

Mental Health Impacts of Recurrent Flooding: Evidence from *Bahraich* district, Uttar Pradesh*

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Key words: mental health, flood, depression, anxiety

The physical health impacts of extreme events, especially infections, pattern of injuries, mortality and morbidity trends are now well known, well studied and recognized. The impact of such events on the mental health, especially in Asian countries are less well explored and recognized.

With this background, mental health impacts of flooding in the case of Bahraich district of Uttar Pradesh will be discussed. Bahraich is flooded every year due to heavy discharge of water in the river Ghaghra. This flooding leads to large scale damage to property in the form of land erosion, complete destruction of the household and damage to livelihood. Apart from constituting an extreme experience, the flood disrupts social functioning of both victims and their social networks. The combination of a collective extreme experience and the collapse of social networks predisposes the community to an increase of mental health problems and impaired functioning.

Our study used different indicators of mental health: Hopkins Symptom Checklist-25 for measuring symptoms of depression and anxiety, the Mental Health Indicator-5 for measuring the general mental health and the SF-12 for measuring social functioning. The study collected data from flood affected and non flood affected population of Bahraich. There was a vast negative impact of the recurrent floods in Bahraich district on mental health outcomes. There were large to very large differences between the flood affected group and the control group on anxiety, depression and total distress. Further, compared to the control group, the flood affected group scored lower on functioning and especially low on domains of psychological functioning. The present paper tries to interpret the results of the mental health study in the light of qualitative data collected through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and interviews in the field. Our study reveals that the primary stressors were economic factors such as loss of land, crop, livelihood and assets leading to food and job insecurity. Furthermore, due to superficial state support, the families were forced to seek for private loan which resulted in long term indebtedness.

Psychosocial Response in Mumbai Train Blast through Intervention in Schools

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Context: Mumbai has been target for various human made disasters in past decades and the event of serial blast in 2006 in the local trains was one of the worse incidents. The impact was so severe that many school reported an immediate dropout in attendance, fear among the children, thoughts of re-occurrence and subsequent deterioration in the academic performance. Therefore, JRC⁶ Unit of IRCS⁷ Maharastra State Branch with support of American Red Cross proposed to work in the schools throughout the railway tracks near to the sites of blasts.

Objectives: The objective of this intervention was to facilitate ventilation and ensure regaining confidence among the children in the schools.

Methodology: In the first phase following the needs assessment 108 local volunteers and teachers from the 28 target schools were trained to work with the children. Further, all the trained teachers conducted multiple sessions with the children that has been evaluated to understand the impact by using qualitative method.

Findings: The children are most open to talk about their concerns that were not possible for them to express otherwise in home. Mostly, the children were discouraged to talk about the incidents of blast by the parents, teacher by assuming that talking about the incident will cause more worries and hatred about communities that may impact the normal behaviour. Through different creative expressive activities children were able to express the worries and also dealing with the same.

The analysis of the drawings showed that event of flood and train blast both were horrifying experience and in the initial drawing all the children expressed helplessness. In latter stage children were able to talk about solving the problem by strengthening community ties, being prepared or being knowledgeable about the dangers.

Conclusion: Strengthening the capacity of the school community to deal psychosocial support that help to build the confidence among the children should be done on regular basis.

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Psychological Risk-analysis of Terrorism

