

Community Engagement in Child Centered Space at Disaster Events: A Case Story of Sri Lanka

Authors : Wasantha Pushpakumara Hitihami Mudiyansele

Abstract : Since recent past, Sri Lanka is highly vulnerable to reoccurring climate shocks that severely impact the food security, loss of human & animal lives, destructions of human settlements, displacement of people and damaging properties. Hence, the Government of Sri Lanka has taken important steps towards strengthening legal and institutional arrangements for Disaster Risks management in the country in May 2005. Puttalam administrative district is one of the disaster prone districts in Sri Lanka which constantly face the devastating consequences of the increasing natural disasters annually. Therefore disaster risk management will be a timely intervention in the area to minimize the adverse impacts of the disasters. The few functioning Disaster Risk management networks do not take children's specific needs and vulnerabilities during emergencies into account. The most affected children and their families were evacuated to the government schools and temples and it was observed that children were left to roaming around as their parents were busy queuing up for relief goods and other priorities. In this sense, VOICE understands that the community has vital role that has to be played in facing challenges of disaster management in the area. During and after the disaster, it was viewed that some children were having psychological disorders which could be impacted negatively to children well-being. Need of child friendly space at emergency is a must action in the area to turn away negative impact coming from the hazards. VOICE with the support of national & international communities have established safer places for the children (Child Centered Spaces - CCS) and their families at emergencies. Village religious venues and schools were selected and equipped with necessary materials to be used for the children at emergency. Materials such as tools, stationeries, play materials, which couldn't be easily found in surrounding environment, were provided for CCS centers. Village animators, youth and elders were given comprehensive training on Disaster management and their role at CCS. They did the facilitation in keeping children without fear and stress at flooding occurred in 2015 as well as they were able to improve their skills when working with children. Flooding in 2016, the government agencies have taken service of these village animators at early stage of flooding to make all disaster-related recovery actions productively & efficiently. This mechanism is sustained at village level that can be used for disaster events.

Keywords : child centered space, impacts, psychological disorders, village animators

Conference Title : ICDEM 2018 : International Conference on Disaster and Emergency Management

Conference Location : Rome, Italy

Conference Dates : March 05-06, 2018