

Knowledge of Disasters Risk Reduction among People of Garhwal Uttarakhand



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Abstract

"A disaster", as defined by the World Health Organization, "is any occurrence that causes damage, economic destruction, loss of human life, and deterioration in health and health services on a scale sufficient to warrant an extraordinary response from outside the affected community or area. Uttarakhand is prone to a number of natural hazards and the people living in this terrain would have often experienced rage of these. A critical component of disaster preparedness is the knowledge of available local resource information and how to respond at the time of disaster. There for a community based cross sectional study was done to assess the present level of knowledge about disasters preparedness among people of Garhwal Uttarakhand. Hundred respondents were selected with purposive sampling. Data was collected by interview schedule and observation method. Data analyses were done through MS-Excel. Results were presented in simple proportions and percentages. The present study concluded that majority of the respondent were aware about the term disaster but they still lack some of correct safety measures of disaster and its emergency helpline sources. Thus there is a need of raising the awareness about disasters, planning and training to the community regarding disaster preparedness.

Keywords: Knowledge, Preparedness, Disaster, Landslide, Earthquake
Introduction

"Disaster, by Oxford dictionary's simple definition is an unexpected event, which kills a lot of people or causes huge damage".^[1] Disaster preparedness refers to measures taken to prepare for and reduce the effects of disasters. That is, to predict and, where possible, prevent disasters, mitigate their impact on vulnerable populations, and respond to and effectively cope with their consequences.^[2] In recent years, despite the age we live in being one of technological innovation, the increased frequency, intensity, magnitude, and impact of natural disasters have claimed thousands of lives and caused immense material losses throughout the world. In recent decades this has been attributed to an increase in population worldwide and subsequent developments like urbanization, use of vulnerable regions or degraded land, and alterations in the environment. In the second half of the twentieth century about 250 'great natural catastrophes' claimed the lives of about 1.4 million people, most of whom succumbed to windstorms or floods. India is one of the Asia's largest and probably most vulnerable countries, and is greatly exposed to a variety of natural disasters, out of 36 states and union territories, 27 are disaster prone.^[3] In India the state of Uttarakhand had experienced the Uttarkashi earthquake in 1991, Chamoli earthquake in 1999 and a terrific disaster on 16 and 17 of June in the year 2013. These disasters resulted in the deaths of many people and the destruction of thousands of homes. Landslides, flash floods and sudden cloudburst are also occurred in every year. Impacts of natural disasters can be reduced through pre-disaster activities for mitigating risks and such activities are among the most crucial aspects of disaster risk reduction to consider in forming a coordinated strategy or plan. Mobilizing resources raises the awareness level within the community and aids in assessing local knowledge and resources.^[4] Every country is at the risk of exposure to some type of disaster, whether natural or manmade. In order for each country to prepare for any kind of disaster, it must inform its citizens about the different types of disasters. The local residents must also be aware of how they can effectively participate in preparing for a disaster, mitigating potential impacts of a disaster and the recovery process after a disaster. Awareness of people is regarded as one of the disaster management innovative tools and best practices used to achieve

disaster risk reduction. Public awareness helps a community to become resilient through awareness of the issues affecting its environment. However, measuring the effectiveness of such campaigns is a difficult task. A critical component of disaster preparedness is the knowledge of available local resource information and how to respond at the time of disaster. For involvement of community, it is important to assess their perception about disaster and its preparedness. Keeping above aspect in view, this study was planned to assess the knowledge of disasters preparedness among people of Garhwal Uttarakhand.

Objectives of The Study

1. To find out demographic characteristics of Respondent.
2. To assess the existing knowledge about disasters preparedness among

Material and Methods

A community based cross sectional study was conducted from September to October months, 2018 among rural people of district Tehri, Uttarakhand. To conduct the study researcher randomly selected 100 individuals by purposive sampling method. The data were collected through primary and secondary source. The primary data were collected by interview schedule and observation method and the secondary data were collected from books, journals, news papers, research publication, website etc. Data analyses were done by MS-Excel. Results were presented in table with simple proportions and percentages.

