<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Title</strong></th>
<th>Communicating right information.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Author(s)</strong></td>
<td>Munawar Mirza.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td>1999</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>URL</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10220/1813">http://hdl.handle.net/10220/1813</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rights</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COMMUNICATING RIGHT INFORMATION

BEFORE I GO TO INTO DETAILS OF NATURAL DISASTERS, THEIR TYPE AND MAGNITUDE AND HOW WE COMMUNICATE INFORMATION. I WOULD LIKE TO GIVE A BRIEF INTRODUCTION ON PAKISTAN IN RELATION TO THE SUBJECT.

PAKISTAN IS A STRANGE COUNTRY, BOTH ANCIENT AND MODERN SIMULTANEOUSLY. WITH IT OLD CIVILIZATION OF 4000 YEARS OLD AT HARAPA AND MOEN-JO-DARO WHILE MODERN THAT IT WAS CREATED ONLY 51 YEARS AGO IN 1947. IT AREA IS 795,095 SQUARE KILOMETERS WHILE THE POPULATION EXCEEDS 130 MILLIONS. 379 PEOPLE LIVE WITH IN A SQ KILOMETER.

PAKISTAN HAS MORE THAN 700 KILOMETERS COASTAL BELT ON THE ARABIAN SEA. THE TALLEST POINT IS K-2, A HIMALAYAN PEAK WHILE KARACHI THE LARGEST CITY IS A PORT CITY.

IT HAS FOUR PROVINCES PUNJAB, SIND, BALUCHISTAN AND NORTH WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE, WITH ISLAMABAAD AS ITS CAPITAL.

PAKISTAN HAS ALL THE INGREDIENTS, THAT CAN MAKE A COUNTRY RICH IN NATURAL RESOURCES AND SIMULTANEOUSLY PRONE TO ALL KINDS OF NATURAL DISASTERS. IT HAS A MOUNTAINEOUS REGION IN THE NORTH WEST WITH HIMALAYAN AND HINDUISTH AND SULEMAN RANGES. WHILE IT HAS THE INDIAN OCEAN SHORES ON ARABIAN SEA, A CENTRAL DESERT AREA IN THE REGION OF SIND SPREADING TO BORDERS OF PUNJAB. WHILE IT HAS THE MIGHTY RIVER INDUS AND TRIBUTERIES ALMOST SCALING THE ENTIRE AREA FROM NORTH IN HIMALAYAN TO SOUTH NEAR KARACHI, IT HAS THE FORESTS IN THE NORTH AND IN CENTRAL AREAS OF PUNJAB. MOREOVER PAKISTAN IS IN THE TROPICS THUS MONSOON HAS A LONG SPELL OF ALMOST 60-70 DAYS STRIKING ALMOST ALL PARTS/MAJOR CITIES AND AREAS. IN MY LONG SPELL AS A NEWS-MAN IN PAKISTAN TELEVISION I HAD SOME UNIQUE EXPERIENCES IN COMMUNICATING WITH THE PEOPLE. I HAVE EXPERIENCED REPORTING IN FLOODS, CYCLONES, HURRICANES, DRAUGHTS AND EARTHQUAKES APART FROM OTHER DISASTERS LIKE TRAIN ACCIDENTS, FIRES AND MAN MADE OR ENGINEERED DISASTERS AND HAS ALSO OVERSIGHTED THE DESEMINATION OF INFORMATION IN SENIOR POSITIONS OF NEWS EDITOR.

WHAT KIND OF INFORMATION IS NECESSARY IN THE FACE OF DISASTERS?

