Book review

Disaster Management: International Lessons in Risk Reduction, Response and Recovery

A. Lopez Carresi, M. Fordham, B. Wisner, I. Kelman and J. C. Gaillard (eds). Routledge (Taylor & Francis Group), Oxford, UK and New York, NY, USA, 2014, ISBN 978-0-415-71744-1, £50.00, 352 pp.

The disaster management process is a very complex cultural and geographically based methodology requiring complicated policies and operations, and very simple, affordable and common-sense solutions. This book is a culmination of the hard work of a number of people from varying backgrounds and disciplines, and provides a rich source of information on practical aspects of disaster management, with valuable lessons drawn from real-life events. This book places great value on the issues of gender, and advocates a good level of education and social uplifting of women within communities, which thereby become more inclusive of women. As the title suggests, risk management incorporating reduction, response and recovery is at the heart of the book.

The book is divided into 19 chapters that consider all aspects of hazards and risks, and directing communities and local governments into people-oriented participation, such as training and education. These activities need to include women and children, and to improve the overall understanding of their environment.

To complement this comprehensive approach, the authors look at work undertaken as a result of disasters that have taken place around the world, and highlight different types of audits used to assess the impacts of these events, as well as recommendations made to mitigate risks from future occurrence. There are real-life examples from around the world. These include: educating communities on climate change in Belize and Timor-Leste; relief and rehabilitation work in the Philippines; typhoon early warning identification and mitigating measures in India; and targeting vulnerable groups in Galle, Sri Lanka.

The first chapter introduces the broad base of disaster management with full emphasis on the need to be inclusive of grassroots communities to

local, regional, national and international collaboration. The subsequent 18 chapters are divided into four parts under the headings of: 'Prevention and risk reduction'; 'Response and recovery'; 'Regional perspectives'; and 'Tools'. Tables, charts and boxes are interspersed to illustrate and enhance the text.

Part 1 maps out disaster risk reduction. In this part, key elements are the decentralising of resources by way of improving local knowledge by the locals of their environment and amalgamating this with the external factors to mitigate or reduce hazards. One good example is of people-centred early warning systems. Also in this part, and elsewhere, strong emphasis is placed on improving gender equality by way of letting women in the community take more ownership and become recognised as equal partners in all activities of their community.

Part 2 outlines responses and recovery in emergency situations.

Part 3 looks at the wider perspective of disaster management in three regions: Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia Pacific. These regions are well spread around the globe and have different environmental conditions and geography, but still the human dimension remains a common factor.

Part 4 has two chapters describing tools to manage the process holistically through participatory mapping, by way of integrating people's capacities in disaster risk reduction and their knowledge. The final chapter concludes by addressing all vulnerabilities; it advocates learning from the past, strength through participation, resources from correct policies and adopting a flexible approach.

The book is written for communities and social practitioners to understand the whole process of disaster management. It is reassuring to learn that laws to combat disasters are introduced in almost all countries and are backed up by national action plans and capacity building.

This is a textbook; it does not prescribe any one way of finding the solution to a complex subject matter.

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