

RADHA SOAMI SATSUNG BEAS: GLORIOUS DISASTER RELIEF IN COMMUNITY

Dr. Gurwinder Singh Bhatti

Acting Head of School

Govt. Elementary School

INTRODUCTION

India's geo-climatic condition as well as its high degree of socio-economic vulnerability makes it one of the most disaster prone countries in the world. A disaster is an extreme disruption of the functioning of a society that causes widespread human, material, or environmental losses that exceed the ability of the affected society to cope with its own resources. Disasters are sometimes classified according to whether they are "natural" disasters, or "human-made" disasters. For example, disasters caused by floods, droughts, tidal waves and earth tremors are generally considered "natural disasters." Disasters caused by chemical or industrial accidents, environmental pollution, transport accidents and political unrest are classified as "human-made" or "human induced" disasters since they are the direct result of human action.

Disasters can be very tragic and can have a very large impact. They will leave a trail of injury, deaths, loss of livestock, loss of property, and economic losses. The event with the highest death toll since 1980 was the Boxing Day Tsunami in South East Asia which claimed the lives of 220,000 people. In 2017, 335 natural disasters affected 95.6 million people, 9697 deaths and costing a total of \$335 billion. In Asia, most disasters are floods and storms, with 44% of all disaster events, 58% total deaths and 70% of total people affected. Despite all of this, America has reported the highest economic losses representing 88% of the total cost from 94 disasters.

A disaster is an unexpected, unfortunate event that can cause people to harm animals, plants, or even animals. Disasters occur quickly, suddenly and randomly. Disaster can be a natural or man-made disaster that cannot be controlled by human effort and hinders human activities (Ashrafand Shaha, 2016).

Disaster is an event or series of events, which gives rise to casualties and damage or loss of properties, infrastructures, environment, essential services or means of livelihood on such a scale which is beyond the normal capacity of the affected community to cope with. Disaster is also sometimes described as a "*catastrophic situation in which the normal pattern of life or eco-system has been disrupted and extra-ordinary emergency interventions are required to save and preserve lives and or the environment*".

Disaster management needs a strong political commitment at the national and societal levels. A structure with clearly defined authority and appropriate budget to maintain an effective disaster plan is needed. Preparedness plans should be operational as well as comprehensive in scale, ideally outlined through a nominated national body. Disaster management planning is a sequential and continuous process. Good planning requires diagnosis, resource evaluation and feedback towards fulfilling the goal of disaster reduction. Since disaster management is wide in scope and numerous actors are involved in it, the need for a framework for coordination becomes essential. There is a need to manage the situation at all the stages of disaster management. The agencies that play a role in disaster management include the government at the central, state and district levels, the community groups and community-based organisations, NGOs, and other agencies such as the PSUs, the armed

forces, police and para-military forces, ex-service personnel, fire services, etc., also play a significant role in disaster management. Their services have to therefore be utilised to the maximum. This Unit highlighted these pertinent issues.

BRIEF HISTORY OF RADHA SOAMI SATSUNG BEAS

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines the community as a group in face-to-face contact with each other, having harmony of interests and aspirations. It is also bound by common values and objectives. The efforts of the community in certain areas are laudable. At some places, they have formed their own organizations that take the initiative in disaster situations.

The community, as an institution in itself, is emerging as the most powerful among all the agencies involved in disaster management. In the event of a disaster, the community, if well aware of the preventive actions it is required to take, can substantially reduce the damage caused by the disaster. An institution namely Radha Soami Satsang Beas (RSSB) has been working since long to build social values in modern society in India as well as abroad in more ways than one. This institution has a large number of followers who serve the society in a missionary mode. The philosophy of RSSB is said to be related with the core of all religions. The followers of RSSB are strongly attached with it and they are seen to serve the society with passion. The philosophical development of RSSB has spread gradually overtime in India and abroad. This study seeks to investigate the relevance of RSSB in today's world.

The main centre of RSSB is at Dera Baba Jaimal Singh, located on the banks of the River Beas in Amritsar district, the northern India state of Punjab. Although RSSB is not defined as a religion, the organization's fundamental teachings are not in conflict with those of other world faith. Master Gurinder Singh (1990-) is the present spiritual heads at RSSB.

