

Mental Health Support in Disaster Management

Chetana Lokshum
Senior Psychologist
Executive Director/Technical Advisor
The Relief Trust/ DpNet
May 8, 2023

WHO definition

- “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being.” 1948
- "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." 2021

Cont...

A disaster is a critical incident that affects whole communities and causes massive, widespread, and collective stress and human suffering that requires assistance to recover. Major classifications of disaster include:

- Natural Disaster: earthquake, hurricane, tornado, flooding, bushfire, landslide, etc
- Human-caused: Act of violence, crime, war, genocide, terror, violence, etc.
- Pandemic/disease: COVID-19, Swine Flu, Dengue, etc
- Accident : car accident, airplane crash, building collapsed, electrical accidents





Landslide/Flood



1235997587

The country has remained at the top 20th list of the most multi-hazards prone countries in the world where ranked 4th, 11th and 30th in terms of climate change, earthquake and flood respectively. Nepal poses in average two deaths per disaster and one disaster per day (Koirala: 2014).

Humanitarian response

Assistance and action designed to:

- Save lives
- Alleviate suffering, &
- Maintain and protect human dignity

Emergency Situation

An extraordinary situation arising from natural disaster and armed conflict in which large segment of population at acute risk of:

- dying
- immense suffering and/ or
- losing their dignity

Humanitarian response

Emergency-induced social problems:

- family separation
- disruption of social networks
- destruction of community structures
- Gender-based violence (GBV)

Effects

- Physical
- Mental
- Economic
- Academic
- Social, etc

Distress could be:

- Overwhelmed
- Confused or very uncertain about what is happening
- Fearful
- Anxious or numb
- Suicidal thoughts
- Confused
- Hopelessness
- Helplessness, etc.

People may have mild reactions as well as more severe reactions.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support

“any type of local or outside support that aims to protect or promote psychosocial well-being and/or prevent or treat mental disorder”

(IASC)

Exact definitions- vary between and within aid organizations, disciplines and countries

Some Distress shown in crisis situation are:

Headaches	Being “on guard” or jumpy
Feeling very tired	Worry that something really bad is going to happen
Loss of appetite	Insomnia
Aches and pains	nightmares
Crying, Sadness, Depressed mood	Irritability, anger
Appearing withdrawn or very still (not moving)	Not responding to others, not speaking at all
Confused, emotionally numb, or feeling unreal or in a daze	Guilt, shame (for example, for having survived or for not helping or saving others)
Disorientation (for example, not knowing their own name, where they are from, or what happened)	Not being able to care for themselves or their children (for example not eating or drinking, not able to make simple decisions)

Disaster Risk Management

Psychosocial Support Program

- **Pre Phase:** Awareness, Training, Linkages
- **During Phase:** Implementation of Psychological First Aid (PFA) and Linkages
- **Post Phase:** Linkages, Psychosocial Counseling,

Pre Phase

Preparedness activities:

Objective: Getting Prepared

Activities:

Training

Psychological First Aid (PFA),

Psychosocial Welling

- Stress Management
- Develop Resilency
- Life skills

Awareness

- Psycho-education (trauma and mental health)
- Family, Friends, Service Linkage

During Phase

Response Activities:

Objective: Develop resiliency

Activities:

- Stress Management (self care, resilience and coping mechanism)
- Psychological First Aid
- Support Group Intervention

Managing Acute Disaster Reaction:

Social Withdrawal, Detachment feelings, anger, guilt, humiliation, suicidal ideation, adjustment issues, phobia, loss of identity, acute stress reaction, somatic complain, substance dependency, panic attack, role change (children taking care), decline in educational performance

Post Phase

Recovery :

Objective: Holistic Rehabilitation

Activities:

Support for referral, linkages,
Community Outreach Programs
and Individual and Group
Psychosocial
counseling/therapies

*Inclusion, multi-cultural,
Holistic Approach, Need Based
(localization), Enhancing
community participation and
local bodies, no harm ethics,
**medication, multi cultural, need
based** multi-sectoral approach

Loss and Grief,
Post Trauma Stress
Disorder (PTSD),
Survival Guilt, Fear,
Wellness program,
Creating Support
System/Club,
promote hope
(Hope Installation)

Service Provider

- Compassion fatigue (self-care, retreat, etc.)
continuous vulnerability, Ethical Challenges

The Relief Trust in Disaster

- **Training on** Psychological First Aid (PFA) after the earthquake to health professionals, teachers and different organizations.
- Provided PFA in different affected areas.
- Supported with fooding, blankets, tarpaulin, GI Sheets, Dignity Kit to different affected areas.
- **WASH** built 20 toilets in Digam, Nuwakot, Long term trainings and short term training cum workshop on agricultural based training and Women Empowerment.
- Relief activities in relief support, reconstruction, community house development, Kinship Care and Livelihood Income Generating Activities (IGA), etc. in 7 communities of Lakuridada, Rayale, Sangachowk, Bhimtar, Sankhu, Lele and Changunarayan.

Thank you !!!