

## Social Work Response to Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM)


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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** Social work aims to strengthen individuals, groups, and communities. It plays a vital role in the effective management of community based disaster risk. This study explores the role of social work in effective CBDRM by highlighting the appropriateness of the various methods of social work viz. casework, group work, community organization, social action, social welfare administration, and social work research. It further captures information and connects disaster risk reduction with social work and attempts to develop an interlinkage between Community based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) and social work.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** The study is based on secondary data. Various papers and reports published in the domain of social work are analysed and discussed.

**Findings:** Social workers enable to play a potentially key role in disaster recovery by facilitating community development, restoring livelihoods, providing psychosocial support, and building capacity in local communities. The social worker can play a vital role in minimising disaster risk and creating community resilience through Community Based Disaster Risk Management in various stages of disaster management through community involvement.

**Originality/Value:** Local communities can play a vital role in disaster mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) involves engaging the at-risk communities to actively participate in the identification, analysis, treatment, monitoring and evaluation of disaster risks in order to reduce their vulnerabilities and enhance capacities, through a decentralized planning process.

**Paper Type:** View Point.

**KEYWORDS:** Community | Disaster | Social work | Frameworks | Policy and Acts

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## Introduction:

Since time immemorial, all disasters have been a constant companion of human being. Natural and man-made disasters continue to occur unabated and without any prior warning alerts. These hazards often turn into a disaster due to a lack of preparedness. Disaster is an unexpected and calamitous event that is always accompanied by enormous loss, and destruction, causing devastating effects on human life and property. Disaster management serves as a very significant management aspect to survive in the occurrence of any natural or man-made disaster. Disaster risk management is the implementation of disaster risk reduction strategies and policies to reduce the existing disaster risk, manage any residual risk, and prevent any future new disaster risk resulting in strengthening resilience and reduction of disaster losses (National Disaster Management Authority, 2009). Areas of concern of Social Work in disaster situations include coping with traumatic stress, resource mobilization for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, and coordination of various intervention systems. Although Social Work is involved in psychosocial interventions in disasters, the profession could play a more vital role in social development employing participatory approach (Pyles, 2007). Social workers can play a constructive role in enhancing community participation in Disaster Risk Management as they are familiar with community's local resources, skills, and capacity of community leaders whose services may be utilized during the time of disasters (Hossain A, 2013).

## Concept of “Community Based” in Community Based Disaster Risk Management:

The term “Community Based” means that disaster risk management work is carried out by and together with the community in which they play a key role from the programme planning stage to the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation stages. It is agreed that in this concept, the community is the main actor who makes and implements important decisions concerning the conduct of disaster risk management. There are many empirical cases, stories, histories, or events where communities have tried to solve the crisis they are facing. Some of the world's communities have long been living with disaster risks. CBDRM becomes the indicator of what a given community has done, is doing, and will do in managing cyclic, periodic as well as predictive disaster risks. Some communities such as those in Bangladesh, Africa, Timor, Yogyakarta, Aceh, and Nias have long been living with recurrent floods, drought, volcanic eruptions, tsunami, and/or earthquake hazards (Paripurno et.al., 2011). Knowledge of disaster risk management can derive from bio-indicators or bio-detectors (such as the sound of certain birds, the phenomenon when snakes go down the mountain), geo-indicators, or geo-detectors (such as the low tide indicating

tsunami, the roaring sea wave, birds that indicate earthquake). This is called traditional knowledge of local wisdom that is passed down from generation to generation and is an integral part of the CBDRM process. Some of the indicators prove to be effective in risk management (Paripurno et.al., 2011).

CBDRM is a reflection of the trust that the community has the full right to determine the types and ways in which disaster management works in their context as they have the inherent right to be given the opportunity to determine the direction of their life. Following this thought and to the extent permitted by the laws and regulations, the community has the full right to make the decision on what and how they will manage disaster risk in their areas (Paripurno et.al., 2011). The meaning of “community-based” in CBDRM can be extended as follows: full participation that involves also the participation of the vulnerable, men and women, the elderly, people with special needs, the marginalized, and so on. It also means a bottom-up – instead of top-down – approach, full participation, access and control, inclusive approach, and a sense of ownership of the past, existing, and future systems of disaster management. A top-down approach may be possible initially but over time community can be empowered to be self-reliant to ensure a more bottom-up approach (Kafle & Murshed, 2006). Twigg defines the approach as “from, by and for” the community in the entire process, where they can take control of the system and not being controlled by the system. In CBDRM, the system also includes early warning (Twigg, 2004).

