

Expert: Ogbonna Prince Emeka

Title of the Session: Building Community Resilience at the local level using Risk Information Literacy.

Date: 27/07/2015 to 02/08/2015

Summary

This submission explores the activities used to successfully enter a local community with risk communication themes. It harnesses the potential of key members of a community by empowering them to become risk information advocates. It creatively explains how to drive DRR messages into a local community using an emerging concept called risk Information literacy (RIL). The overall goal is to establish a sustainable platform that consistently equip members of a community to be individually sufficient in DRR knowledge and promote a social infrastructure that achieve resilience in a community

Context

One can explain community resilience as the continuous ability of a community to resist or regain from a struggle or disaster. This piece seeks to communicate the critical element of building community resilience through risk information literacy and explored systematic ways of driving DRR messages into a local community.

Risk Information literacy herein refers to a community-based program among out-of-school youths and adult learners which communicates preparedness and collective response strategies to mitigate disaster at local level. With the ever growing population of unengaged youths and adults especially in Africa and Asia, not to mention the high level of crime rate organized against the state, the need to creatively involve this distinct group to effectively participate in disaster risk reduction activities cannot be over-emphasized. Risk Information literacy is an emerging component of community resilience conducted to enhance the individual and community knowledge base on disaster prevention. The following are targeted outcomes the program should achieve if it is well implemented.

1. Increased access to information, materials and learning opportunities on DRR to a local community
2. A collaborative platform for communities and stakeholders to share and increase their knowledge base on risk reduction strategies.
3. Improved coordination and cooperation among stakeholders in the local DRR community.
4. A Developed individual and community prepared to respond to disasters.
5. Developed local communities empowered with disaster risk reduction plans and management strategies.
6. Enhanced assessment on DRR penetration in a local community.

A proposed methodology in achieving the desired outcome is outlined as:

- Rapid Assessment of local community.

An assessment is needed to identify key persons, infrastructure at risk, preferred language to be used, vulnerable population, availability of any existing capacity, etc. Assessment can involve formal and informal methods using questioners and random discussions with community members and indicators that capture a comprehensive need assessment for the community.

- Awareness Campaign

The objective of the awareness campaign is to create resilience communication messages for the general public that improve DRR knowledge and transmission. Tailoring information for at-risk individuals with consideration to issues of information literacy level; culture; channels; preferred language; and preferred communication styles in accessible formats are key entry points to DRR awareness and penetration to a local community amongst others strategic campaigns.

- Production of instructional and learning materials

With the understanding that DRR education can be used to enhance effective risk communication, care must be taken in producing learning materials targeted to engage the vulnerable population. While we consider Risk Information literacy as extremely useful to build social connectedness and effective community response, cultural relevant education about risk must be considered while understanding the communication strategy of a local community. In producing learning materials, creative themes should be consistent with the local ideals of the community to guarantee a mass buy-in of the risk message. Individual-level preparedness and self-sufficiency are important messages that should be well crafted in the instructional and learning materials.

- Train the Trainer

Training community-based messengers (CBMs) and spokespersons in the principles of risk communication and helping them to deliver public messages regarding DRR, will greatly impact the local community's knowledge to build resilience and respond to emergencies faster and more effectively. Further activities will involve training and educating partner agencies, local community partners, community based organizations, village heads in a comprehensive understanding for an inclusive strategy to communicate DRR. Effective communication to community members creates a stronger social infrastructure for resilience.

Materials that will be necessary for training will be risk information literacy training videos, kits for symbolic expression, creative publications that will enhance knowledge retention among identified key spokespersons. These key leads are trained so that they can further train the larger community in an informal way.

These activities entail developing appropriate risk communication learning, particularly ones that focus on pre-disaster planning and emphasize the importance of preventive care and disaster mitigation.

- Program outreach

Involves a consistent day of the week where trained trainers convene meetings and engage a targeted group with learning sessions. Members in a group share experiences and concerns on risk knowledge. Pseudo-sessions are organized to build individual and collective literacy.

- Zonal Coordination meetings

Greater integration of organizations can increase trust and knowledge among community members and help maximize participation in emergency preparedness, while contributing to the ability of communities to enhance plans and speedup learning. Regular zonal meetings are encouraged to monitor community learning progress and receive feedbacks on peculiar challenges encountered. It is advisable that coordinating agencies especially from the government and developing partners should drive the frequency of convergence with the sole aim of measuring outcomes objectively and make recommendations for future planning.

- Monitoring and evaluating progress

Measuring the progress of the program will involve collecting, analyzing the data collected during the rapid assessment and the program outreach. Metrics for monitoring and evaluating performance of a community will be used against the baseline data generated. These indices will be useful for decision making and planning DRR intervention programs in the future.

- Sustainability and Ownership.

Activities will be directed towards the local community owning the program in full. Measures for continuity will include advocating for local legislation while agency organization and local government will be encouraged to provide the necessary aid in providing resources that will guarantee sustainability.

Conclusion

It is difficult for a community to attain a state of preparedness if they are not adequately informed about their risk exposure. Risk information literacy at the local level equip stakeholders and the vulnerable population with an opportunity to build individual sufficiency and collectively respond in achieving a more resilient community.