



S H A R E

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FOCUS ~ DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

The Answer to Disaster

Written by: Jady Sit

Every time there is a disaster, we feel sad and anxious for the suffering victims. While some people would pray for them, others would donate generously or organise a fundraising campaign, and some people would form a volunteer team to serve the devastated survivors through humanitarian work or counselling support. Although we try to give what we can, in the face of a natural disaster, we still feel helpless and powerless, because what could we do to stop tragedies that are not of our control?

In 2015, the massive earthquake in Nepal brought irreversible destructions: close to 9,000 casualties, 3.5 million people lost their homes, and Kathmandu Durbar Square, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was severely damaged. The U.S. Geological Survey estimated that the overall damage of the quake was about US\$10 billion (about half of the country's GDP). So, is it true that we cannot prevent a disaster from happening?

Earthquakes Don't Kill People, Buildings Do

There is a saying: "Earthquakes don't kill people, buildings do."

This statement points out the difference of hazard and disaster. Hazard is something natural or manmade that can cause

danger, loss or casualty, such as earthquake, flooding, storm, epidemic, war, and economic crisis. A hazard itself does not form a disaster; a disaster is caused when hazard is coupled with environmental vulnerability. So, if a disaster is caused by a hazard and vulnerability of a community, then we can prevent or mitigate the impact of a disaster by identifying immediate or potential hazards within a community and factors that make the community vulnerable.

They Are Not Vulnerable

Photos and videos on news media often portray a vulnerable, suffering, depressing image of the disaster-stricken people; out of empathy, we would respond swiftly with donations and earnest prayers. Slowly, we begin to think that disaster survivors are vulnerable and they are unable to help themselves. In fact, what made them vulnerable were external factors, such as: unstable livelihood, deficiency in natural resources, building houses on unstable slopes, being marginalised by the society. If a community could not address such external vulnerabilities, it would become an inability for them to forecast or resist hazards and recover from disasters.

Disaster management includes: disaster prevention, post-disaster relief, post-disaster rehabilitation, and disaster mitigation. It is a series of interrelated interventions that aims to reduce disaster risks (hazard and vulnerability) that could cause disaster, helping community members to mitigate the impact of disasters, or even prevent a disaster from happening.

A disaster management project not only incorporates Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) elements, but also involves building a stable livelihood. For example, a DRR project in southwestern Bangladesh focuses on assisting community members to build alternative livelihoods to cope with constant cyclones and flooding. 38-year-old Dilip was a day labourer and had a small farming land to feed his family of four. They lived in a flood-prone coastal area. Climate change has exacerbated the frequency and multiplied the impact of such disasters. The livelihoods of the locals were affected, and they had to look for jobs other than farming. Water logging has affected salinity in the soil, making it hard to grow crops. "Though I have a very small farmland, I can tell that the land's fertility is getting reduced day by day because of salinity and frequent tidal floods. This creates a serious impact on the lives and livelihoods of marginalised population like me." Dilip continues, "I left home and went to many northern cities in search of work, but couldn't find a job with secure income."



Dilip gets his crabs from the pond

CEDAR and World Concern Bangladesh facilitate members of Dilip's community to form a Disaster Management Committee to help plan for disaster management activities and measures, raising everyone's awareness on DRR and organising alternative livelihood training. After attending the crab farming training provided by the Committee, Dilip was equipped. With some financial support, he started crab farming in a small pond near his home. After two months, he harvested almost triple amount of crabs. He is now able to provide for his family, "I found my way out, I no longer have to leave my family to look for jobs elsewhere." After seeing Dilip's example, his neighbours have expressed their interest in crab farming. Dilip thanked partner for bringing a new dimension to their livelihoods. From this example, we can see that through rising awareness on disaster management and reducing vulnerability like diversifying livelihoods for new income source besides farming, by doing so, Dilip and his community can be immune from the threats of tidal floods and provide for their families.

Disaster Response Isn't Only Relief and Aid

Soon after the earthquake in Nepal, we got in contact with our local partners and Integral Alliance members, and dedicated concerted effort on emergency relief. When the relief phase has passed, the more important work is to plan for rehabilitation and recovery work, including psychosocial support, reconstruction of schools and homes, child protection, anti-human trafficking measures, and launching disaster management and disaster mitigation work. This continued phase of work is often neglected by the public, yet it is essential in helping disaster survivors to recover and resume to their normalcy of life, and more importantly, to be equipped to prepare for similar future disasters.

Dhading district, where Hari lives, was one of the worst affected districts by the earthquake. It was reported that over 80,000 houses were totally destroyed and 30,000 houses were partly damaged. Hari used to work as a window fitter and construction worker. He was involved in constructing cowsheds and village houses, using stone and mud mortar to build. Most of the houses were destroyed during the earthquake. So, during the rehabilitation phase, our partner UMN conducted mason training to support and train local construction workers. Through the training, they learned about earthquake resistant construction technology. The curriculum was designed according to government standards. After completing the training, the trainees received construction materials and personal protective gears to further practise.