There are a large number of studies, articles, views, research, and case studies available on Disaster Risk Reduction which started gaining momentum after International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction 1990, which indicates community participation as an integral part of DRR. It paved the way for a substantive amount of work having been undertaken in the area of disaster response. The impact of natural calamities may be reduced by ensuring that people are capable of withstanding the immediate effect of disaster in emergency hours with proper skill-building, training, pre-planning, and mock-drill (Jagirdhar & Sastry, 2014). CBDRM is a process in which risk communities (people) are actively engaged in the identification, analysis, treatment, monitoring, and evaluation of disaster risks to reduce their vulnerabilities and enhance capacities. This means that people are equally participating in the decision-making and implementation of disaster risk management activities. It is pertinent to mention here that “People have become more vocal and confident; they developed a “we-can-do-it” feeling as a result of the many capacity-building initiatives. They have identified vulnerable and high-risk areas and also recognized what strategies and actions are needed to minimize risks. At the individual level, people have become familiar with the do's and don'ts of action before, during, and after disasters. At the family level, new practices have been adopted for the construction



of houses and the storage of grains. At the community level, people have become more analytical and, have started to initiate additional interventions (UNDP, 2012)

## Methods of Social Work and its Applicability to Disaster Risk Management:

Social work is a practice profession that affects individuals, families, groups, communities, and society as a whole to meet basic needs and to improve social functioning, self-determination, collective responsibility, and general well-being (IFSW, 2014). According to Alpa Parmar (2014), there are six methods of Social Work viz; casework, group work, community organization, social welfare administration, social research, and social action. The applicability of each of these methods in CBDRM is explained below:

- **Social Casework:** It is a method that aims at enhancing better social relationships and social adjustment of the individual client through counselling so that the client leads a satisfying and useful life. Gordon Hamilton (1940) points out that, "The objective of casework is to administer practical services and offer one-to-one counselling to enable the client for better social adjustment and social functioning. This method is mostly applicable in post-disaster stress and trauma counselling like stress and anxiety management (Hamilton G., 1940).
- **Social Group Work:** It is a method in which the group worker enables various types of groups to function in such a manner that both group interaction & programme activities contribute to the growth of the individual and the achievement of desirable social goals. During the preparedness and response phases in a disaster, various dedicated groups are created and provided specialised pieces of training.
- **Community Organization:** It refers to various methods of intervention whereby a professional change agent (could be a social worker) helps a community action system composed of individuals, groups, or organizations to engage in planned collective actions to deal with special problems within the democratic system of values (Kramer & Specht, 1975). It is suitably applicable to CBDRM as it emphasizes planning & developing social services in order to meet the health & welfare needs of a community or larger unit. CO also paves the way for CBDRM by ensuring people's participation in Disaster Risk Reduction.
- **Social Action:** It is an organized group process solving general social problems and furthering

social welfare objectives by legislative, social, health or economic progress. The term social action refers to organized & legally permitted activities designed to mobilize public opinion, legislation & public administration in favour of objectives believed to be socially desirable. This method is applicable when social workers are involved in advocacy for bringing out some structural mitigation changes at the community level and trying to lobby with the government like "Narmada Bachao Andolan" or trying to amend low/ legislation like many NGOs/ CSOs are now advocating for the inclusion of the word "mainstreaming" in The Disaster Management Act, 2005.

- **Social Welfare Research:** It involves a systematic critical investigation of questions in the social welfare field with the purpose of yielding answers to problems of social work. As disaster management in itself is a continuous and ongoing process, it happens all year round and not only when disasters strike. Similarly, CBDRM is an all year-round process making it one of the perfect tools for community engagement and participation. Training Need Assessment is done on a regular basis and hence new research studies need to be planned to enhance training skills.

Among the above methods of social work, community organization method is widely applicable in CBDRM. Social workers in their role of community organizers would support in conducting participatory planning, training to the community, informing the community about the existing natural and manmade risk through the partnership of stakeholders. However, Marie Weil (1995) popularized the broader term community practice instead of community organization. Community practice includes work to improve the quality of life and increase social justice through social-economic development, community organizing, social planning and progressive social change. She emphasized cooperative efforts between practitioners, affected populations, groups, communities, and society. She talked about four central processes viz; Development, Organising, Planning and Progressive Changes. Thus, it is observed that processes of group work, community organization, and social change would be applicable to Disaster Risk Reduction while ensuring community participation (Weil & Gamble, 1995).