ROLE OF RSSB IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Radha Soami Satsang Beas (RSSB) actively supports disaster relief efforts wherever necessary. If possible, RSSB quickly responds with lifesaving donations of food, water, shelter, clothing, and medical care. Once these immediate needs are met, focus shifts to shelter to provide housing for displaced families and to school construction to ensure the continuity of education for school children. The earthquake-resistant structure designed by the RSSB engineers, and first used in Gujarat, has served as a prototype that has been replicated for multipurpose sheds used as housing and schools in other disaster stricken areas in Kashmir, Ladakh and Nepal. RSSB, working through its local centres in each area, donated all goods and services, manufactured construction materials, and mobilized thousands of volunteers (sevadars) to carry out all disaster relief activities and construction projects. While the RSSB organization may receive recognition for helping with these disasters, all credit must be given to the volunteers who, at great inconvenience to themselves, work night and day in difficult conditions to help people whom they don't even know. This is the ultimate act of selfless service as taught by the Masters. As Maharaj Charan Singh taught, "*The greatest reward in seva (service) is the contentment and happiness that you feel within, that you get an opportunity to serve someone.*"

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Chandana et al. (2018) investigated the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing disaster management frameworks in Sri Lanka and found that only minor alignments with the global standards are present, and that the existing framework has not been able to manage previous disaster incidents properly. There are considerable inefficiencies in the "whole of government" response, coherence and integration as well as in the resource allocation.

Thattai et al. (2017) researches about two case studies – cyclones and floods – are taken up for comparison of disaster management strategies adopted in the country.

Huq (2016) presented analysis on the disaster management by grassroots community participation in Bangladesh and concluded that the people should be participated for disaster management. To aware people the social workers should provide training and seminars to the people time to time.

Walters and Gaillard (2014) presented focuses on the linkages between the multi-faceted marginalisation of homeless people and their various vulnerabilities to disaster associated with both everyday small-scale hazards and large-scale natural hazards.

Highlighting the complexity and acute vulnerability of homeless people to disaster from a multitude of man-made and natural hazards at different scales, it argues for more attention and integration of homeless people's needs and everyday hazards in disaster research and policy.

Murthy (2014) explains that the Bhopal disaster is an important landmark for understanding the mental health dimensions of disasters. There was an increase in the psychopathological symptoms leading to dysfunction in the day to day activities. Clinical help and care were needed for the people who had acute psychotic symptoms viz., confusional states, anxiety-depression reactions, reactive psychoses and grief reactions. The long term care was needed for the psychological problems which resulted from disabilities, uncertainties of future, broken social units and rehabilitation issues. The victims who had direct and indirect experiences of the disaster showed prolonged behavioural and cognitive symptoms for which psychological rehabilitation was needed.

Chou and Zahedi (2013) presented we focus on identifying the contents of a web based disaster management system from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders (victims and aid providers), the needs the system should meet, and crisis behaviors that the system should anticipate. We propose two conceptual models to investigate how these categories of web-design elements could enhance victims' coping mechanisms and reduce impacts of natural disasters on individuals and businesses extending the theories of task-technology fit and self-efficacy, we propose the concepts of need-web element fit, behavior-web element fit, and disaster self-efficacy.

Shukla (2011) describes severe damage to ecology and economy of a region due to disaster. With installation of new technologies and by adopting space technology as INSAT and IRS series of satellites, India has developed an operational mechanism for disaster warning especially cyclone and drought, and their monitoring and mitigation.

ROLE OF RSSB DURING THE DISASTER RELIEF CAMP

(a) Nepal

On April 25, 2015, Nepal was hit by one of the largest earthquakes on record, causing extensive devastation in Kathmandu and surrounding areas affecting eight million people. It is also known as Gorkha Earthquake and had a magnitude of 7.6 Richter Scale and the epicentre was about 76 km northwest of the capital Kathmandu. It was followed by more than 300 aftershocks. Nine thousand people were reported killed, 23,000 injured; thousands of structures collapsed and infrastructure of roads and bridges damaged. Such widespread damage rallied many organizations to participate in relief efforts in tandem with national and local government. RSSB immediately opened its Kathmandu Centre to provide shelter and cooked food for homeless earthquake victims and to distribute food packets.

Over the course of a month, food and shelter were provided to 54,037 people and 292,196 food packets were distributed. Responding to medical needs, RSSB fielded a team of five doctors to three posts from May 5-10, treating and giving medicines to 2,000 outpatients

a day. From May 7 to May 10 three teams of doctors and pharmacists equipped with essential medicines were fielded to remote areas of Nepal along with teams to run free kitchens (langars) to provide medical care and feed displaced persons. On request from RSSB, a team of 25 doctors from FORTIS Healthcare in Delhi visited Kathmandu and six affected districts and provided medical treatment and drugs for 4,196 earthquake victims.

Subsequent to the provision of essential supplies and services, RSSB was asked to construct sheds to shelter earthquake- affected communities, which can later be repurposed for community social and educational activities. Twenty standardized sheds along with toilet facilities were built on selected sites, with all materials and labour supplied free of charge by RSSB.

