

Assessment and Reengineering of Counseling and Psychosocial Support maneuvers in Disasters with an emphasis on Local Structures in Marvdasht

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ABSTRACT: The present study intended to assess and reengineer the MOHEB plan with an emphasis on local structures of Fathabad village. This was a descriptive and applied study. To collect data, observation and interview were used. This plan included both maneuver and workshop. Findings: MOHEB team, emergency team, province welfare organization crisis command staff (based on IMS), and Marvdasht welfare organization (based on ICS) were designed and localized. Conclusion: it is recommended that coping with disasters trainings become frequent in order to develop and maintain the readiness for facing disasters.

Keywords: Counseling and Psychosocial Support, Disasters, Incident command and management, Maneuver.

INTRODUCTION

Human is always exposed to incidents threatening his life. These incidents have been increasing as human has evolved (Heidari & Jafari, 2008). Natural disasters are inseparable parts of human life. Some of them, especially earthquake, are considered as one of the stressing sources for human being because they are unpredictable and harmful. Generally, these disasters results in humane and material undesirable outcomes. Extreme earthquakes lead to undesirable sociological and psychological outcomes because of broad urban destruction, extreme casualties, bereavement bitter experiences, etc. (Sharifi, 2003).

Incidents affect families and societies differently. These effects are not distinct and separable. The effects of incidents on society's individuals play role also in their effects on whole society. Psychosocial supports system plays an important role in protecting individuals in disasters. Disruption and psychosocial disorder have bad effects on family and society and they are great stressing sources for individuals constituting family and society. Psychological destruction of family and society are more destructive than the incidents themselves (Karami, 1994).

The power of the harms caused by disasters like earthquake is much more affected by the characteristics of the victims and their social conditions and the extent of support they receive in these disasters than the characteristics of the earthquake itself. The role of these factors determines the extent of mental and social harms in victims (Sharifi, 2003). Research shows that social support has a useful effect on physical and mental health of human. Those who enjoy social support feel less stress (Scocco, Meneghel, Caon & Dello, 2001; Giordano, 2000; Taylor, 1995) and seldom get depressed. Therefore, social support reduces the effects of stress through increasing true understanding of threatening incidents (Kaplan & Sadock, 1998). Psychosocial support facilitates resilience in families and societies and helps people improve after a crisis (Yasamy, 2003).

About the organizational actions, it should be mentioned that a comprehensive plan is essential for every organization (Ghazizadeh & Mesdaghiani, 2001). Nowadays, most of governments regard quality of life as an important part of social and economic development (Benedict et al, 2005). Therefore, Counseling and psychological center of prevention department of state welfare organization has considered a priority for conducting the plan of counseling and psychosocial support after the disasters (MOHEB) as a preventive action. MOHEB plan, with an emphasis on local structures, includes development and training of social health and counseling services emergency groups in disasters with an emphasis on society-based services. In this plan, the will and power of people are put into focus in controlling and managing the crisis. Local community's rehabilitation plan makes people aware of psychosocial problems resulting from disasters, teaches needed skills especially stress management skill, and rehabilitates local communities in a way that they become able to prepare crisis management projects before the disasters occur. In this plan, the will and power of people are put into focus in controlling and managing the crisis. Psychosocial interventions include a extensive continuum of services in mental health domain. Mental health is a condition of emotional and psychic welfare in which the individual can have a suitable social functioning and supply the daily needs of his life. Psychosocial welfare puts an emphasis on the relationship between the psychological dimensions of individual's experiences (thoughts, feelings, and behavior) and social life experiences (communications, customs, and culture) (Zokaeifar, Mirbeigi, Eskash, Dousti, Sedaqatpisheh & Shafiei, 2014).

In the first counseling and psychosocial supports maneuver in disasters (MOHEB) that was conducted in southern Golshahr (Zokaeifar et al, 2014), it was found that people have little knowledge in coping with disasters. Coping with disasters trainings should become frequent in order to develop and maintain the readiness for facing disasters. Therefore, Counseling and psychological center of prevention department of state welfare organization has considered a priority for conducting the plan of counseling and psychosocial support after the disasters (MOHEB) as a preventive action. Assessing and reengineering the southern Golshahr maneuver, this study was conducted to rehabilitate the people of Fathabad village (Marvdasht County) for preparing for, managing, and coping with critical conditions through local communities. This study also deals with assessment of counseling and psychosocial supports plan (MOHEB) in this quarter.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Method

In this descriptive-analytic study, observation and semi-structured interview were used to collect data. The program includes an educational workshop and a maneuver in Fathabad village (Marvdasht County) in 2013.

