

DISASTER MANAGEMENT AS A COMPONENT IN SCHOOL CURRICULUM

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Disaster is a sudden adverse or unfortunate extreme event resulting in loss of lives and properties. Disaster management is preparing for reacting and recovering from disasters. In India, it has been introduced at school level and preparing children to combat and sensitise about disasters, will prove a fruitful and blessing for millions of lives saved by them

Introduction

Mother earth has hidden manifold mysteries, wonders and secrets in her lap. The man has been endeavouring to unravel these mystics since ages. The unrevealed mysteries become the causative agents of the disasters and catastrophes resulting in innumerable loss of precious lives and properties. Abiding by the need to combat disasters, governments and scientists have directed their resources in this direction. Substantial scientific and material progress has been made but the human toll and economic losses due to calamities have remained recurrent events. It was in this background that the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, declared the decade 1990-2000 as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction with the objective to reduce loss of lives and properties and restrict socio-economic damage through concerted

international action, especially in developing countries.

Disasters

The term disaster has been interpreted in lots of ways by various individuals and organisations. According to Hadow and Bullock, "Disaster is a sudden adverse or unfortunate extreme event which causes great damage to human beings as well as flora and fauna". Balaji, Sankar and Karthi defined disaster as a serious disruption of the functioning of a society, causing widespread human, material or environmental losses, caused by hazards, which exceed the ability of affected society (community) to cope using only its own resources.

Disasters occur swiftly, instantly and erratically. This extreme event either natural or man-induced

exceed the bearable scale within or beyond certain time limits, make regulation difficult, result in appalling losses of property and earnings and paralyses the life.

Disaster management

Disaster management is the discipline of dealing with and avoiding menaces. It is a discipline that involves preparing for disaster before it happens, disaster reaction as well as supporting, and rejuvenating society after disasters have occurred. It is a continuous process by which all individuals, groups and communities manage hazards in an effort to circumvent or recuperate the impact of disasters resulting from the hazards.

The process of disaster management involves four phases: mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery.

Mitigation

Mitigation efforts are long-term measures that attempt to prevent hazards from developing into disasters altogether or to reduce the effects of disasters when they occur.

Preparedness

The plans of action are developed when the disaster strikes. Common preparedness measures include

- The communication plans with easily understandable terminology
- Development and practice of multi-agency coordination

- Proper maintenance and training of emergency services
- Development and exercise of emergency population warning methods combined with emergency shelters and evacuation plans
- Stockpiling, inventory and maintenance of supplies and equipment.

Response

The response phase includes the recruitment of the essential emergency services and first responders in the disaster area. It includes a first wave of core emergency services, such as firefighters, police and ambulance crews supported by a number of secondary emergency services, such as specialist rescue teams.

Recovery

In recovery phase the affected area is restored to its previous state. Recovery efforts are primarily concerned with actions that involve rebuilding destroyed property, re-employment and the repair of other essential infrastructure.

Disaster management occupies an important place in every country's policy framework as it is the poor and the under-privileged who are worst affected on account of calamities/disasters.

Disaster management in India

India has been susceptible to natural disasters on account of its unique geo-climatic conditions. Floods, droughts, cyclones, earthquakes and landslides have been intermittent phenomena.

About 60 per cent of the landmass is prone to earthquakes of various intensities; over 40 million hectares is prone to floods; about 8 per cent of the total area is prone to cyclones and 68 per cent of the area is susceptible to drought. In the decade 1990-2000, an average of about 4344 people lost their lives and about 30 million people were affected by disasters every year. The loss in terms of private, community and public assets has been astronomical. The super cyclone in Orissa in October 1999, the Bhuj earthquake in Gujarat in January 2001 and Tsunami in 2004 underscored the need to adopt multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approach and incorporation of risk reduction in the developmental plans and strategies.

Prevention is better than cure, is an old saying which is very appropriate in the perspective of disaster management. Every year massive amount of resources is used by our Government as well as Aid agencies in relief and rehabilitation measures. It is now apparent that mitigation and outlay in disaster preparedness can save thousand of lives, imperative economic possessions and livelihoods and reduce the cost of overall disaster relief.