WHILE PROVIDING INFORMATION FOR A DISASTER WE ARE USUALLY FACED WITH FOUR TYPES OF SITUATIONS,

1. EDUCATING BEFORE AS A LONG TIME MEASURE
2. THE STAGE OF IMPENDING DISASTER
3. THE DISASTER
4. AFTER MATH
EDUCATION FOR DISASTER: WHAT I HAVE EXPERIENCED AS A MEDIA-MEN DURING MY CAREER IN THAT IN MOST DEVELOPING COUNTRIES THERE IS AN IGNORANCE AND APATHY AS A WHOLE TOWARDS EDUCATING ABOUT DISASTERS, THE REAL PROCESS STARTS ONLY AFTER THE HAVOC IS THERE. WHAT IS VERY NECESSARY IS THAT THE PEOPLE SHOULD BE INFORMED AND EDUCATED ABOUT THE POSSIBLE DISASTERS AND HOW TO FACE THEM. IT WOULD BE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO STOP A CYCLONE OR AN EARTHQUAKE. HOWEVER TODAY IT IS POSSIBLE IN WEATHER TECHNOLOGY TO FORECAST THE POSSIBILITY OF A CYCLONE FLOODS. HEAVY RAINS MORE OVER THE AREAS CAN BE MARKED FOR A PARTICULAR KIND OF DISASTER, FOR EXAMPLE THE MONSOON AREAS OF ASIA ARE PRONE TO CYCLONE, HEAVY RAINS AND FLOODS IN THE MONTHS OF JUNE TO SEPTEMBER IF PROPER EDUCATION IS PROVIDED TO THE PEOPLE IN THERE OWN LANGUAGE, AS TO HOW TO FACE SUCH NATURAL CALAMITIES. IT COULD BE MUCH EASIER FOR THEM TO FACE IT COURAGEOUSLY COOPERATE ACCORDING TO INSTRUCTIONS WITH HELPING AGENCIES THUS MITIGATING AND MINIMISING THEIR SUFFERING. I WOULD QUOTE ONE INSTANCE IN PAKISTAN WHERE SUCH AN EDUCATION HAS HELPED IN AVERTING COLOSSAL LOSSES. THE CITY OF BALUCHISTAN WAS HIT BY A EARTHQUAKE IN 1935 TAKING A TOLL OF 10000 AND THE ENTIRE CITY BROUGHT TO GROUND. HOWEVER LATER THE PEOPLE HERE WERE EDUCATED THAT QUETTA IS ON THE EARTHQUAKE FAULT LINE PRONE TO SUCH EARTHQUAKES. PRECAUTIONS SHOULD BE TAKEN IN TERMS OF BUILDINGS PARTICULARLY, MANY STOREYED BUILDINGS, THUS THE 1997 EARTHQUAKE HAS ALMOST NEGLIGIBLE CAUSALITIES AS COMPARED TO 1935 ONE IN TERMS OF LIFE AND PROPERTY. THOUGH THE POPULATION HAS INCREASED FROM HUNDRED THOUSAND IN 1935 TO MILLION IN 1997 WITH ALMOST HUNDRED TIMES INCREASE IN BUILT UP AREA.