Participants

Population of the study included all individuals living in Fathabad village (Marvdasht County) (116 individuals). Participants included 33 children (below 15 years old), 9 elderly (above 70 years old), 4 physically disabled persons, 25 spouseless women, and 48 other people.

Instruments:

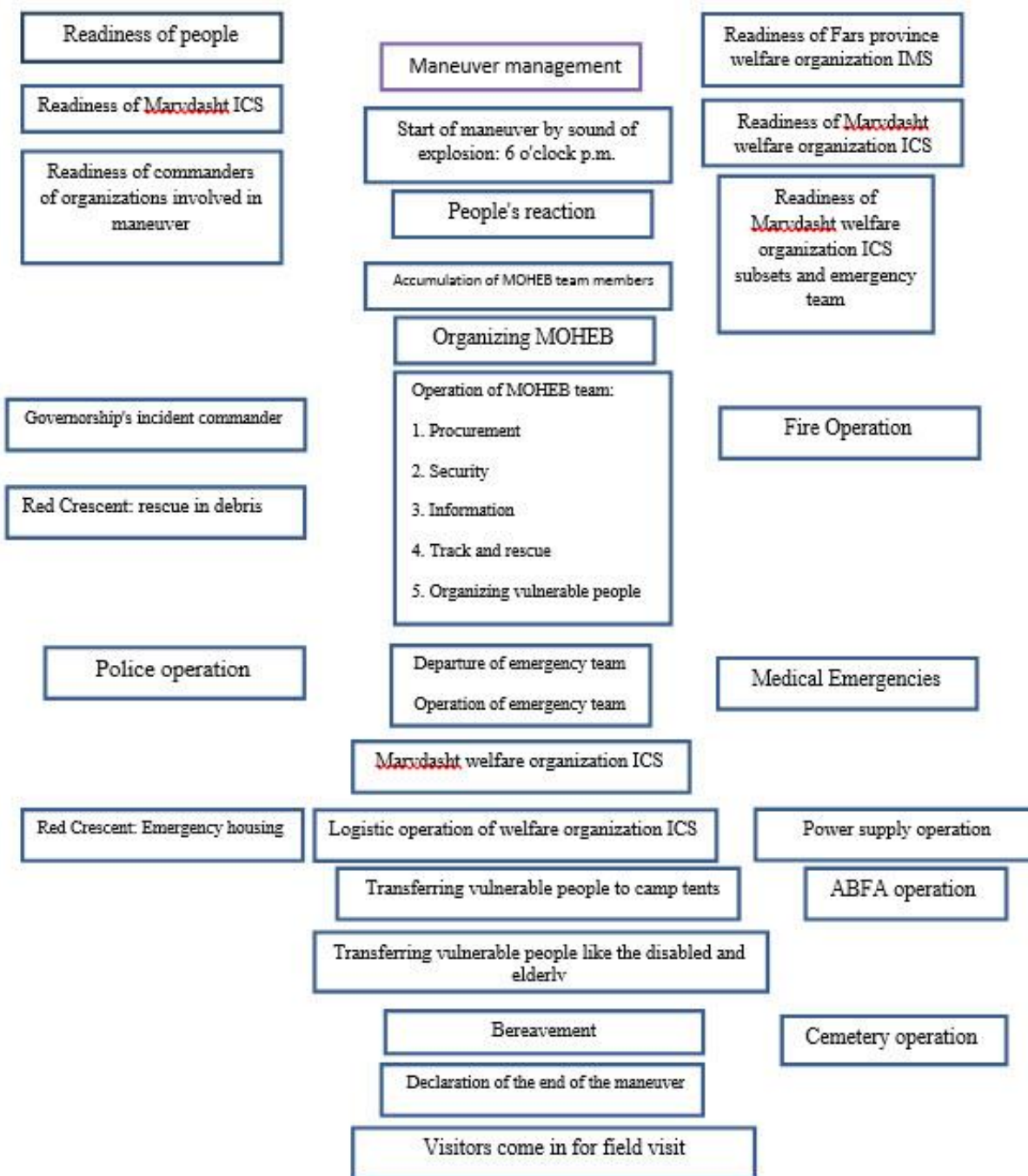
The author has developed a semi-structured questionnaire that measures the participants' opinions regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the maneuver. Content validity was used to confirm the validity of the instrument; the questionnaire was presented to a number of experts and they confirmed its validity requiring some partial changes. To analyze the data, descriptive statistical methods (frequency, percentage, cumulative percentage, and mean score) have been utilized.

