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Paper No. 7
DISASTER MANAGEMENT FUNDAMENTALS

by

Brian Ward

REFERENCES

Disaster Management: A Disaster Manager's Handbook, Introductory Notes and Chapter 1.

INTRODUCTION

1. The aim of this session is to refresh your minds very quickly about some of the fundamental concepts of disaster management so that we shall all have a common starting point in the rest of the course. These fundamentals apply at all levels of government or administration from the highest levels of government down to the community level which is the primary concern of this course.

2. Firstly, our subject is disaster management. Let us look a bit more closely at those two words - disaster and management.

DISASTER

Here is one definition:

*An event, natural or man-made, sudden or progressive, which impacts with such severity that exceptional measures are required to deal with it.*

Let us examine each element of that definition in turn:

- *natural or man-made* (e.g. flood or industrial accident)
- *sudden or progressive* (e.g. earthquake or drought)
- *exceptional measures* - outside normal administrative and organizational responsibilities and capabilities
- *deal with* i.e. manage it before, during and after the event.

MANAGEMENT

What is management? Management is about:

- human beings
- culture
- simple, clear unifying goals
- training
- teamwork
- performance
- end products


3. To which list should be added "planning".

WHAT IS DISASTER MANAGEMENT?

4. The term "disaster management" includes all aspects of planning for and responding to disasters. It refers to the management of the risks and consequences of disasters - including measures for prevention, and preparedness in anticipation of possible hazards, the whole range of necessary response measures when disaster do occur, and rehabilitation and long-term reconstruction.

THE DISASTER SPECTRUM

5. The disaster spectrum embraces:

- prevention
- mitigation
- preparedness
- response
- rehabilitation
- reconstruction

DEFINITIONS

6. Common definitions are:

Prevention

*Measures taken to prevent a disaster occurring, if possible.* (To impede a hazard so that it does not have any harmful effects).

Mitigation

*Measures taken prior to the impact of a disaster to minimize its effects* (sometimes referred to as structural and non-structural measures).
Preparedness

Measures taken in anticipation of a disaster to ensure that appropriate and effective actions are taken in the aftermath.

Response

Actions taken immediately following the impact of a disaster when exceptional measures are required to meet the basic needs of the survivors.

Rehabilitation

Actions taken in the aftermath of a disaster to: 1) assist victims to repair their dwellings, 2) re-establish essential services and 3) revive key economic and social activities.

Reconstruction

Permanent measures to repair or replace damaged dwellings and infrastructure and to set the economy back on course.

7. You will remember that if we arrange these various elements in a circle, rather than in a line, then the link which joins prevention and reconstruction to complete the circle is development and we get what is known as the disaster cycle.

The Disaster Cycle

8. In fact a circle is not the best way to represent the situation as it implies that there is never any progress. A three dimensional rising spiral would be more accurate. Some people,
conscious that this cycle presents an imperfect even misleading picture, have even taken to omitting development from it altogether.

THE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF DISASTER MANAGEMENT

9. The essential basic requirements of disaster management are that there should be:  
   - a legal basis  
   - an organization  
   - people to make it all happen.

10. And, of course, the essential "lubricant" - money!

11. The key word in disaster management is preparedness. From it stems all else:

   - Before a disaster:
     - Risk management (reduction, mitigation, development)
     - Information systems
     - Contingency planning

   - After a disaster:
     - Assessment
     - Crisis management

WHERE DO WE STAND?

12. Change. Asia is set to become a major actor in disaster management practice. It is a region of phenomenal change:

   - astonishing rates of economic development
   - changes in the climate and environment
   - changes in settlement patterns
   - changes in the types and patterns of disasters
   - changes in attitudes to disasters and coping capacities
   - changes in attitudes to the rest of the world

   From:  
   Fatalism  
   Ad hoc response  
   Relief

   To:  
   Higher expectations  
   All-hazard, inter-disciplinary planned approach  
   Mitigation
13. Countries are much better organized for response than hitherto. But there is still scope for improvement. More emphasis needs to be placed on mitigation - in reconstruction, new investment and the environment. There is a growing understanding of the relationship between disasters, the environment and development.