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The forecasting of a disaster occurring in a country is highly uncertain, but the level of risk involved can be ascertained especially when it is a matter of human lives. Risk is simply a product of the magnitude of vulnerabilities and the associated cost. Although, enough consideration is given to the social, economic and political consequences of a disaster, but little attention is paid to the risks and their psychological impact on citizens. Life threatening events viz. 26/11 terrorist attack, Gujarat serial bombings, Varanasi blasts, medical contagion like Swine flu or Avian flu, Tsunami, Civil riots etc. create havoc in the minds of the people and their psychological well-being is further marred by the situational uncertainty as well as the information vacuum from the side of the civil administration. In such a scenario, it is imperative to understand the perceived risk levels of the individuals along with the feelings of intense insecurity in terms of their susceptibility to the risks, especially with reference to Terrorism. Paper attempts to highlight the psychological impact of terrorism and the process of Psychological Risk-analysis involving three aspects, namely 1) Risk perception and Characterization by the use of risk matrix, 2) Risk communication, and 3) Social amplification of risk. It highlights the significance of investigating the frequency of particular types of attack, determining the degree of predictability, analyzing the speed of onset, determining the amount of forewarning, estimating the duration, its impact and consequences followed by the estimated losses. Moreover, certain remedial measures are suggested to curtail the compound panic & fear caused by such attacks. The process can be effective not only to ensure societal preparedness for such challenges like terrorism, but it can also facilitate recovery planning, both at the individual as well as at the national level.

Impact of events on community level workers in disaster rehabilitation services.

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Introduction: The role of community level workers in an event of any natural or human made disasters is very decisive as they are one significant group of the first responders to the disaster. Generally, in disaster relief and rehabilitation work, the survivor's sufferings take the centre stage. Rarely, does the difficulties faced by community level workers get noticed or given importance. Assisting the traumatized is always stressful and often traumatic where the human suffering reaches a level where local systems and resources can no longer contain the situation and often large numbers of care givers (CLWs) are required to alleviate the trauma among the survivors. These CLWs generally perform multiple functions beginning with rescuing the survivors from their life-threatening situation to distribution of various relief materials, transporting the survivors to safe destinations, managing safe living spaces, delivering psychosocial and mental health care. These carers in the context of this study the community level workers have to face innumerable problems while performing their work and this can result in a decrease in their efficiency and the effectiveness of their services, and an adverse impact on their psychological health. Methodology: The study aimed at assessing the impact of events among the community level workers in disaster rehabilitation services. It adopted a descriptive research design and 200 community level workers from nongovernmental organizations who worked in post disaster rehabilitation were assessed for impact of events (intrusion, avoidance and hyper arousal). Results: Large number of CLWs was found to have suffered from the impact of the events at moderate or severe level. CLWs with the lowest education, income reported significant level on the Impact of events Scale. The findings and implications will be discussed.

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Responding to Natural Disasters of Bihar Flood 2008 and Aila 2009: The psychosocial initiatives of Indian Association of Clinical Psychologists.

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The IACP Task force on Disaster Preparedness was formed in June 2008. The first initiative was in responding to the psychosocial needs of the flood affected and locally displaced population in Bihar. The second initiative is the response to the Aila cyclone affected population at Kumirmari and Radhanagar village in West Bengal. In association with local NGO's the task force has done need assessment as well as intervention programs. The initiatives in response to Aila are ongoing programs and the impacts of intervention are yet to be evaluated. There is a need to train the available psychologists in responding to the disasters and to train lay people in providing psychological first aid. The IACP plans to take up Training of Trainers in providing psychological first aid at the local as well as at the national level. The third initiative is the provision of resources to the professionals and the public through the website of IACP.

COPING AND SOCIAL SUPPORT AMONG THE SURVIVORS OF DISASTERS

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Coping strategies among the disaster survivors is crucial to deal with the situation that emerge after the disaster. Though coping strategies have been studied from different angle, but it is essential to understand how to facilitate positive coping to ensure psychosocial recovery by strengthening the social support mechanism. Social support among the disaster survivors depends on their perception about the support that they receive and feel being secured even after facing the events of disaster. Hence, coping and social support are very inter related that ensures well-being of the survivors.

Any disaster leaves a trail of suffering and survivors need support to recover and rejuvenate to their previous situation. Psychosocial support for the survivors' ensures bringing normalcy and enhancing positive coping by rebuilding support system. This need to be strengthens by understanding the specific coping strategies among the survivors that could facilitate development of a practical model of psychosocial support interventions.