IN THE NEXT STAGE OF DISASTER, THE STATE WHEN THE DISASTER IS YET TO COME, RECENTLY WE EXPERIENCED SUCH A STATE BEFORE THE CYCLONE OF 19TH MAY 1999, WHEN THE CYCLONE WAS PREDICTED TO STRIKE ON THE 19TH AND IT WAS TO SPREAD OVER AN AREA FROM KARACHI TO THE COASTAL AREAS OF GUJRAT IN INDIA. SUCH A STAGE WHAT WE EXPERIENCED WAS THAT THE INFORMATION WHICH WAS RECEIVED FROM THE VARIOUS SOURCES SUCH AS WEATHER SATELLITE CENTRES AND METEOROLOGICAL OFFICES AND EARLY MORNING FLOOD SYSTEMS HAS TO BE PASSED TO THE PEOPLE IN THE AREA OF DISASTER AND THE GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES IN A TOTAL AND COMPREHENSIVE MANNER. THE PEOPLE HAVE TO KNOW WHAT WILL BE TIMINGS, DURATION MAGNITUDE, THE POSSIBLE STATE OF DISASTER AND ITS AFTERMATH WHILE THE GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WHO ALSO REQUIRE ALL THE INFORMATION SHOULD ALSO
BE GIVEN A CLEAR PICTURE TO PREPARE THEMSELVES AND THEN IN TURN PREPARE THE PEOPLE TO FACE THE DISASTER, WHILE IN FACE OF NATURAL DISASTERS.
LIKE FLOODS AND CYCLONES AND DRAUGHTS, A REASONABLY ACCURATE CALCULATION IS POSSIBLE TO FORESEE THE AMOUNT OF DISASTER BOTH TO THE PEOPLE, PROPERTY AND ENVIRONMENT. THEREFORE AS A PRE WARNING SUFFICIENT INFORMATION SHOULD BE PROVIDED FOR THE EVACUATION OF THE INHABITANTS FROM THE AREA. MOREOVER THEY MAY ALSO BE PROVIDED INFORMATION AS TO HOW TO MINIMISE LOSS IN TERMS OF PROPERTY AND ALLIED MATERIAL. WHILE THE INFORMATION SHOULD BE GIVEN IT IS OF UTMOST IMPORTANT THAT PANIC MAY NOT BE CREATED. IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY LIKE PAKISTAN, WHERE THE RATE OF LITERACY IS NOT VERY HIGH, MOREOVER THE RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS FOR PROVIDING ASSISTANCE IS ALSO LIMITED, ONE HAS TO BANK TO A LARGE EXTENT ON THE ALERTNESS AND POSITIVE RESPONSE OF THE PEOPLE IN WAKE OF DISASTER. THUS ANY INFORMATION WHICH IS GIVEN TO THE PEOPLE SHOULD BE WITH A CARE THAT PANIC SHOULD NOT BECOME THE ORDER OF THE DAY BECAUSE IN MANY A INSTANCE PANIC HAS TAKEN MORE TOLL THAN THE ACTUAL WRATH OF THE DISASTER. SAME IS ALSO APPLICABLE TO THE AGENCIES DEALING WITH THE DISASTER AND PROVIDING ASSISTANCE HOWEVER THESE ARE MORE ORGANISED, TRAINED AND CAPABLE OF FACING AND ASSISTING THE PEOPLE DURING SUCH PERIODS. FOR SUCH ORGANISATION THE VERY CORRECT TIME, PLACE AND MAGNITUDE HAS TO BE CONVEYED PRECISELY SO THAT THEY CAN UTILIZE THERE RESOURCES TO THE OPTIMUM AND ALSO MOBILIZE THE PEOPLE TO ACT ACCORDINGLY. DURING THE DISASTER, DURING THE RECENT CYCLONE OF MAY 1999 WE IN TELEVISION HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO COMMUNICATE TO THE PEOPLE FOR ATLEAT A WEEK BEFORE THE ACTUAL HITTING OF THE AREA. RADIO AND NEWSPAPERS ALSO DID A TREMENDOUS JOB. THE DAY, HOURS AND AREAS ALL WERE COMMUNICATED.

DURING DISASTER STAGE

THE TWO CATEGORIES WHO FACE THE DISASTER THAT IS THE ONES WHO ARE ACTUALLY PRESENT IN THE AREA OF THE DISASTER AND THOSE WHO ASSIST THEM HAVE TO BE VERY COMPOSED WHILE PASSING THROUGH THE DISASTER THEY HAVE TO BE GIVEN ALL POSSIBLE INFORMATION TO ENCOURAGE THEM AND BUILD UP THEIR MORAL TO MITIGATE THEIR SUFFERINGS WHILE ALSO HAVE TO COPE UP WITH THE PASSING CALAMITY IN PROGRESS, THE MEDIA HAS A VERY IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY HOWEVER USUALLY DUE TO A BREAKDOWN OF THE COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS THE INFORMATION TO BE GIVEN HAS TO BE PROVIDED THROUGH ALL POSSIBLE CHANNELS INCLUDING THE INFORMATION CHANNELS.
WHILE WE IN PAKISTAN HAVE A VERY SIGNIFICANT EXPERIENCE IN MEDIA DURING THE STAGE IN TIMES OF FLOODS AND CYCLONES OR DRAUGHTS WHICH HAVE A LONGER DURATION PARTICULARLY THE FLOODS AND DRAUGHTS TAKE EVEN MONTHS BEFORE THE EFFECTS START RECEEDING. DURING SUCH A PERIOD FOR HELP ASSISTANCE AND EVACUATION, WE USED TO DAILY BROADCAST THROUGH OUR MAIN BULLETINS THE PRESSURE OF THE DISASTER, THE HELP IN KIND OF FOOD SHELTER, MEDICAL ASSISTANCE AND THE MANNER IN WHICH THE EVACUATIONS WILL TAKE PLACE. IN CASE OF FLOODS WHICH ARE A RESULT OF MONSOON RAINS AND ALSO OF MELTING GLACIERS THE RIGHT INFORMATION REGARDING THE CONCURRENT DAILY RAINFALL AND ITS INTENSITY HAS TO BE CONVEYED MOREOVER AS WE HAVE A EXTENSIVE CANAL SYSTEM AND BARRAGES AT THE VARIOUS RIVERS THEREFORE A DAILY OUT FLOW AND PRESSURE WAS ALSO RELAYED SO THAT THE SITUATIONS BE MONITORED BY THE AGENCIES AND THE PEOPLE TO REACT ACCORDINGLY.