14. There is a growing awareness of the benefits of international cooperation. We have much to learn from each other. Technology is a three-way process - from developed world to developing world, laterally between developing countries (South to South) and (as is sometimes overlooked) from developing world to the developed world.

15. There is no definitive solution; what works in one country cannot automatically be “transported” to another. This is because of differences in the types of hazards, culture, and economies.

WHAT IS A DISASTER MANAGER?

16. Good disaster management is mostly the application of basic management practice. Of course, the extra bit helps - people need to learn about risk analysis, disaster planning and crisis management - but a capable leader and manager, even if he or she has had no formal disaster management training, will cope better in a crisis than somebody who is intrinsically a weak manager no matter how many disaster management courses he or she has attended. Disaster management is not an arcane science - though as you will already have noted it is starting to develop its own vocabulary! - we must de-mystify it.

DISASTER RELATED SKILLS

17. Disaster-related skills can be categorized as:

- local knowledge
- technical/individual
- socio-economic
- political
- management
- leadership

LEADERSHIP IN DISASTERS

18. There is one other quality a disaster manager must have if he is to be effective, particularly at the time of a crisis, and that is leadership (see also Disaster Management: A Disaster Manager’s Handbook Chapter 10).

19. What is leadership? Inspiring people to greater achievements.
20. What is leadership about?

- Inspiring
- Achieving
- Taking responsibility
- Example
- Caring
- Teaching

21. What is the difference between management and leadership?

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<th>A Leader:</th>
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<td>administers</td>
<td>innovates</td>
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<tr>
<td>maintains</td>
<td>develops</td>
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<td>relies on systems</td>
<td>relies on people</td>
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Source: *Fortune Magazine*

22. So, to summarize, a disaster manager is:

- a good *general* manager
- understands disasters
- understands contingency planning
- is a good *crisis* manager
- is a leader

**SKILLS FOR COMMAND IN CRISIS**

23. Although you yourselves may not be involved in taking command of disaster operations you will almost certainly be required to support them. It is therefore appropriate that you should have some idea of the skills required of a commander, how he should operate and, most importantly of all, the sort of support he must be given in order for him to operate effectively.

24. A commander must be capable of:

- handling multiple, demanding events simultaneously, under conditions of high stress, confusion and uncertainty;
accurately assessing the disaster;
- setting priorities;
- making high risk decisions;
- activating appropriate response whilst maintaining the routine;
- understanding the range of options for response;
- coordinating many specialists.

Source: T. Moore, Cranfield Disaster Management Centre

25. 7 Steps for Command in Crisis

1. Establish your aim
2. Dominate the situation by seizing the initiative
3. Be decisive
4. Be bold
5. Communicate with those you lead
6. Lead by example!
7. Replace people who are not up to the job.

Source: T. Moore, Cranfield Disaster Management Centre

A COMMANDER'S REQUIREMENTS

26. In order to be able to operate effectively a commander needs:

- a sound organization
- an efficient on-site command post
- an effective information management system
- reliable communication
- sufficient resources
- well tested Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs).

Source: T. Moore, Cranfield Disaster Management Centre
Possible Functions of a National Disaster Body

Pre-disaster:
- Draft a national policy statement for disasters, for issue by the Government
- Supervise the national state of preparedness for disasters
- Maintain the national disaster plan
- Lay down guidelines for subordinate plans (provincial, district & sectoral)
- Assign disaster related responsibilities
- Supervise the establishment of stockpiles
- Establish and maintain national disaster management information systems
- Foster public awareness
- Foster appropriate research
- Coordinate disaster management training
- Promote prevention and mitigation
- Ensure effective interfaces between all agencies

Post-disaster:
- Conduct national assessments (damage and needs)
- Collate and disseminate national disaster reports
- Coordinate operations
- Advise the Government whether to declare a State of Emergency
- Advise the Government whether to appeal for international assistance
- Coordinate international relief
- Coordinate plans for rehabilitation/reconstruction
- Initiate post-disaster "lessons learned" evaluations.

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