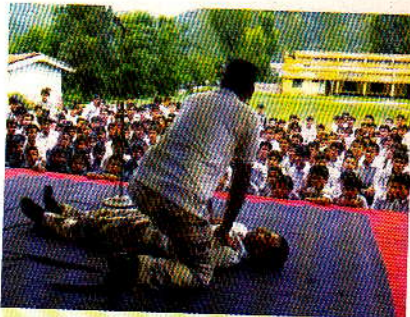


## Role and Importance of Effective Communication

CK Nayak



*Modern communication also came to use when thousands of persons were evacuated before the cyclone Phalin hit the Odisha coast since the warning equipment were in place beforehand*

**W**ith rapid change in climate and increasing conflicts in the society across the globe, sheer number of disasters whether natural or manmade has increased in recent times by manifold. And so also the disaster management. With rise in cases of disaster management, role and importance of communication has swelled too.

In the days of breaking news and making headlines journalists who mostly play the role of communicators in such emergencies often come in conflict with the personnel handling disasters even though the aim of all is to help the affected at the earliest. As a result all three stake holders-the disaster management personnel, the victims and the scribes are affected if there is no proper coordination.

There is nothing to train the victims except making them aware in general beforehand in a mass scale. Same applies to the management personnel since they are already trained. But there is a need to train the journalists covering disasters starting from how to reach the spot till what precautions they should have. Hence, the task is to prepare the journalists to cover the disasters in smooth way which in the process will help rather than hinder the other two parties-

victims and disaster management personnel.

Communication during and immediately after a disaster situation is an important component of response and recovery, in that it connects affected people, families, and communities with first responders, support systems, and other family members. Reliable and accessible communication and information systems also are key to a community's resilience.

The word "communication" holds a very significant place in all walks of human life. A person is an element of society, nation and the world and cannot live his or her in isolation. He or she has to interact with his or her fellow human beings in normal circumstances and more so during disasters.

There are two distinct facets of communication first is the physical one where we use a variety of means using ever progressing technology. Due to modern technology and use of Satellites we broadcast television programmes all over the world. Satellite phones and internet have added new dimensions to global and almost instantaneous communication. Thus there is no lacking of any type of Hi-Tech. means to communicate. Media (print and electronic) serve as credible and influential agents of communication.

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The other aspect which is far more important is the conceptual one. It is necessary to ensure that recipient of communication understands the contents of the message being conveyed and that he responds to it in the desired manner. This apparently simple requirement carries behind its giant efforts of thorough knowledge, clarity and conciseness. The originator must realize the capacity and capability of the receiver to appreciate the message and to react correctly. Thus, content and clarity have to be the essential features of the message being communicated. The content has to be specific, to the point, brief and couched in simple, understandable and clear language with no ambiguity. In its modern concept "communication" transcends its traditional meaning of transmission of message but includes the quality of the message itself especially the content, conciseness and comprehensibility.

Application of communication technology has a role in all the four distinct phases of disaster management namely, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. But most of the application has traditionally been in response and recovery phases. The new communication and information technologies that have emerged over the last two decades lend themselves to greater possibilities of integration of different communication systems. The interoperability of various communication systems including internet, mobile- phones, fax, e-mail, radio and television is increasingly becoming functional. As a result, the possibilities for application of communication technologies in mitigation and prevention of disasters are also increasing.

In crisis events and emergencies which are mostly chaotic, communications is critical at all phases of disaster management. Communications during emergencies incorporates a wide range of measures to manage risks to communities and the environment. Before disasters strike, telecommunications can be used as a conduit for disseminating information about the impending danger thus, making it possible for people to take the necessary precautions to mitigate the impact of these hazards. Other telecommunication applications, including remote sensing and global positioning system (GPS), have critical roles to play in tracking approaching hazards, alerting authorities, and warning. Journalists who are covering the disasters must be trained about use of such latest instruments.

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There has to be close coordination and the journalists who act as communicators during such disasters starting from reaching the place to cover the mishap and doing a post mortem. At the same time they should be knowing the dangers which is basically the line up to which they can go and no further. A disaster management personnel can enter into a collapsed house since he knows how to save himself while rescuing a trapped victim but an over a reporter or cameraman should not follow

him since he cannot save himself if immediate further mishap happens.

The journalists and the disaster management personnel should also identify the danger spots and map the area accordingly. The journalists should also take care of their communication equipment like mobile phones and computers which hold vast amounts of data vulnerable to attack. Losing or compromise of this data can derail a story or worse put yourself, or a source at risk.

Consider what information is important, vulnerable and how you will protect it and turn off computers when you leave the office / hotel room. One should clear history, re-cycle bin and password and ensure wireless networks are secured and password protected. Sat phones, mobile phones and radios can be traced, even when turned off, so minimize usage in hostile areas and remove battery when not in use. Ensure mobile phones are password protected with auto lock activated and turn blue tooth off when not in use, to prevent hackers from accessing phone.

Role of communication was best experienced during the super cyclone and floods in Odisha. When all the telephone lines were down and mobile towers were razed to the ground. The then Andhra Pradesh Government rushed its modern technology phones which came into immense use. Modern communication also came to use when thousands of persons were evacuated before the cyclone Phalin hit the Odisha coast since the warning equipment were in place beforehand. □

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