Murry G. Ross (1967) defines, community organization as a "process by which a community identifies its needs or objectives, gives priority to them, develops the confidence and will to work at them, finds resources (internal and external) to deal with them, and in doing so, extends and develops co-cooperative and collaborative attitudes and practices in the community". In this definition by "process", he meant a movement from identification of a problem or

objective to the solution of the problem or attainment of the objective in the community. There are other processes for dealing with community problems, but here he implied the community organisation as a process which enhances the capacity of the community to function as an integrated unit grows as it deals with one or more community problems. The task of the professional worker in community organisation is to help initiate, nourish, and develop this process. His/her task is also to make this process conscious, deliberative, and understood.

A.J. Christopher (2015) emphasized that “Community organisation is applied when the community takes initiative in solving their problems and meeting their needs. In such a situation the community plays different roles in dealing with the various needs and problems. Usually within the community either the interested people or the people who are affected by an issue take up the lead in addressing the problem. In other words, they form the community and undertake different roles in solving the problems, and consequently, needs get fulfilled. But such a process does not take place easily and hence someone has to take the lead as facilitator” (Christopher, 2015). He further emphasized that social workers as community organiser can use different methods to identify, assess the need, analyze and understand the situation. There are two levels of understanding, the first level is the understanding of the community by the organizer and the second level is making the community understand their own situation. Different methods and techniques can be used to understand and make the community understand Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) (Christopher, 2015).

As mentioned by A.J. Christopher (2015), “Social worker as community organizer play roles of communicator, enabler, guide, animator, counsellor, collaborator, innovator, motivator, catalyst, advocate, facilitator, mediator, and educator. Various steps of CO as defined by A.J. Christopher may get interlinked as most of the frameworks assessed and studied were found to revolve around capacity building, community training, and thus building community resilience through various steps of community organisations viz; assessment of needs and problems, list the problems, prioritize the need, redefine the problem, formulate achievable goals, work out the alternatives, select an appropriate alternative, work out a plan of action, mobilize resources, implement the plan, evaluate the plan of action. In all such activities, social workers play the most significant and consistent role.

## Role of Social Worker in Disaster Risk Reduction:

Social workers can play a crucial part in helping to reduce the risk of disasters and acknowledge their role in the communities of which they are themselves members. Ms. Margareta Wahlstrom, Special Representative of the

UN Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction said about social workers that “You can be the transmission chain.” Ms. Wahlstrom even confirmed it at the European Association of Schools of Social Work (EASSW) conference, which drew more than 700 participants from 44 countries (Wahlstrom, 2017). The reality was emphasized by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR, 2015). Social workers may work in partnership with a wide range of activities and organizations - not just those from the emergency response process but also in preparedness. The role of social workers in disaster risk reduction is more than just helping communities cope with the effects of disasters such as floods or earthquakes. They are well-positioned to identify and try to address what puts people at risk in the first place, whether poverty, poor health and housing, environmental challenges, or, as usual, a combination of those factors.

EASSW is currently developing strategies for the way social workers are trained, in order to better address the emerging challenges posed by climate change, migration, and resilience. Sue Lawrence, President of the EASSW confirmed that “We’re at a crossroads, and need to develop a new curriculum for social work to confront the new condition that we find ourselves in”. Disaster risk reduction is part of that. Social workers can work to help reduce disasters in Europe and around the world (UNDRR, 2015). The importance of meaningful participation of all stakeholders and their capacity building has been emphasized in the Hyogo Framework for Action (2005-2015) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030) (Center, 2015). The Hyogo Framework for Action was an agreement adopted in 2005 just a few weeks after the Indian Ocean Tsunami. The Hyogo Framework of Action (HFA) 2005-2015 (UNISDR, n.d.) was adopted to work globally towards sustainable reduction of disaster losses in lives and the social, economic, and environmental assets of communities and countries. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, a 15-year international blueprint adopted by 169 countries in March 2015, emphasizes the need to see individual risks as part of a whole, and seeks ways that involve everyone in formulating and implementing policies. It also spreads disaster relief mitigation over natural hazards to cover man-made threats such as industrial hazards, and epidemics.

