Average
<u>Yéle</u>	13.9	Unknown	Average	Average

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