"I learned and understood various concepts, for example how to build beams, pillar and tie beams; what is the proper distance between doors, windows and corners. We also learned techniques to build stronger buildings, using local tools and materials," Hari shares, "After the training, not only my neighbours, people from two-hour walking distance away came to ask me to help build their houses." Hari has already constructed a school building for a secondary school. He said that even though he does not have academic qualification, the skills he learned from the training have greatly improved his career and income. Hari's story highlights the importance and impact of post-disaster rehabilitation and recovery support in helping community members to build stronger community.



Through mason training, community members' livelihoods have improved, and they are equipped with earthquake-resistant construction techniques

So How Could Communities Prevent a Disaster?

To execute disaster management, communities would set up Disaster Management Committees to collectively draft and implement DRR strategy and measures, reducing the vulnerabilities of the community. In Zimbabwe, our partner Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe understands the significance of unity and ownership for DRR effort, so they launched the project in five communities which have participated in Church and Community Mobilisation. We encouraged community to first conduct hazard assessment, then community leaders and church leaders would lead members to review the frequency of previous natural hazards and find out factors that render them vulnerable, capacities that are lacking, and underlying causes that hinders them from better prepared for disasters. At the end, they will produce a community-owned DRR plan based on their findings, then various actions are carried out by different parties: the community itself, non-governmental organisations, and the government.

As long as a community values disaster prevention and is sensitive to vulnerabilities and hazards it faces, community members can apply relative disaster management measures to reduce the chances of disaster. Therefore, it is possible to prevent disasters from happening, even in communities in developing countries!

BACK TO THE BIBLE



Give US our Daily Bread

Written by: Tony Chan

(CEDAR's Senior Partnership Development Officer and Pastor)

Matthew chapters 5 to 7 documented Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. At the end of the teaching, He invited the crowds to make a choice: Enter through the narrow gate and live faithfully according to His teachings. He pointed out the consequence of their choices (7:13-23). Jesus then told the parable of the wise and foolish builders; and the wise would put His words into practice (7:24-27).

Jesus often took reference from daily life to explain through parables about difficult teachings. From the parables of the house builders, we learn that even in Jesus' times, people were aware of the power of the nature and would try to avoid disaster from happening. These verses are often used as biblical proof of the importance of disaster prevention. But, as we study it, let's also look at the context of Jesus' teaching and think how we should respond to it wisely.

In the Old Testament, the law told people how to love God according to His will, and such love, should also be practised between men. On the other hand, Jesus' Sermon on the Mount taught disciples to love God and others sincerely without the Old Testament's constraints. When we read the passage, we should exercise fearing and loving God, as well as observing the collective sense of it. For example, in chapter 6, when Jesus taught us to pray, "Our" and "us" appeared 9 times in only 5 verses of the Lord's Prayer. This indicates that Jesus expected that when we pray, we not only pray for our own needs, but to also pray for the needs of others.

"Disaster Management" is this issue's theme. No matter where we live, urban or rural settings, we are all under the threat of natural hazards like storms, floods, and earthquakes; but in remote rural communities, people are less alert about disaster management.

In March, I went to Kurigram district, located in northwestern Bangladesh, where desertification prevails. Sand and stones have covered cultivatable farmlands. How did the farmlands become deserts? The locals said climate change was responsible for disrupting their livelihoods.

Located in the lower parts of the Ganges and Brahmaputra rivers, Bangladesh experiences seasonal floods every year due to hundreds of rivers within the country and difficulty in drainage, causing widespread flooding. Climate change has

influenced the occurrence of massive floods, flood waters washed up sandstone and covered farmlands, causing desertification to happen.

Desertification heavily affected the lives of local people. Farmers lost their jobs and daily bread. The community members told us that there were two super floods in 2017 that destroyed their homes and crops, and many died or injured.

To apply Jesus' teaching, first, we should thank God for giving "us" our daily bread. But "us" includes more than those who dine with us. It includes every one of God's children – as well as people living in developing countries.

We can take action to help our neighbours by praying, concerning, and donating. More importantly, we must change our behaviours. Stop all bad practices that intensify the impact of climate change and hurt the poor. Jesus' parable teaches us that only an ignorant person would ignore the magnitude of natural hazards. We, who live in developed settings, are hurting the environment and the poor for our own advantages. This article and people's experience in Kurigram help us realise that when we exacerbate climate change, we are exploiting others' well-being, and taking away their daily bread. Let us practise faithfulness daily and be reminded of the collective essence of Jesus' teachings that we should also be mindful of those affected by climate change. Start practising eco-friendly habit to sooth the effect of climate change.

JOIN HANDS JOIN HEARTS



Ajay (right) and his mother

Growing Up in the City's Forgotten Place

Situated in southern India, Chennai is the sixth biggest city in the country. It is the cultural, economic, and academic hub of South India. Many travel websites named Chennai as "hottest city for travellers" and one of the "best cosmopolitan city", attracting numerous tourists and expats. However, behind the prosperity are families in slums struggling with everyday living.