Viable forms of community-based disaster reduction depend on a favourable political environment that understands, promotes and supports this participation process. A special effort is required to recall locally valued traditional coping mechanisms and strategies, while modern concepts and technology can provide additional innovative approaches. The first to respond to a disaster is the local community. The involvement of local people promotes self-reliance and ensures that emergency management plans meet local needs and circumstances. Generally, indigenous knowledge, wisdom, as well as an innovative solution for the mitigation of



hazards, is well-rooted within the local community. Failure to understand the risk behavior and culture of local communities can lead to badly designed preparedness measures including early warning systems. Investments in community-based preparedness and early warning systems have proved to save lives, protect property, and reduce economic losses. Thus, the community organization process of social work aims to bring the community people together and enables the community to own, get involved, and being accountable for the whole efforts of risk reduction strategies at the local level (Zubir & Amirrol, 2011).

Table 1 depicts the comparative assessment of social work and recovery principles which was executed in a study conducted by H Bronwyn (2015). The practice of recovery has become a staple of mental health services, regardless of how they are understood, accepted, and practiced. The study analyses the principles of recovery as stipulated in Australian national policies and examines the challenges associated with implementing these in an inpatient mental health facility as represented in Table 1. Using a qualitative method with the incorporation of a literature review, documentary analysis of policy and standards, and reflections on social work practice in an inpatient facility, the study reveals a strong correlation between recovery and social work goals. However, the analysis also highlights the noticeable absence of social work in contributions to the literature and research around the move to recovery-oriented practice. The same correlation might be possible to some extent if recovery oriented practice is implemented in the field of CBDRM (Bronwyn, *et al.*, 2015).

**Table 1: Social Work V/s Recovery Principal Approach practiced in health-related services**

Social work	Recovery approach
Self-determination	Self-determination
Empowerment	Empowerment
Acceptance and uniqueness of individuals	Personal meaning, expert by experience
Collaboration and participation	Collaborative relationships
Identifying and developing strengths	Strengths
Respect for inherent dignity, worth and autonomy of every person	Self-identity, sense of agency, inherent capacity to live a full and meaningful life of their choosing
Respects the human rights of individuals and groups	Upholding of human rights

(Bronwyn Hyde, *et al.*, 2015)

As discussed by G.J. Mishra (2011), unionization process may be adopted in Disaster Risk Reduction at the community level where CO works for organizing the unorganized people for their specific goals and interest. In unionization the oppressed, exploited, weaker, vulnerable, and marginalized people (this includes individual(s), group(s) and/ or communities voluntarily organize themselves in union(s) based on equality to identify and rank their needs/problems/issues; to secure their essential demands; to protect and promote their interests by collective action; accepting the principle of majority rule and maximum participation

of community people in each and every step of community organisation and development process. To unionize the target group i.e., community people, the following strategies of unionization, can be practiced (Mishra, 2011).

- a) Information collection and community meetings.
- b) Conscientisation
- c) Formulation of plans and Programmes (through P.R.A).
- d) Capacity building
- e) Collaboration and co-ordination
- f) Networking

G.J. Mishra (2011) further emphasized that authorities have to ensure a conducive environment for the holistic and sustainable development of people, right from the small village level to the nation as a whole. But it could not happen, due to the 'egocentric style of functioning of the authorities, instead of 'peoplecentric style. As a result of it, the majority of people are in a pitiable situation. For improving their conditions and providing what is due to them, the following strategies can be practiced to deal with authorities as and when required; i) Submission of petition ii) Persuasion iii) Bargaining iv) Negotiation v) Lobbying and advocacy vi) Conflictual/confrontational strategies. These skills of CO are applicable in flood risk mitigation activities at the community level.

### Sustainability of CBDRM based on Social Work Interventions:

Successful CBDRM is based on various social work interventions which include the following factors:

- Community organisation process support in the implementation of CBDRM process.
- CO and CBDRM both are based on participation (bottom-up) of the community and external input (top-down) as an expert/social workers for technical support.
- Adoption of traditional organizational structure (indigenous people or local community) and mechanism for decision making (formal and informal) is an important aspect of Community Organisation that also enhance the knowledge of the community locally to minimize the impacts of any disasters.
- Capacity-building activity and multi-stakeholders' partnership are essential elements of CBDRM.
- Awareness generation in the local dialect regarding DRR is an important tool of Community Organisation.
- Community is the main actor while external stakeholders and community organisers act as facilitators in the process of CBDRM.