Counseling and psychosocial supports in disasters plan intends to prevent psychosocial problems by collaboration of governmental structure and non-governmental structure. On one hand, psychologists, counselors, and social workers are considered as emergency groups and receive continued educational programs to become formidable and to act quickly when inevitable incidents occur. On the other hand, organizing neighborhood groups

and teaching specific skills especially stress management skills to them make people ready to enter crisis management projects (Zokaeifar et al, 2014).

Emergency Preparedness Training Program included workshop and maneuver with presence of people. After checking with crisis committee, the emergency maneuver was conducted in city's square to deepen the information and to show the importance of paying attention to planning in disasters. The parts of this maneuver are as follows:

Whole process of Fathabad MOHEB maneuver



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

According to the findings of observations, questionnaires, and interviews, the effectiveness of counseling and psychosocial support maneuvers in natural disasters based on Incident Command System (ICS) and Incident Management System (IMS) was examined. According to the findings, participants' views about the advantages of this plan are as follows:

Part one: cooperation of people and officials

1. Holding high-quality educational and practical sessions
2. Active presence of Marvdasht welfare organization director; and his good relationship with governor and governor-general.
3. Ability to create effective scenes in people reaction part.
4. Creating Fars province's IMS in a situation very similar to real performance.
5. High motivation and commitment of province Welfare State director general, undersecretary of prevention, County Welfare State director, and province MOHEB supervisor for holding the maneuver.
6. High cooperation of key members of IMS, ICS, and Welfare State emergency team in briefing sessions.
7. Good relationship and motivation of Fathabad people
8. Suitable combination of women, men, and children
9. Inclusion of all vulnerable people in maneuver (including children, women, elderly, and disabled people)

Part two: considering security issues during the maneuver

1. Insuring the participants of maneuver
2. Creating vibration in the ground that shocked everyone
3. Demolition of symbolic structures that had already been prepared
4. No loss of life during the maneuver

Part three: satisfaction with the performance of MOHEB team

1. Preparation of the stats by MOHEB team and exchanging it with welfare organization
2. Obvious commandment of MOHEB captain
3. Obvious division of labor in MOHEB's 5 groups
4. Fast fencing by MOHEB's security group
5. Observing the hierarchy and integrity of command by all teams
6. Timely and suitable reporting
7. Development of good emotional relationship between emergency team members and the vulnerable group
8. Timely establishment of Welfare State camp in a good place and suitable form
9. The maneuver was neither hasty and short in time, nor boring and very long in time. An appropriate day and time had been selected for the maneuver.
10. Well organization of vulnerable groups by MOHEB group
11. Choosing a suitable scene for maneuver
12. Very good relationship between emergency team, MOHEB team, and target groups
13. Good coordination and cooperation between MOHEB groups and respective helping organizations
14. Good function of Marvdasht Incident Commandment
15. Good and reality-like performance of province welfare organization IMS by use of maps, tables, and intelligence.

