

Pre-Disaster Preparedness: Role of the University in Disaster Management

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Abstract

Disaster management activities can broadly be divided into two categories as pre- disaster preparedness and post- disaster recovery. Each part involves several steps and activities. Among them, the tasks grouped under the pre- disaster preparation, are being identified as the most important part of the disaster management strategies. This is because of the nature and severity of destruction, loss, relief, and the costs incurred on rehabilitation and reconstructions. It is obvious that the nature of destruction and costs on rehabilitation of disasters can be reduced by the pre –disaster preparation activities. Almost, all universities are equipped with the necessary resources and posses the ability to manipulate important segments of the pre-disaster preparation work of disaster management process.

Destruction caused by the recent Asian Tsunami proves that the potentials of universities towards disaster management activities have not been utilized satisfactorily. This paper discusses gaps and laps of university- role in disaster management through the experience of recent Tsunami - devastation. For instance, the death toll at the Tsunami event in 26, December 2004 in Sri Lanka could have been reduced drastically if the coastal residents were aware of the physical process of Tsunami. This background urges researchers and policy makers to make general public awareness about the physical processes of environmental hazards in order to protect lives and save natural and artificial assets of global community.

Field survey data, personal interviews, observations and secondary data sources have been employed to identify factors that can be used to enrich the potentials of university- role in disaster management, particularly in the pre-disaster management stage.

Key words: Pre- disaster preparedness, Physical process of disasters