Active involvement of the community in the process of planning and decision-making in the identification of realistic solutions, feasible preparedness, and mitigation solutions is essential to establishing ownership. Unity or cohesiveness of the people, community, individuals, or society in the commitment for disaster reduction can be ensured with effective community organisation. The existence of an institution set up at the community level can ensure the sustainability of CBDRM process aimed at protecting the health and well-being of the community in a sustainable manner. These institutions also provide the community with the opportunity in participation of decision-making process and building confidence at the community level. Skill training and capacity building at the community level provides the community with doable mitigation solutions that make CBDRM cost effective and self-reliant.

## Conclusion:

The issue of disaster management has made significant changes in recent years, ranging from assisting and responding to disaster risk reduction (DRR) and public administration. Organizations and vulnerable countries engaged in DRR have moved from a reactive, top-down model to proactive, community-focused disaster management. Social workers can assist with implementing early warning systems and in preparing communities for natural disasters. Social workers enable to play a potentially key role in disaster recovery by facilitating community development, restoring livelihoods, providing psychosocial support, and building capacity in local communities. The social worker can play a vital role in minimising disaster risk and creating community resilience through Community Based Disaster Risk Management in various stages of disaster management through community involvement. One of the methods of community organization may be directly applicable to ensuring risk reduction at the community level. The various national and international framework does acknowledge the role of community organisation and its models in enhancing community resilience. This article captures information and connects disaster risk reduction with social work and attempts to develop an interlinkage between Community based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) and social work.

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### GJEIS Prevent Plagiarism in Publication

The Editorial Board had used the Ouriginal – a Swedish anti-plagiarism software tool which is a fully-automatic machine learning text-recognition system made for detecting, preventing and handling plagiarism and trusted by thousands of institutions across worldwide. Ouriginal by Turnitin is an award-winning software that helps detect and prevent plagiarism regardless of language. Combining text-matching with writing-style analysis to promote academic integrity and prevent plagiarism, Ouriginal is simple, reliable and easy to use. Ouriginal was acquired by Turnitin in 2021. As part of a larger global organization GJEIS and Turnitin better equipped to anticipate the foster an environment of academic integrity for educators and students around the globe. Ouriginal is GDPR compliant with privacy by design and an uptime of 99.9% and have trust to be the partner in academic integrity (<https://www.ouriginal.com/>) tool to check the originality and further affixed the similarity index which is {1%} in this case (See below Annexure-I). Thus, the reviewers and editors are of view to find it suitable to publish in this Volume-14, Issue-3, Jul-Sep 2022.

## Annexure 14.15

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### Reviewers Memorandum

**Reviewer’s Comment 1:** Social workers acknowledge their role in the communities by playing a crucial role in helping to reduce the risk of disaster. They are well-positioned to identify and try to address what puts people at risk in the first place.

**Reviewer’s Comment 2:** The paper is planned strategically, which cover various themes related to disaster management and social workers such as, concept of community bases in disaster risk management, methods of social work and its applicability to disaster risk management, role of social worker in disaster risk reduction and sustainability of CBDRM based on social work interventions.

**Reviewer’s Comment 3:** The paper is based on the secondary data. Theme of the paper is very appropriate. Inclusion of primary data would further have improved the quality of the work done.



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### Editorial Excerpt



The article has 1% of plagiarism which is the accepted percentage as per the norms and standards of the journal for publication. As per the editorial board's observations and blind reviewers' remarks the paper had some minor revisions which were communicated on a timely basis to the authors (Tanushree and Sayantani), and accordingly, all the corrections had been incorporated as and when directed and required to do so. The comments related to this manuscript are noticeably related to the theme "**Social Work Response to Community Based Disaster Risk Management**" both subject-wise and research-wise. Natural and man-made disasters continue to occur unabated and without any prior warning alerts. Disaster management serves as a very significant management aspect to survive in the occurrence of any natural or man-made disaster. This study explores the role of social work in effective CBDRM by highlighting the appropriateness of the various methods of social work. Overall, the paper promises to provide a strong base for further studies in the area. After comprehensive reviews and the editorial board's remarks, the manuscript has been categorized and decided to publish under "**View Point**" category.

### Acknowledgement



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