Part four: innovation

1. Employing a director, a make-up artist, and some semi-professional actors
2. Controlled bereavement
3. Representation of normal conditions before earthquake in a unique form (narration, wedding caravan, baking bread, playing, etc.)
4. Optimized use of all destroyed spaces in maneuver area
5. Innovative addition of kindergarten scene to scenario
6. Creating real vibration in the ground

According to the findings, participants' views about the disadvantages of this plan are as follows:

Part one: cooperation of people and officials

1. People crowd crossing the sidelines of the maneuver

2. Some people helping to establish the camp tents without wearing a uniform (probably staff of Red Crescent Organization)
3. Lack of mat for some vulnerable people, especially for children

Part two: satisfaction with the performance of MOHEB team

1. Weak organization of MOHEB
2. Condense accumulation in front of logistics warehouse (the process of equipping MOHEB was not done systematically)
3. Some injured people (like children) had been located in the place intended for vulnerable people
4. Welfare Organization commander often commanded the emergency team rather than MOHEB team.
5. Almost all the participants were divided into vulnerable groups. No normal group (headed households) was located in the camp.
6. The use of children, instead of adults, as dead bodies (deep psychological effects on children and parents)
7. The bereavement scenes of separating corpses somehow suggested that psychological support from relations had not been very effective.
8. Field visit was done before the second ambulance left the cemetery.

Discussion

The practical purpose of designing and conducting MOHEB maneuver in Fars province was to enhance and reengineer the welfare organization MOHEB plan in order to change its traditional structure into a paradigm with IMS/ICS standards. This reengineering was planned in two phases: logical and practical. MOHEB team and emergency team, who did not have a consistent organizational structure, were organized in a specific format. Fars province welfare organization as the crisis command staff (based on IMS), and Marvdasht welfare organization (based on ICS) were designed and localized.

In addition to the mentioned organization that connected the province officials to the target population in emergency conditions, some other cases were determined to be organized: designing the uniforms, estimation of required sources and facilities, and determining the position and role of other helping organizations in time of disasters.

In the second phase of this reengineering, it was decided to examine and revise the logical stage through conduction of the IMS/ICS-based maneuver in practical stage. It was also decided to prepare an instruction of MOHEB plan till the end of the year (2013) in order to be a long step toward being more complete and enhanced than before.

Nowadays, public contributions and cooperation, as one of the basic foundations of development, attract the attention of policymakers more than before. It is considered as one of the basic and efficient instruments of the development of every country. In fact, contribution is the honest and conscious cooperation of people for sake of society. Nowadays, the developing countries need the active cooperation of people more than before. The more people cooperate, the faster the projects progress to achieve sustainable development (Sarvestani, Parvin, Baqaei, Kordani, Baqaei, 2012).

The importance of public contributions in decreasing the effects of incidents and disasters, especially psychosocial effects, is quite overt to everyone. Additionally, the mentioned approach should consider all aspects of disasters management (prevention, preparation, coping, rebuilding, and rehabilitation) and pave the way for prevention, preparation, and taking rapid reaction. According to the results of southern Golshahr maneuver (Zokaeifar et al, 2014), people had received little education regarding disaster management and had little preparation although they had an important position in helping injured persons in time of disasters.

It is worthy of notice that psychosocial supports are being neglected as compared with other actions such as rescue, rebuilding, and rehabilitation. On one hand, the psychosocial damages can not be measured as compared to losses of life and property. On the other hand, experience shows that contribution of people in programs can influence the extent of damages and rapid rehabilitation. Due to the fact that people are the first interveners in incidents, education and organization of public groups can play a great role in maintaining the structure of neighborhood till the governmental forces arrive (Zokaeifar et al, 2014).

Finally, it should be noticed that Incident Command System will be useful if it is employed in all steps of disaster and if the users have been educated through this system. Encouraging the officials to learn about vulnerabilities and past disasters is essential in planning for reducing risk. To achieve this, not only legislation, but also investment in civil contributions and public education are needed (Buck et al, 2006). Experiences of the past crises show that governments can not perform the emergency operations to cope with crisis by themselves. To conduct a successful

rescue operation and reduce the damages, presence of social groups is essential. In societies that have planned pre-crisis preparation programs, the extent of losses and damages has significantly decreased.

According to the results of the present study, people had received little education regarding disaster management and had little preparation although they had an important position in helping injured persons in time of disasters. On the other hand, conduction of preparation programs, as a part of programs for coping with disasters, showed to be effective in preparation of individuals. Therefore, it is recommended to conduct such maneuvers in other cities and villages for enhancing the preparation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We thank all officials of Fars province's and Marvdasht' Welfare Organization and also dear Fathabad village people, without their help this research would not be accomplished.

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