This study was conducted in a comparative manner between the survivors of human made and natural disasters in Gujarat. The six different ways of coping was assessed and showed that the survivors tend to adapt more negative coping in case of human made disaster, where as interpersonal coping is most effective and widely used to deal with the complications in disaster and post-disaster situation. Perceived social support was assessed that contains three sub-scales to explain the support from community in general, from family and friend and also showed that saviors having positive coping are having higher social support.

Hence, for the disaster intervention professionals it is essential to identify the positive coping mechanisms and the perceived social support to strengthen the psychosocial resources of the survivors to hasten the recovery towards psychosocial well-being.

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Long Term Perspective of Psychosocial Rehabilitation

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Context: The long term perspective of the disaster intervention is yet to be developed with common understanding among the professional and practitioners. Still now the major national/ international guidelines focus on the emergency responses. Long term psychosocial impact of the disaster need to be understood based on the changes that a community undergoes in the rehabilitation phase and the support that they received by equating with the present situation that would help them to take up activities for strengthening the foundation for psychosocial well-being.

Objectives: Seven years after the earthquake IRCS, of Anjar Branch initiated a project with an objective to provide support to the survivors to improve the psychosocial well-being by strengthening the human, social and cultural capital of the individual, families and communities.

Methodology: The psychosocial impact of the project was assessed through regular monitoring of the field activities and supported with the qualitative information to derive the changes over the life of the project.

Findings: The capacity building of the community volunteers and school teachers need to be supported with active persuasion of activities that encourage involvement of local people and encourage the feeling of ownership by contribution and participation in the continuous process of strengthening economic, environmental and physical resources. This process also reflects the cultural reconstruction by rejuvenating the practices, encourage building of social support system through formal and non-formal methods and finally encourage the values of human capital that every one has a chance to contribute towards development of his/her own self as well as the communities where he/she lives. Hence, the psychosocial well-being in long term focused on the changes and encouraged the communities to identify the positive moves and facilitated the developmental process by strengthening the coping abilities and resiliency.

Conclusion: Developing the long-term perspective for psychosocial well-being is most crucial that could ensure a life time achievement in an integrated manner with the improvement of economic, environmental and social resources.

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Guidelines on Management of Psychosocial Support and Mental Health Services in Disasters

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India is vulnerable to natural, manmade disasters, prolonged conflicts and other complex situations that impede the country's overall development. Disasters are quite devastating and usually leave a trail of human agonies including loss of human life, livestock, property, and livelihood loss, physical injuries and damages to development works. Along with relief, rehabilitation and care of physical health and injuries, psychosocial and mental health issues are also important and they need to be addressed. There is considerable experience and evidences supporting the benefits of PSSMHS. The experiences from Orissa Super cyclone, Gujarat earthquake, Tsunami, Kashmir earthquake PSSMHS interventions reveal that PSSMHS need to be planned ahead of disasters, executed in a coordinated and integrated manner and well monitored. The psychosocial support to the disaster affected population needs to be provided on a long term basis.

The objective of the PSSMHS guidelines is to prepare national guidelines on part of all hazard health plan which shall concentrate on response, relief and rehabilitation aspects of PSSMHS across different kinds of disasters and implementation of PSSMHS activities through capacity building, training, service delivery, research, documentation, monitoring and evaluation at the National, State, District and Community Level. The provision of PSSMHS shall be based on the general health programmes and will be integrated with NMHP, DMHP and delivered through general health care plan and district health plan. The guideline is designed to acquaint the reader with the basics of Management of Psychosocial Support and Mental Health Services (PSSMHS). It is also envisaged that these Guidelines will be used for the preparation of national, state and district Psychosocial Support and Mental Health Services as a part of 'all hazard' Disaster Management (DM) health plans.

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Facilitating Recovery in the Communities through Psychosocial Support

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Psychosocial support activities for the recovery of the disaster survivors has gone a long way forward following the development of the specific guidelines on Mental Health and psychosocial support in Emergency Settings by IASC⁸ (2007). Tsunami recovery programme for the survivors of Kanyakumari District by Indian Red Cross Society, supported by American Red Cross was developed considering an integrated approach of health and psychosocial support.

