

## An Era of Disasters and Turmoil

The December 2004 tsunami disaster shook the world. Since then twelve major disasters have happened and the last being the floods in Sri Lanka in January 2011. These major disasters have taken away the lives of 1 million people and those affected by the disasters are not less than a 100 millions mostly the poorest and the most vulnerable. The characteristics of these disasters are both rural and urban.

Of course, these disasters do not take into consideration the man made disasters like the Sri Lankan Ethnic crisis and the post war situation, the israelo-palestinian conflict, the Afghan Crisis. It does not take into consideration either the crisis of moderate impact like the torrential rains in Latin America, the earthquake in Chile etc.

In all these crisis situations the asset loss and the psychological consequences are very high and often hinder resilience.

Before such successive and repetitive disasters, the international community is at a loss to bring the appropriate sustainable disaster response. The NGO do not have sufficient means and are the mercy of the local governments ; the UN institutions have their limits ; the local governments are often taken up in their petty politics and internal political problems. Haiti and Pakistan are the two present situations which are appalling and illustrate what has been discussed above. This raises the question of the relevance of traditional response to these disaster and also the need to be innovative creativity to respond to the crisis situations.

Our globalized village is affected by extreme environments and climatic changes, the La Nina phenomenon affects different parts of the world with torrential rains bring damage to assets and untold sufferings to the victims as in Australia and in Sri Lanka. The worst affected are the most vulnerable who are already poor

and living in dire conditions of poverty. They lose everything and are unable to get back to normal life easily.

Early recovery of these victims is more than difficult because of the complex post disaster situation. It is not easy to undertake longterm activities quickly. For example, in Pakistan crop and agricultural recovery in this predominantly agricultural society is highly difficult. This means getting back to normal life will depend on many factors such as social, political, climatic and above all will depend on the resilience of the victims. The disaster response has to be planned on a longer span of time entailing considerable financial means.

An important and major challenge is the resilience of the affected population. Due to a combination of factors such as the root causes of vulnerability before the disaster such as poverty, political situation, lack of assets etc, and the unsafe conditions created by the disaster, the victims are rendered highly vulnerable and their resilience is a major challenge. This is aggravated by food insecurity and lack of professional recovery. As long as resilience is not ensured, the rehabilitation of these victims will not be an easy task. This means that humanitarian response must also have contingency plans to propose alternative solutions.

Since many of the affected populations are in the poor countries and many of the state are fragile states either due to lack of good governance or due to lack of basic democratic principles, the humanitarian intervention are getting to be more and more complicated. In Pakistan it is not so easy for the INGO to take-up action in liberty and autonomy; In Sri Lanka the INGO are not welcome to participate in the post war disaster response; in Myanmar the junta did not easily accept the international community to take up action. There are many more examples which give a good picture of the

difficulties and challenges for carrying out humanitarian activities.

Another fact is that the multiplication of disasters both natural and man made are also affecting the donor logic leading to donor fatigue and donor scepticism, resulting in lesser collect of funds. Public donors sometimes do not keep up their promise once the media pressure is over and time has passes by.

In this context, the humanitarian response is getting to be more and more complex and the challenge is a need to rethink traditional response in order to be more effective with a focus on aid efficacy.

1. There is an urgent need for NGO to carry out a vulnerability analysis in the different high risk countries and identify the highly vulnerable and high risk niche in order to be operational. This means going beyond DRR or CBDDR. It is rather a question of "Institutional Disaster Intervention strategy (IDIS).
2. NGO in the north should adopt a more proactive, anticipative communication strategy which will contribute to do constant awareness building of the potential private donors. Emotional strategy on the long run is fragile because it is uncertain but a constant awareness building strategy will motivate and mobilise the larger public.
3. Build a communication strategy based not on donation as voluntary act, but as a social responsibility because every citizen of this world is responsible for the present situation.
4. There is a need for "major NGO consortium" specialised in humanitarian disaster response to negotiate with corporate sectors such as automobile, pharmaceuticals and banks to create a "Early Recovery Funds" which will help have a emergency reserve to help the victims quickly. It will be relevant to consider reflecting on this aspect.
5. International Humanitarian organisations must work with the universities to reflect on more appropriate response to the new

disasters. In countries situated in the High Risk Zone, there is an urgent need to analyse the vulnerability and risk and take appropriate preventive measures to prevent the loss of human life and also anticipate other collateral and covariate problems that will aggravate the conditions of the victims and also delay the rehabilitation process.

6. NGO must build the social, economical and capabilities of the vulnerable population in order to make them more resilient and this must be integrated into the normal Integral Human Development Program.

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