

## **Module IV**

# **Disaster Education and Public Awareness**

- ❖ Community-based Initiatives
- ❖ Stakeholders' Roles and Responsibilities
- ❖ Categories of stakeholders
- ❖ Government, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs)
- ❖ Regional and International Organizations / Donor Agencies,
- ❖ Island Councils / Local Government,
- ❖ Community Workers,
- ❖ National and Local Disaster Managers, Trainers, Policy Makers and Grass-roots people,
- ❖ Advantages and Disadvantages of the Community-Based Approach,
- ❖ Duties of Response Personnel,
- ❖ Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plan,
- ❖ Hazardous Materials,
- ❖ Ways of storing and safely handling hazardous materials,
- ❖ Opportunities and regional planning for hazard management.

One of the most effective mechanisms for a country to prepare for a disaster is by **conducting education and public awareness programmes at the local community level.**

Public awareness in disaster management is a process of educating and empowering the population through sharing knowledge and information about the various types of disasters and their potential risks as widely as possible so that people act appropriately when a disaster happens.

## **Public awareness:**

the process of transmitting information to the general population to increase their levels of consciousness about disaster risks so they can prepare appropriately to cope with a disaster

## **Community-based approach:**

a method of education and public awareness in disaster management in which community members are involved in the planning and implementation of the awareness programmes

## **Hazard Map:**

a map which shows areas that are vulnerable to particular hazards such earthquakes, cyclones, flooding, volcanic activity

## **Community Disaster Management Organisation :**

a national organisation which ensures that planned activities for disaster management are implemented within a given timeframe

## Rationale for a Community-Based Approach

All governments are responsible for protecting their citizens and endorsing the 2005 Hyogo Declaration which states that:

“strengthening community level capacities to reduce disaster risk at the local level is especially needed, considering that appropriate disaster reduction measures at that level enable the communities and individuals to reduce significantly their vulnerability to hazards.”

There are organizations which are formed by people (community), operated by them and monitored and controlled by them, with least interference of public or private organizations.

These offer:

- Immense volunteer capacity
- Understanding of community needs and awareness of the most vulnerable populations
- Built-in credibility with the community
- Access to social and population groups that may avoid interaction with government officials
- Power of persuasion and community influence; and
- Ability to make decisions outside of government processes

They **have the best knowledge about their local surrounding** in terms of the most disaster-prone areas, the **demography of their community** and their **social and traditional organisation**.

It is important that they have the capacity to cope with the impacts of a disaster and are involved in the development of disaster management activities right from the initial planning stages.

**Community participation** can also make them more confident in their capabilities to act in the event of a disaster leading to a self-reliant community.

Every community has **members who can be ignorant of events** around them especially when these events do not affect them directly or more frequently.

This type of attitude can also be gradually changed by involving members of the local community in decision-making processes such as planning national disaster management plans or even designing awareness programmes.

This **bottom-up, participatory approach** can make community members more receptive of new knowledge and information presented to them.

Local residents who **speak or understand their native language** only may be hesitant to accept non-native people conducting education and awareness programmes for them.



## ***Village Disaster Management Committee (VDMC)***

VDMC is formed in each village and is responsible for initiating disaster preparedness activities.

It consists of :

- Locally elected representatives, grassroots government functionaries
- Local NGOs/Community Based Organizations (CBOs)
- Members of youth groups such as the National Service Scheme (NSS) and Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), women groups, youth club members, grassroots level government functionaries, etc.
- The size of a VDMC is based on the population and need of the villagers.
- The Head of the VDMC takes a lead in mobilizing the community for preparation of the CBDP plans.

## Stakeholders' Roles and Responsibilities

An effective and successful community-based approach in reducing disaster risks is often attributed to the spontaneous participation and involvement of the following stakeholders:

- Government
  - Non-governments (NGOs)
  - Regional and International Organisations/Donor Agencies
  - Island council (Local government)
  - National/Local Organisations (women committees, youth groups, schools, etc)
  - Community workers
  - Trainers
  - Disaster Managers (Local and National)
  - Policy Makers
  - Grass-roots people
  - Religious Denominations

## **Agencies of United Nations involved in Disaster Management**

- 1. United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR)**
- 2. United Nation Disaster Management Team (UNDMT)**
- 3. United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC)**
- 4. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)**
- 5. International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG)**
- 6. Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction (GFDRR)**
- 7. ASEAN Region Forum (ARF)**
- 8. Asian Disaster Reduction Centre (ADRC)**
- 9. Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC)**
- 10.SAARC Disaster Management Centre (SDMC)**