
Role of Media in Disaster Management

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ABSTRACT

Media can play an important role in not only effective dissemination of warning and relevant information but also live coverage of action being taken at the site of disaster. Besides relaying the real time situation to affected people, the media can be an effective communication means for mobilizing human and material resources and in turn can influence emergency operations in a positive manner. It can provide real time visuals to all the stakeholders and hence offer inputs for decision-making. Media is a very potent medium and a great force multiplier. It must be fully integrated into the system of disaster management. It could be well utilized to further information, dissemination and mobilize national resources in a short time. Publicity can go a long way in harnessing help from neighboring states, countries and from the world bodies. It can also help in raising required funds to deal with the calamity. Media, while covering such incidents, should come out with innovative strategies and should be prepared to take on additional role. Similarly, the planners at the emergency operations centre and on the site should be able to integrate the media's role in their planning well in advance. Media should be co-opted during the mock-up exercises and rehearsals at all levels. Similarly, the mobile telephone operators should also be co-opted in the planning stage, as well as during rehearsals and mock up exercises.

Key Words: Dissemination, Communication, Decision making, Harnessing, rehearsals.

Introduction

Media plays an all-round roll in pre disaster, during disaster and post disaster stage. The media not only is powerful, it has an inner reach to the lowermost tier and the top most tier as may be most useful for best Governance and management in the case disaster. However media for such disaster situations needs to be institutionalized and made purposeful, accurate, efficient and effective. Media have an important role, and a huge responsibility in providing clear and accurate information to the public during disasters. The Media forges a direct link between the public and emergency organizations and plays a very important role in disseminating vital information to the public before, during and after disasters. The media assists in the management of disasters by educating the public about disasters; warning of hazards; gathering and transmitting information about affected areas; alerting government officials, relief organizations and facilitating discussions about disaster preparedness and response for continuous improvement. To help the media fulfill these roles, direct Working relationships between the media and disaster management organizations should be established and maintained. Experience shows that regular interactions with the media before a disaster strikes, aids, the effective flow of information and lays the ground work for effective working relationships in the aftermath of a disaster.

Mainly there are two types of mass media exist, namely the electronic and print media, a) Electronic Media-the Radio , the Television, Satellite Radio. b) The print Media -- The News paper, other printed material.

Objectives of The study;

1. To examine the role of media in disaster management positive and negative effects.
2. To discuss the impact of media in generating public awareness about disaster risk reduction.
3. To study the ethical values of media in disaster management.
4. To suggest measures that can sustain media interests before and after disaster.

Methodology: The Primary and secondary data is used in this study. This paper is investigates and identifies through Survey the role of mass media in mitigating the disaster. The Media plays an integral and vital role in the management of disasters. Usage of satellite imagery facilitates speedy transmission of information around the globe, and this has put tremendous power in the hands of news reporters to influence global public opinion. Since disasters are a significant source of news and capture the attention of populations worldwide the media provides tremendous visibility for disaster related issues and , if used properly, can aid the process of disaster management in so many ways; a) The media can increase lobbying for political commitment to make national leaders more responsive to the unique needs of vulnerable communities and special populations by increasing visibility of related issues through consistent reporting. By applying pressure on public officials, the media can help positively. b) The media can influence the government to prioritize disaster risk issues, thereby ensuring that “self serving” political interests are not emphasized at the expense of the wider population. c) The media can help disaster mitigation experts create early warning systems, by providing information on risks and existing technologies that can aid the development of useful concepts and systems. d) The media can trigger donations from the NGOs’ and international community subsequent to the occurrence of national disasters, as well as push the government to increase allocations for disaster response programs. e) The media can improve the co-ordination of risk assessment activities between policy makers and donors communities, this integration of effort should result in increased availability of resources and improved work programmes geared towards saving lives of affected populations and vulnerable communities. The media is a mere tool in the hands of the disaster management professional and can therefore , yield positive or negative results depending on how it is used. Media need to be proactive in nature rather than reactive. They need to disseminate the right information at the appropriate time. For instance in India, the reach of radio and television to the masses, in providing information is getting organized. However, there is a need to include professionals in these channels to enable easy comprehension and response to the information. For instance, the involvement of professional meteorologists or training of media experts in providing weather-related Information would definitely make an impact on how meteorological information is presented.