The Integrated Recovery Project covered 40 affected communities with 75,000 families designed the maximum utilization of human resources, strengthening the capacities to build resiliency and improve psychosocial well-being. The community volunteers who are trained become the focal point to work with the communities and implement the Red Cross programme that the community could participate to bring change for their own situation. Hence, community people participated in the assessment, monitoring and evaluation of the specific project activities that they could develop capacities of problem solving and decision making for the betterment of communities. To work with the schools, a representative body of the school community was formed in the target schools. This representative body through participatory assessment identified the needs for improving the psychosocial well-being and interventions that facilitated development of child friendly atmosphere, improving health and creating culture of safety.

In this project capacity building was supported by development, adoption, and contextualization of various print and non-print IEC materials. In this process of empowerment the communities were encouraged to make better connection with the service providers (Government departments, other NGOs, Hospital etc.), so that the communities themselves can address the needs and ensure sustainability of the interventions that are initiated.

This intervention showed that using psychosocial support as a platform for the integrated intervention to facilitate recovery is most essential that ensure the community to assume responsibility and make initiatives and contribution for their development.

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⁸ Inter Agency Standing committee (2007)

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IMPACT OF DISASTERS ON QUALITY OF LIFE OF THE PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES – ROLE OF NGOs

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Key Words: Disasters, Impact, Persons with Disabilities, Quality of life, Calamities, Earth Quakes, Project Affected People (PAPs), Poverty, Environment, Community, Natural Resources, Pollution, Resettlement & Rehabilitation.

ABSTRACT

Disasters are the resultant of degradation and dynamic changes occurring in the environment. Every man made and natural activity creates impact over its surrounding and thus works with advantages and disadvantages. Though every developmental work certainly creates development but at the same time it creates negative impact. Day by day, the natural calamities come to minimum thus maximizing the disasters mainly due to man made activities including dams for irrigation & power, mining for natural resources, industries & its pollution, soil degradation & salinity, construction & real estates, floods, draughts, earth quakes, etc. The most alarming aspect is the negative impact created due to all these so called developmental activities. But most of the time, their planning to implementation will be done by some one not living in the area that to without considering the project affected people (PAPs). All these activities certainly create impact over the quality of life (QOL) of the people living around it in general and particularly the persons with disabilities (PWDs) both primary and secondary impact.

The quality of life of the PWDs is complex in nature and linked up with the QOL of their parents / family and the development of the community and area itself. The sustainability and the quality of life of the PWDs due to disasters affects in many ways as:

- ✓ Disturbs the routine life
- ✓ Lost the benefit of special services
- ✓ Gets low priority in the process of rehabilitation
- ✓ It disturbs more particularly when they need to be resettled
- ✓ The resultant poverty affects the sustainability and QOL etc.

The recent Tsunami is the significant and recent one to imagine the impact of disaster in general and particularly on PWDs. In addition there are many unrecorded or un-noticed projects / activities which make the life of PWDs miserable.

Though the Development is the root cause for all the unpleasant impact over environment including disasters, still there is option left out with us except to accept it as development is the only way to achieve better sustainability with quality of life in general and more significantly to PWDs. In this situation of compulsion, the ways to make un-pleasant situation to pleasant environment are as:

- Create awareness to the PWDs and their guardians to face the disasters
- Allow the PAPs particularly PDWs to participate in the project planning and implementation including monitoring & control
- Special facilities need to be planned and provided to PWDs
- Better facilities in the Resettlement & Rehabilitation (RR) Package for PWDs
- Create barrier free environment before and after displacement if any

This paper covers the disasters both due to natural & man made developmental projects / activities and their consequences including the disasters and finally their impact on the quality of life of the PWDs while providing them necessary training and rehabilitative services living in the Coastal part of Andhra Pradesh. This aims in creating better sustainability with QOL in their own community by utilizing the resources available locally thus providing all the needy services at affordable cost.