The government of India has shifted its focus from traditional response and recovery approach to strategic risk management and reduction and from a government-centered approach to decentralised community participation. The new approach adopted by the Government of India proceeds from the conviction that mitigation has to be multi-disciplinary spanning across all sectors of development. The new policy also emanates from the belief that investments in mitigation are much more cost effective than expenditure on relief and rehabilitation.

Disaster Awareness in School Curriculum

The educational system is the hub of younger blood on whose shoulders lay the responsibility of making a nation a safe place to live in. On these lines, the Ministry of Home Affairs, India launched a set of nation-wide disaster risk mitigation initiatives in its Tenth Five Year Plan to empower the younger generation to combat disasters. One of the important initiatives recommended to the education boards and institutions is the inclusion of disaster management in the curriculum of school and professional education.

In lieu of this, disaster management as a frontline curriculum in Social Sciences has been introduced at the school level by The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) for Classes VIII, IX, X and XI. The State Governments have been advised to take similar steps vis-à-vis their school boards. Several States Governments like Tamilnadu, Sikkim, Delhi, Gujarat, Bihar, Maharashtra, Punjab and Orissa have introduced the disaster management in schools from Class VIII onwards. Now Ministry is working with the Council of Board of School Education (COBSE) to facilitate inclusion of disaster management in public education in all 39 School Boards in the country.

The curriculum of disaster management introduced in the schools emphasises on structural and non-structural measures that one needs to take to combat disasters. The course content for various classes includes:

- Class VIII: Preparedness measures for earthquakes, cyclones, floods, droughts and man-made disasters.

- Class IX: Mitigation measures which include
 - Understanding the key terms and concepts
 - Components of disaster management
 - Prevention of specific hazards
 - Community planning in disasters.
- Class X
 - The role of government and other agencies in disaster management
 - Role of Science and technology in Disaster management
 - Initiating the concept of volunteerism among the children.
- Class XI (Sociology): include emergencies, gender and disaster management, role of community and local level institutions in disaster management
- Class XI (Geography): includes introduction to the key concepts, floods, cyclones, earthquakes, tsunami and landslides.

To make disaster management more effective, the subject has been allotted 8 marks for written examination and 20 marks for project work. The curriculum also intends to provide joyful experience for the students in the journey of Disaster Management by generous use of:

- Case studies
- Projects
- Success stories
- Anecdotes
- Regular participation in mock drills
- Minimum emphasis on learning of concepts

and community participation in the form of painting, debate, essay competitions, skits and exhibitions.

A teacher is an acknowledged guide in the process of learning. To ensure effective curriculum transaction, the Board has taken up extensive training programmes for the teachers in a phased manner across the country. In each of the training programmes, focus has been laid on the causes, preparedness and mitigation measures for various hazards.

The schools are encouraged to get their teachers and students and other ministerial staff trained on first aid, search and rescue etc., by various Governmental and Non-Governmental agencies.

Road ahead...

It is said that accidents do not happen but they are caused. Advance planning, effective implementation strategies, development of right attitude for safety, co-ordination and co-operation with agencies working in this area are important for ensuring safety in schools.

Introduction of disaster management has been a revolutionary step but still India has a long way to go. The curriculum enacted for the schools has covered almost all the conjectural aspects but the realistic approach has not been given due to weight age. The subject should be introduced on operational level to cover the maximum population.

To kindle the awareness of disaster management among students, teachers and community, the mock drill sessions should be given appropriate

prominence with emphasis on practical training for first aid, safety and rescue measures. Hazard specific mock drills should carry out every month.

The training modules should be prepared to sensitise and prepare the teachers for disseminating the existent depiction of disasters to students and make them prepared to face them. The community should be made a part of mock drills and rallies to sensitise them on this contemporary issue.

The print and electronic media should be mobilised to create awareness about the disasters and the means to alleviate them. Each child should teach at least a single member of the community

in relation to ways of managing unseen natural and man-made disasters.

Conclusion

Disasters can happen anywhere, anytime and to anyone so it is imperative to make everyone around you aware of the disaster that is the only effective way in condensing the loss of lives and assets. The student community is the paramount resource in bringing this awareness among the people. Hence preparing them to combat and sensitise about disasters will prove a fruitful and blessing for millions of lives saved by them.

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