Stricken by poverty, children and teenagers from slum communities face the threats of dropping out of schools, being physically and psychologically abused, and being malnourished. Through local partner Christian Missions Charitable Trust, we sponsored 240 children and teenagers in eight slums. We support four areas of their growth and development: cognitive, socio-emotional, spiritual, and physical. At the same time, we facilitate mothers to form women's groups and savings groups.



Ajay has been sponsored for over 10 years. He is now studying his first year of university. His father had poor health and had a habit of alcohol abuse. Ajay's mother was the family's only breadwinner. But how could the meager income be enough to make a living? Ajay later received sponsorship, which eased part of his mother's burden. He and his brother studied hard and got admitted to university. Thank God for intervening in their family! Ajay's mother became a believer and goes to church with her sons every Sunday. Ajay's father is now a driver and is able to earn an income to support the family. Also, Ajay regularly participates in various activities, retreats, and camps.

If Ajay did not receive sponsorship, his mother might still be working arduously. He and his brother might not study university but quit school to work to support the family at young age. And due to the lack of knowledge and skills, they might earn a little and have a dim prospect. But today, their family and lives have been changed, and they can face the future with hope.

TAKING ACTION



Step Out, Live Out the Blessings

Written by: Tiffany Lam

During holiday, would you travel abroad, or do something meaningful? A team of 10 brothers and sisters from Evangelical Free Church of China Waterloo Hill Church (WHC) spent their 10-day holidays in Nepal last April. They travelled to mountainous communities in Gorkha to visit CEDAR's partner ACN who are doing post-disaster work. "Through this trip, we hope to help brothers and sisters realise what integral mission is and broaden their gospel vision," says Joshua, former WHC staff and part of the team. Therefore, they stepped out of the air-conditioning room at church and went to remote mountainous area where they practised walking with local people and the meaning of offering a cup of cold water to little ones. It was the first time for most of the team to visit a disaster area or take part in cross-cultural activity, thus Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) was also a new idea to them.

Seeing Blessings from DRR

The team entered the villages and saw simple brick houses along the way that were structured differently from urban houses. ACN rebuilt houses and schools in the disaster area, incorporating quake-resistant technique in each construction that used the white concrete steel structure as a strong framework. When earthquake occurs, the brick wall would only collapsed partly, providing a chance for people to escape. Team member Tim, an engineer, saw houses in the community left

empty and incomplete due to the delay of construction company. Hence Joshua says, "We appreciate ACN even more that they never delay their scheduled work, and they never cut corners." Tim nods and agrees, "ACN workers arrived the area two weeks after the disaster and have been walking with victims. Their sincere attitude and diligent work spirit inspire other local organisations to follow. It is indeed a good testimony!"

Walking pass houses, they returned to the road towards school. The team rolled up their sleeves and transformed into construction workers. With a shovel, they shoved up the cement and poured it onto the road to create an even path, which will also help reduce soil erosion. Villagers gave great thanks as their efforts in few hours actually equaled to two days of work. Afterwards, the team joined a disaster prevention talk, aiming to increase villagers' sense of disaster preparedness. "I saw villagers from different religions and clans attending the talk held at church. I think this has provided a platform for sharing our faith and God's love for the world."

Continued Caring with Our Small Steps

Upon the end of their trip, they returned to the prosperous Hong Kong. But they did not forget their experience, "After return, we tried to learn about the difficulties local Nepalese face. We took part in children tutorial class held by a local organisation, and we taught them Chinese," says Tim. Joshua continues, "The church took action to support through donations during last year's flood in South Asia. Although it was a negligible amount, it meant a lot." Faith and works are inseparable. What we ought to do is to step out to act and to bless others.

DIGITAL VERSION OF THIS ISSUE



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2017/2018 OPERATING STATEMENT

(Our financial year is from 07/2017 to 06/2018)

Jul '17 – May '18			
Income	Donations	HK\$	12,459,495
	Grants		814,646
	Appeal for Relief		1,732,308
	HK Government Disaster Relief		2,883,000
	Fund (for flood relief in India)		
	Other Income		81,156
		HK\$	17,970,605
Expenditure	Projects	Asia	6,581,600
		China	2,797,092
		Africa	1,771,926
	Disaster Relief &		1,417,917
	Rehabilitation Projects		
	HK Government Disaster Relief		2,883,000
	Fund (for flood relief in India)		
	Education & Promotion		1,805,644
	Administration		852,199
			HK\$ 18,109,378
Surplus/(Deficit)			HK\$ (138,773)

Remarks: The annual budget for 7/2017 to 6/2018 is HK\$17,906,000. From July 2017 to May 2018, there is a total spending of nearly HK\$12 million, and reserve fund was used to cover deficit. Please support CEDAR's and its partners' work with prayers and donations. 🙏