AFTERMATH OF DISASTER: WHEN THE DISASTER HAS TAKENPLACE, WHAT IS LEFT IS USUALLY CAL AMITY SORROW AND DESTRUCTION THE PEOPLE IN THE AREA ARE GRIEF STRICKEN SOMETIMES ANGRY AND IN ANXIETY, THEY HAVE LOST LIVES OF DEAR ONES AND HAVE BEEN DEPRIVED OF PROPERTY SUCH AS HOMES AND LIVING ESSENTIALS. IN SUCH SITUATIONS THE INFORMATION HAS TO PROVIDED AS TO HOW AND IN WHAT MANNER THE REHABILITATION HAS TO BE CARRIED OUT WHAT IS THE MAGNITUDE OF DISASTER AND SIMULTANEOUSLY THE SCALE OF REHABILITATION. WHILE INFORMING ALL THIS A POSITIVE NOTE TO RE-START THE LIFE IS MOST IMPORTANT. HOW EVER I WOULD RECOUNT TWO EXPERIENCES OF UNUSUAL NATURE WHICH WE FACED AFTER THE EARTHQUAKE HAD PASSED THE PEOPLE IN QUETTA WERE PARTICULARLY SHAKEN THEY CALLED THE DISASTER IN 1935 EARTHQUAKE WHICH TOOK TOLL OF MORE THAN 1000 PEOPLE AND HAD RAVAGED ALMOST ALL THE SIGNIFICANT STRUCTURES THE CITY HAD TO BE BUILT ENTIRELY THESE MEMORIES CAME FORWARD IMMEDIATELY MOST OF THE PEOPLE STARTED SLEEPING OUTSIDE THEIR HOMES EVEN ON ROAD GROUNDS THERE WAS A SORT OF PANIC EVERYDAY THERE WERE REMOURS OF MORE INTENSE EARTHQUAKES WITH MORE DESTRUCTIVE POTENTIAL. THEREFORE TO PACIFY THEM WE PREPARED SOME SPECIAL REPORTS INFORMING AND EDUCATING PEOPLE WITH THE MAIN THEME THAT EARTHQUAKE CANNOT BE PREDICTED ANYWHERE AND ANY MACHINE THERE NOT THE BEST THING WAS TO BE COMPOSED AND REMAIN ALERT FOR THIS DISASTER TO SAVE LIFE AND PROPERTY TO THE MAXIMUM WE GAVE THEM TIPS AS TO WHAT MAY BE DONE AS PRECAUTIONERY MEASURES AND WHAT TO DO IF THE QUAKE HAS ACTUALLY STRIKEN THIS.
A positive response most of the people got themselves composed and started their daily life as per their routine. Similarly after the cyclone also the loss to life and property was colossal. More than 200 dead, 10000 injured millions displaced 100,000 houses damaged or destroyed. There were rumors of more such cyclone. People were very nervous. We managed to strike the right kind of information and convinced them that quite a reasonable time before the information about the cyclone will be with them if it was to happen again. Moreover the relief and rehabilitation activity projection also boosted up their moral and they were able to come back to their normal life. There is one more aspect to which the media has to take cognizance in face of disaster in a country. Today the satellite communication has transformed the world into a global village, moreover the world at large, the international agencies and the NGO's everywhere would like to respond with help and assistance however these all have to be given the correct data regarding the place area and the magnitude of disaster together with the kind of assistance required in the prevailing environment. Most of the developing countries in Asia may not find themselves equipped to deal with a sudden and unforeseen disaster taking a large toll in terms of life and property thus the proper information to the international community is also a must to seek their helps and assistance. These agencies should be specifically informed about the kind, type and terrain of disaster area.

Conclusion: Whenever a people are facing a disaster, the most important thing to be kept in mind is that they are all human being a period of disaster is a period of trial and tribulations. Whatevsoever information is passed to these people the communication should be from a human angle,