(b) Jammu and Kashmir

On October 8, 2005, a devastating earthquake hit the Uri/Tangdhar area of District Kupwara in Kashmir causing loss of life and rendering many people homeless. RSSB approached the state government to offer assistance in disaster relief efforts by constructing 12 sheds to shelter those displaced by the earthquake who were most in need. RSSB manufactured and transported construction materials from Ludhiana (Punjab) over roads with difficult terrain. Four hundred volunteers, deployed in groups of ten to fifteen at a time, worked in arduous conditions to complete construction.

The 12 sheds, each containing a living area, kitchenette, and toilets, were fully insulated against heat and cold. All the sheds are earthquake resistant structures made of steel. The walls consist of profiled GI sheet cladding. The sheds were constructed on school land made available by the State Government. The design was such that these sheds could be converted in to school room later on. Despite difficult conditions, lack of local labor and limited communication, 12 sheds in 11 locations were completed in 42 days and handed over to the Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) government on December 5, 2005, just before the onset of the snow season.

(c) Leh, Ladakh

The 2010 Ladakh floods occurred on 6 August 2010 across a large part of Ladakh, then part of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. 71 towns and villages were damaged, including the main town in the area, Leh (Hobley et al, 2012). At least 255 people are reported to have died, six of whom were foreign tourists (Bodeen, 2010) after a cloud burst and heavy overnight rains triggered flash floods, mudflows, and debris flows (Wivell, 2010). 200 people were reported missing in the initial aftermath of the storm (BBC, 2010), and thousands more were rendered homeless after the flooding caused extensive damage to property and infrastructure. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) being familiar with the RSSB disaster relief work in Jammu and Kashmir in 2005, made an urgent request to RSSB to provide shelters for those left homeless. RSSB agreed to undertake construction of six steel sheds with attached toilets. These sheds were designed to bear the snow load and were insulated to be habitable in extremely low temperatures.

RSSB worked with the NDMA and local authorities to identify six different locations for shed construction. In Ludhiana (Punjab) RSSB manufactured shed materials with the help of 400 volunteers. RSSB then organized the volunteer manpower and transport needed to begin construction in Leh. Over a five-week period, 28 trucks and vehicles transported over 300 tons of construction materials and groups of 200-250 volunteers. During construction, over 1,000 volunteers with a variety of skills were deployed in groups for varying periods of time. Once construction commenced, the six sheds were completed in only four weeks, becoming available for habitation well in advance of the start of severe winter weather beginning in mid-October. In addition to meeting the government's initial request to

construct six sheds, RSSB found that the Old-Men's Shelter at the Mahabodhi Meditation Center had been damaged. RSSB constructed a similar insulated shed as a replacement.

(d) Gujarat

On January 26, 2001, a massive earthquake struck the state of Gujarat killing 20,000 people and destroying thousands of houses and other structures. The destruction was so great that all buildings in Bhuj, Anjar, Bhachau and villages in that area were reduced to rubble. RSSB immediately offered support in the most affected districts of Bhuj, Kutch, Patan and Ahmadabad. Working closely with state and local government, the provision of tent schools was identified as a high priority. Two hundred and fifty volunteers were immediately deployed to begin relief efforts. In just 16 days, 1,250 tented schoolrooms were set up in 56 villages and 120 schools of Kutch and Bhuj District. The Government of Gujarat then asked RSSB to undertake school construction to meet longer-term needs. RSSB developed an earthquake-resistant school design along with a fully constructed prototype school that was approved by the state government.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the present study are:

1. To access the glorious disaster relief social work of RSSB.
2. To gather a brief detail-wise of the disaster relief.

TOOL AND SAMPLE SIZE

100 respondents were selected at random and primary data were collected through a questionnaire. Out of these 50 are males and 50 are females. Again out of 50 respondents (males) 25 were employees and 25 were non-employee. Likewise for the females also, 25 were employees and 25 were non-employee.

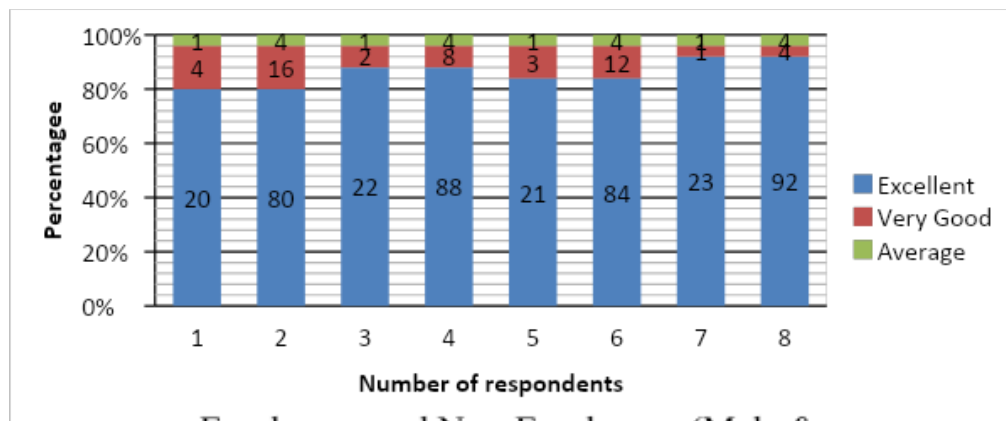
DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1. How do you see the role of RSSB rendering social service during the disaster crises?

