

Forum: Economic and Social Council I

Issue: Improving information and communication systems to reduce the effects of natural disasters

Student Officer: Min Jeong Kim

Position: Chair of Economic and Social Council I

Introduction

When acting against a catastrophic natural disaster, quick, organized and accurate information and communication systems are essential to reducing the effects of the disaster. Reducing the impacts of one includes complicated solutions involving both the technology and the social endeavor. Ways to improve preparation in case of a disaster, recovery, hazard mitigation and disaster response are crucial to a country that is prone to natural disasters, especially in case of LEDCs. Enhanced information and communication systems play an important role in how a nation responds to a natural disaster. Inadequate or lacking communication directly adds to the lack of knowledge regarding the situation. Establishing and keeping direct contact between government officials, formal and informal responders, decision makers and most importantly, the public should be the priority in any emergency plan. Continual examination and research to ameliorate these means of communication are important to reduce impacts of future disasters.

Effective warning of a natural disaster should get to the widest audience possible in a short span of time. Such broad distribution should not only make use of government owned systems such as but not limited to Weather Radio and local sirens, but also explore private radio systems, television broadcasting, telephones, Internet and paper based media.

In discussing this issue, it is crucial for delegates to generate ways of effective means to communicate information both technologically and socially. It will be helpful for delegates to consider improvement of these systems whether they are disaster warning systems or disaster response systems.

Definition of Key Terms

Hazard mitigation

This refers to the process of reducing factors that could contribute as risks.

Warning

Telling and informing that something unpleasant may happen in the future for people to be able to avoid it.

General Overview

Relevant Organizations

Delegates will need to heavily concentrate on not only their delegations but also relevant organizations. Organizations are a great part of generating solutions and can link countries together to cooperate. Keep in mind that these organizations described below are only prominent and well known, and not the only organizations that delegates can access.

EOC (Emergency Operations Center)

The EOC is often regarded as the central physical point of an emergency communication infrastructure. It not only manages and assembles the responses but also contributes as root for communication between the government, the private sector and the public. In many cases the EOCs are considered the root of all decisions regarding response efforts.

ICS (Incident Command System)

This is an organization based on endowing with common framework with which representatives from different agencies can cooperate. ICS focuses on giving standard procedures regarding response and operation and eliminating risks and problems that occur from miscommunication in case of a natural disaster.

DERA (Disaster preparedness and Emergency Response Association)

DERA is a non governmental and non profit association that aims to link professionals, volunteers and organizations active in improving response to emergency. DERA provides with communication teams and equipments and also assists relief organizations in case of a natural disaster.

NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration)

Initiated in 1807, NOAA is a group of scientists who explore high technology instrumentation to provide the public, planners and decision making groups with information of the disaster.

Possible Solutions

Below are some of the well known solutions that have been proposed in action to improve information and communication systems. It is recommended that delegates not rely wholly only on these solutions but also develop and find solutions of their own.

Public-Private Partnership

“Effective Disaster Warnings” solidified by the National Science and Technology Council has recommended public-private partnership that could be a non profit corporation that could assemble stakeholders from a series of groups to bring agreement on implementation and supply the government with clear recommendations.

Creating groups

One or two working groups of representatives from different warning agencies studying effectiveness of warnings, warning users, and manufacturing of equipments, broadcasters and network operators are suggested.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
March 27 1994	Tornado kills six worshippers of Goshen Church in northern Alabama. Warning was issued 12 minutes before it hit. Even though warning was electronically broadcast, it was not able to reach anyone in or near the church. The region was also not in contact with NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) Weather Radio.
February 1998	Abnormally strong tornadoes hit east central Florida during night time, killing forty two. 14 warnings were issued by NWS (National Weather Service) that were provided with wide distribution of electronic media and NOAA Weather Radio. However they were unable to reach many people as they were asleep and did not possess own tone alert NOAA Weather Radios.
May 1998	Tornado kills six in Spencer; South Dakota. Storm disabled power, therefore warnings could not be distributed.
2000	Initiation of Disaster Mitigation Act by CHR (Center for Hazards Research and Policy Development)
2004	Tsunami in the Indian Ocean; one of the most known disasters in history, death had been confirmed in at least eight countries. Death toll now approximately 150,000. Over 50 countries sent in aid and put effort to alleviate the impacts.
2005	Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, the United States.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

The United Nation has the ISDR, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. ISDR aims to increase awareness of risks, obtain commitments from local governments to implement actions and policies regarding disaster reduction, make partnerships more active and make improvements in the scientific areas.

- Humanitarian assistance to victims of natural disasters and similar emergency situations **(A/RES/45/100)**
- International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction **(A/RES/44/236)**
- Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations **(A/RES/46/182)**
- Natural Disasters and Vulnerability **(A/RES/58/215)**

Bibliography

"Incident Command System." *Wikipedia*. Web. 13 Jan. 2010. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Incident_Command_System>.

Smith, Patrick C., and David M. Simpson. "The Role of Mobile Emergency Tactical Communication Systems for Disaster Response." *Center for hazards research and policy development*. Web. 13 Jan. 2010. <<http://hazardcenter.louisville.edu/pdfs/wp0605.pdf>>.

"About NOAA." *NOAA National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration*. Web. 13 Jan. 2010. <<http://www.noaa.gov/about-noaa.html>>.

"Effective Disaster Warnings." *SDR- Subcommittee on Disaster Reduction*. Web. 14 Jan. 2010. <http://www.sdr.gov/NDIS_rev_Oct27.pdf>.

"Missions and Objectives." *ISDR International Strategy for Disaster Reduction*. Web. 14 Jan. 2010. <http://www.unisdr.org/eng/about_isdr/isdr-mission-objectives-eng.htm>.

"Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations." *United Nations*. 19 Dec. 1991. Web. 16 Jan. 2010. <<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/46/a46r182.htm>>.

"Natural Disasters and Vulnerability." *United Nations*. 27 Feb. 2004. Web. 16 Jan. 2010. <<http://www.unisdr.org/wcdr/back-docs/docs/a-res-58-215-eng.pdf>>.

"International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction." *United Nations*. Web. 17 Jan. 2010.
<<http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/44/a44r236.htm>>.