Positive Impact of the Media: a) the media is usually the first to define the event as an official disaster. They inform the public about it and therefore heighten awareness. This resulting awareness influences public opinion about how the disaster is being managed and often determines the level of attention that relief agencies pay to the particular disaster. b) The media provides immediate information is considered to be trusted sources especially at the local level, where the news media have a ‘vested interest’ in the hometown. The networks continuous and factual coverage of incidents and post disaster events can aid decision making and response immediately after a disaster thereby saving lives and properly. c) The media is an invaluable asset in times of a disaster by disseminating information about public safety, giving details useful details on areas such as impassible roadways and downed utility lines. Other important public health concerns are usually addressed by issuing water safety advisories and providing information about sites where medical help is available for the public. d) In the absence of telephones and other mechanisms for communicating with the world outside an affected area, the news media played a key role.

Negative Impact of the Media: By developing an awareness of both the positive and negative aspects of disaster coverage; both the print and electronic media in a more realistic manner. a) The media may exaggerate some elements of the disaster and create unnecessary panic. Influential

politicians may manipulate the media for personal or political gains. b) News reporters may provide biased coverage for purposes of sensationalism by capturing horrific devastation on a street, choosing to ignore that on the opposite side of the street all the houses are intact with minor damage. This may lead to the development of unnecessary and inappropriate resources to moderately affected areas thereby depriving the more severely affected areas of well needed aid. c) The Medias' inaccurate portrayal of human behavior during and after disasters may create a very dramatic and exciting, but only partially truthful story. d) Media representatives often coverage on a high profile event creating tremendous 'congestion' in the affected area. The main principle of information provision, therefore, should be an ethical one, and so during an emergency, the media should be sensitive to the needs of the public in affected areas and should avoid miss informing and broadcasting unconfirmed reports that may lead to despair and panic. Therefore, correct and reliable information dissemination through the media is an important instrument for balancing the possible effects of incorrect, misleading or even willfully distorted information. Reliable and timely information provided through the media can help people overcome any kind of fear and fatalism during and after an emergency. Indeed, the availability of reliable and timely information and knowledge about an event and the resulting needs helps to improve solidarity and also creates an atmosphere conducive to collective response for sharing the humanitarian challenges created by disasters. Media today has arguably penetrated every household in the world, in one form or another. The United Nations has declared the 1990's to be the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. During that period and after, the media have significantly improved the level and sophistication and consulting technical experts better able to describe the causes and mitigation of disaster. The print media is available to everyone at a low cost. The print media too have benefited from advanced technology. Facsimile transmission and closer linkages between reporters and specialists in government and academia have deepened understanding of the causes and impacts of these disasters events and no doubt, have lead some effect in reducing long-term exposure and risk. Tapping the Medias' capabilities can and will improve over preparedness and response to hazards. Conversely, the study and application of hazard – mitigation techniques can enhance the quality of an interest in the services the media can provide. International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction can provide a most valuable opportunity for media and hazard specialists to work together to support mutual interests and more important, to serve the world community by tangibly reducing the risks of natural hazards.

Suggestions:

- a) Scientific and disaster mitigation organizations should seek to develop working relationships with the media based on mutual trust and the recognition of differing characteristics, goals and needs. Regular, effective communications among these desperate groups, before, during and after disaster events can greatly enhance those relationships.
- b) Disaster mitigation organizations should seek to provide reliable information to the media, as early as possible, in a concise and readily understandable form, and linked, where possible, to news worthy events.
- c) Media and Disaster mitigation organizations should take advantage of opportunities to work together, to provide relevant training for reporters and field personnel to enhance disaster preparedness, quality and accuracy of reporting about natural hazards.
- d) Media organizations are encouraged to evaluate their reporting about natural hazards and disaster preparedness, and where appropriate to work with disaster mitigation organizations to improve the quality, accuracy and thoroughness of such reporting.
- e) Disaster mitigation organizations should seek to identify and communicates specific themes and messages, both through the mass media and in other alternative forms of communication.

Conclusion: The media plays a unique role in disaster management. Humankind is not powerless when faced with the fury of nature. They can find means to reduce the impact of disasters and safe lives. Communication technology and media are essential means of saving lives, reducing properly

damage, and increasing public understanding, irrespective of location, population or level of economic development. Such communication can educate warn, inform and empower people to take practical steps to protect themselves from natural hazards.

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