Social Work Profession and Disaster Risk Management

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Why Disaster and Social Work Profession?

Globally at least 66 million children are affected by disasters each year. 2.0 million people in Asia-Pacific were killed during 1970-2010, representing 75% of global disaster fatalities. Disaster losses in Asia-Pacific have increased by 16 times since 1970 but GDR grew by only 13 times.
Why Disaster …

... And it is private sector and citizens who pay the highest price

Earthquakes and floods adversely affected education in Pakistan. Pakistan was also the country with the world’s largest out-of-school population in 2011 - 5.4 million out of a total of 18 million globally

Why disaster…

“Disaster vulnerability…may very well be the most critical challenge facing development in the new millennium. Rapid population growth, urbanization, environmental degradation, and global climate change are all contributing to an increase in the frequency and magnitude of disasters. And their most deadly impact is on the lives and living environment of the poor.”

James Wolfensohn and Didier Cherpitel
...and Social Work?

Social work profession has long been involved with disaster management (relief and recovery) both through the profession’s roots in the provision of wartime relief, and its concern with the physical environment of people (Pryce & Pryce, 2000)

• Social workers have played a tremendous role as:
  - Mental Health Practitioners
  - Community Organizers
  - Social Service Advocates
  - Legal/Policy Advocates
  - Researchers
  - Educators
  - Volunteers

• Social workers have foundation training applicable to emergency management

• Some generalist knowledge and skills provided by social work education can be applied to the field of disaster management (MC Hokenstad)

Managing risk vs. Managing disaster

“Prevention is Better than Cure”

“Every dollar invested in disaster risk reduction saves seven dollars in recovery efforts” - World Bank 2004

Source: FAO adapted from Wilhite (1999).
Risk is growing driven by flawed development and climate variability

...more people in Asia Pacific are getting exposed to hazards...

What is Disaster Risk Management?

It is:

- Helping people and communities prevent bad things from happening
- Helping to prepare for very bad things happening
- Helping to minimize the impact of those bad things.
- Helping them to recover rapidly from it and bounce forward
- And helping them to adapt!

Adapted from Andrew Steer, WB
3 Strategic Goal Areas:

1. The more effective integration of disaster risk considerations into sustainable development policies, planning and programming

2. The development and strengthening of institutions, mechanisms and capacities

3. The systematic incorporation of risk reduction approaches into the design and implementation of emergency preparedness, response and recovery programs

The HFA Learning

- Dedicated legislation and policies;
- The establishment of institutions;
- Increased devolution of authority to local levels;
- Increased multi-stakeholder engagement through National Platforms;
- Strengthened early warning systems including regional multi-hazard early warning systems;
- Increased awareness-raising and school education on disaster risk reduction;
- Improvements in preparedness and response systems;
- But addressing the underlying risk factors (vulnerability, social marginalization, inequity, risk insensitive development interventions…) is progressing the least.
The HFA Learning

There is urgent need to shift from seeing disasters as external shocks to recognizing risks inherent in development policies and practices.

Sustainable development will not be possible without managing disaster and climate risk as integral part of development.

How Can Social Work Profession Manage Disaster Risk?

Assessing vulnerabilities and risks
- Help community and families identify hazards, vulnerabilities, the probability of hazard turning to disaster and impacts on people
- Assess community capability to manage disaster
- Research into vulnerabilities and risks and how social work profession (meeting human needs, developing human potential, ensuring human rights and social justice) can make positive contributions to disaster risk management

• Reducing existing risks, Preventing new risks
  - Organize community to develop plan and undertake actions to reduce risks through i.e. food security, livelihoods and social protection
  - Advocate for local risk-sensitive development practices: in land use planning, managing natural resources and building physical infrastructure with focus on the impacts on the poor and marginalized groups
  - Organize the community to cope with potential emergencies
How Can Social Work Profession Manage Disaster Risk?

Strengthen resilience
- Shift from reducing vulnerability to building resilience as a vital and no-regrets strategy
- Promote accessibility (to information, to services, etc) and inclusion for meaningful participation, especially of vulnerable people
- Advocate for gender inclusion, women empowerment and women leadership

• Improve disaster preparedness
  - Planning services for vulnerable people
  - Training volunteers
  - Developing community support groups

Ensure risk-sensitive recovery and reconstruction
- Rebuild social and physical infrastructure
- Empower citizens and communities through social development
- Reintegrate internally-displaced people into the community
- Promote grassroots social development in rebuilding communities and social networks

• Promote stronger accountability frameworks
  - Increase public awareness and advocate for rights to information
  - Promote oversight mechanisms that involve and empower citizens and communities to hold institutions and individuals accountable for disaster losses
  - Strengthen social worker role as intermediate between government and communities for community development
Disaster Risk Management Post-2015

- Current global blueprint – the Hyogo Framework for Action - is approaching end of its timeframe
- UN General Assembly Resolutions decided to convene the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015 with the purpose to:
  - Review the implementation of the HFA
  - Consider experiences gained at regional and national levels.
  - Adopt a post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction (HFA2).
  - Identify modalities of cooperation based on commitments to implement the post-2015 framework.
  - Determine modalities for period review.

- Recognize the importance of people-centered development models
- Call on all Governments and stakeholders to
  - Enhance resilience at local levels;
  - Improve public investments for disaster and climate risk management;
  - Strengthen Public-Private Partnership;
  - Promote the use and further development of science, technology, and innovation. Strengthen higher education on disaster risk management

- 10 Stakeholder Groups (including Science, Technology and Academia) made Voluntary Commitments
  - E.g. Strongly promote multi-disciplinary disaster risk reduction in university education as well as professional training. This will ensure human resource development in the DRR field

Asia-Pacific Region Inputs to HFA2 and WCDRR
The UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction
14-18 March 2015, Sendai, Japan

- The UN General Assembly Resolution: all DRR stakeholders are welcome
- To attend the WCDRR you must register under one of these categories:
  1. States
  2. Inter-Governmental Organizations
  3. UN System
  4. Major Groups (Science, Technology and Academia as one)
  5. Media

Thank you and
We look forward to welcome you at the WCDRR in March 2015!

http://www.wcdrr.org