How do you see the role of RSSB rendering social service during the disaster crises?	Males(N=50)				Females(N=50)	
	Employees(N=25)	%	Non-Employees(N=25)	%	Employees(N=25)	
Excellent	20	80.00	22	88.00	21	
Very Good	4	16.00	2	8.00	3	
Average	1	4.00	1	4.00	1	
Total	25	100.00	25	100.00	25	

Primary source

Chart Title



Blue Bar indicate Female)

indicate 'average'

Interpretation

The respondents were asked which natural disaster they are more concern. It is seen from table 1 that among the employees (male) it is seen that out of 25 respondents, 20 respondents (80%) say the service rendered by RSSB during disaster are excellent, 4 respondents (16%) say the service rendered by RSSB during disaster are very good, and 1 respondent (4%) say the service rendered by RSSB during disaster are average. Among the non-employees out of 25 respondents, 22 respondents (88%) say the service rendered by RSSB during disaster is excellent, 2 respondents (8%) say the service rendered by RSSB during disaster is very good, and 1 respondent (4%) say the service rendered by RSSB during disaster are average.

Among the employees (female) it is seen that out of 25 respondents, 21 respondents(84%) say the service rendered by RSSB during disaster are excellent, 3 respondents (12%)say the service rendered by RSSB during disaster are very good, and 1 respondent (4%) say the service rendered by RSSB during disaster are average. Among the non-employees out of 25 respondents, 23 respondents (92%) say the service rendered by RSSB during disaster is excellent, 1 respondent (4%) say the service rendered by RSSB during disaster is very good, and 1 respondent (4%) say the service rendered by RSSB during disaster are average.

It is seen that whenever there is a disaster the Radha Soami Satsang Beas quickly responds with lifesaving donation of food, water, shelter, clothing and medical care, and providing house for displaced families and to school construction to ensure the continuity of education for school children. RSSB actively supports disaster relief efforts wherever necessary. It can be seen the relief measures undertaken by RSSB during disaster is excellent according to the respondents. Some of the respondents also opined that the works done by RSSB are very good and some says it is good.

During the Nepal earthquake disaster the RSSB has also played an important role in providing relief measures. Food and shelter were provided to 54,037 people and 292,196 food packets were distributed. Responding to medical needs RSSB fielded a team of five doctors treating and giving medicines to 2,000 outpatients a day. Doctors and pharmacists equipped with essential medicines were sent to remote areas of Nepal along with teams to run free kitchens (langars) to provide medical care and feed displaced persons. On request from RSSB, a team of 25 doctors from FORTIS Healthcare in Delhi visited Kathmandu and six affected districts and provided medical treatment and drugs for 4,196 earthquake victims. Twenty standardized sheds along with toilet facilities were built on selected sites, with all materials and labour supplied free of charge by RSSB.

Again during the earthquake disaster in Jammu & Kashmir the RSSB came to the rescue of the effected people by manufactured and transported construction materials from Ludhiana (Punjab) over roads with difficult terrain. Four hundred volunteers, deployed in groups often to fifteen at a time, worked in arduous conditions to complete construction.

In the flood disaster in Leh, Ladhak the RSSB volunteers again provided relief measures whereby 28 trucks and vehicles transported over 300 tons of construction materials and groups of 200-250 volunteers. During construction, over 1,000 volunteers with a variety of skills were deployed in groups for varying periods of time in Leh Ladhak. Thus it can be said that the work done by RSSB can be term as the glorious social work toward humankind.

CONCLUSIONS

It is concluded that the disaster is a big problem and the necessary preventive measures should be taken for this. Losses due to disasters have shown growing trend in terms of lives and property throughout the world due to urbanization, increasing population and increasing degradation of environment. The global efforts to manage disasters are not matched with the frequency and magnitude of disasters.

Thus, disaster not only disrupts the quality of life but also creates a significant burden of mental health conditions on an individual and the community. Effective interventions should be given pre, peri and post-disaster period to improve the adverse mental health effects of the disaster. The psycho-social education and clinical interventions are expected to provide better outcomes because of the integration of various effective measures. Rehabilitations plans should be made by keeping in mind the cultural context of the community and the needs of the affected population. So that community is empowered in a holistic way to cope with future disasters.

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