Results

**Demographic Profile of Respondent
Table No. 1**

Age group of the Respondent	No(%)
21-30	21
31-40	42
41-50	22
51-60	15
TOTAL	100.00
Gender	No
Male	45
Female	55
TOTAL	100.00
Marital Status	No.
Married	82
Unmarried	14
Other	04
TOTAL	100.00
Educational level	No.
Illiterate	03
Primary school	08
Middle school	13
High school	25
Intermediate	38
Graduate	08
P. graduate	05
TOTAL	100.00
Occupation	No.
Unemployed	03
Unskilled	13
Semi-skilled	25
Skilled	11
Clerical/ Shop owner/ Semi Professional	30
Professional	18
TOTAL	100.00

A total of 100 individuals were included in the study out of them 55% were female and 45% of male. Majority of them were married. 52% of respondent belonged to age group of 31–40 years. Majorities (38%) of respondent were educated up to intermediate level. and 30% were Clerical/ Shop owner/ Semi Professional.

**Knowledge about Disaster
Table No. 2**

Knowledge of different Disasters	YES	NO
Knowledge about earthquake	93	07
Correct knowledge about indoor and outdoor safety precautions during earthquake	79	31
Knowledge about fire	76	44
Knowledge about safety measures during fire	43	57
Knowledge about flash floods	86	24
knowledge about preparedness for flash floods	56	64

In regard to awareness about different types of disaster, 93% of people were known about earthquake 76% fire and 86% flash floods as disasters. 79% of the people had Knowledge about indoor and outdoor safety precautions of earthquake. Only 43% knew about the safety measures during fire and 56% of respondent had knowledge about preparedness for flash floods.

Knowledge about emergency number of Disaster in India

Table No. 3

Knowledge about emergency number	YES	NO
Earthquake (108)	75	35
fire (101)	47	53
Flash floods (108)	85	15

Results in table 3 shows that 75% had known about earthquake emergency number and most 85% knew about 108 as flash floods emergency number. 53% of respondent had no knowledge about emergency number of Forest fire.

Discussion

In any disaster-preparedness planning, it is important to take into account the local community's participation. The present study revealed that a significant percentage of the subjects had knowledge about the disasters. 93% of subject's had knowledge about earthquakes out of which 79% had Knowledge about indoor and outdoor safety precautions of earthquake. It was also found that 31% didn't know what they had to do in case of an earthquake. The lack of previous earthquakes experience might have influenced this lacking knowledge of people. Similar the findings have been observe in a study conducted by Bikash Chetriet et al in Delhi, India has found that most of the people included in study knew about disasters. Most of them had knowledge about emergency number for earth quake and flash floods but 53% of respondent had no knowledge about emergency number of fire which is very less keeping in view of vulnerability of the houses to fire.^[5] Earthquake-preparedness programs that are sensitive to the needs of the local community members can mobilize their efforts to develop their skills and capacities for dealing with any natural disasters.^[6] Only 43% knew about the safety measures during fire. People in rural areas who were not aware about the safety measure of fire flash may have belief that they are not at risk of fire as a disaster. A study carried out by Jaslow D et al also found that only 42% of the subjects were aware of their building fire plan.^[7] In terms of the public awareness about impending floods, droughts, earthquakes, cyclones etc., India has achieved widespread but low levels of scatter mixed results. However, despite of the wide array of activities, there is a widespread lack of public appreciation for disaster preparedness.^[8] The state of Uttarakhand is highly prone to natural disaster due to its geographical location. In this sate there are many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working for disaster mitigation awareness programme. But the most significant barrier found for disaster preparedness is lack of knowledge about disasters. It is important that the community should be sensitized and well aware of different disasters so that they can take measures for disaster reduction. People should discuss with their family and community members about disaster preparedness so that every member of the community knew that what they have to during disaster.

Conclusion

The present study concluded that the majority of the respondent were aware of the about

disaster and some of them even experience it also. It was also observe that people still lack some of correct safety measures during disaster. Thus there is a need of raising the awareness about disasters preparedness among community people. Raising public awareness is vital to build a culture of safety, and thus the courage of nations and communities to disaster. Government should raise public awareness through collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), local government bodies, and primarily through Panchayati raj institutions at grass root level.

Endnotes

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