

Experiences on Implementing Program for Enhancement of Emergency Response (PEER) in Six Countries of South East Asia

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SUMMARY:

The Program for Enhancement of Emergency Response (PEER) is a regional training program that aims to assist selected vulnerable Asian countries in the strengthening of national emergency response capacities towards the overall goal of reduced mortalities during emergencies and disasters. PEER is being supported by the United States Agency for International Development / Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance since 1998. The National Society for Earthquake Technology – Nepal (NSET) has been awarded by the USAID/OFDA to implement the second stage of PEER (2003-2009). NSET is also implementing PEER Stage 3 (2009-2014), specifically for Program Objective 3: Medical First Responder (MFR) and Collapsed Structure Search and Rescue (CSSR) courses in cooperation with the governments of Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan and the Philippines. MFR and CSSR courses aim to prepare and organize emergency response teams that can provide search, rescue, stabilize and provide appropriate pre-hospital care for victims of disasters.

Keywords: Capacity Building, Emergency Response, Preparedness

1. INTRODUCTION

Emergencies and disasters have been leaving enormous impacts to the most vulnerable population. According to World Disasters Report 2010, for the period of 2001 to 2010, Asia had the most number of disasters with a total of 2,903 reported disasters or with 933,250 deaths. These disaster impacts are a result of several factors, among which are lack of knowledge and financial capacity. In terms of emergency response capacities, World Disasters Report 2010 also mentioned that “there are no statistics on the proportion of the urban population covered by good-quality fire services or rapid response to serious injuries or illnesses (including ambulances and hospitals able to provide rapid treatment), but the inadequacy or complete absence of such services is evident in many informal settlements.”

A number of initiatives in the whole gamut of disaster risk reduction are being implemented to address the needs, including response to emergencies and disasters. One of these is a regional training program being implemented by the National Society for Earthquake Technology – Nepal (NSET) from 2003 until present.

Since 1998, USAID/OFDA has supported PEER in Asia as part of its regional preparedness and mitigation strategy. PEER Stage 1 (1998-2003) inducted four of highly seismic prone countries in Asia, namely, India, Indonesia, Nepal and the Philippines. The Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), Bangkok, managed PEER Stage 1, focused on establishing partnerships with respective national governments of the said countries. This phase laid down the foundation for PEER and introduced the core courses, namely Medical First Responder (MFR) and Collapsed Structure Search and Rescue (CSSR) courses; and instructors’ development courses which are: Training for Instructors (TFI), MFR Instructors’ Workshop and CSSR Instructors’ Workshop. The course on Hospital Preparedness for Emergencies (HOPE) course was designed and pilot-tested during this period. HOPE Course links up on-site pre-hospital care of patients to hospital facilities.

PEER Stage 2 (2003-2009) was implemented by the National Society for Earthquake Technology – Nepal (NSET), in conjunction with three U.S.-based partners - International Resources Group, Safety Solutions, and Johns Hopkins University, in the four original countries; and added Bangladesh in 2003 and Pakistan in 2007. A highlight of PEER Stage 2's focus was nationalization of the MFR and CSSR courses through adaptation to the national contexts and languages.

PEER Stage 3 (2009-2014) pursues the successes of Stage 1 and Stage which is to further institutionalize the capacities of countries to implement a sustainable disaster response training program and to develop qualified instructors, coordinators and monitors. USAID/OFDA has awarded ADPC to implement Program Objective 1: Community Action for Disaster Response (CADRE) and Program Objective 2: Hospital Preparedness for Emergencies (HOPE). CADRE is a new program of PEER that aims to train the local communities in basic emergency response skills. NSET has been awarded to implement Program Objective 3: Medical First Responder (MFR) and Collapsed Structure Search and Rescue (CSSR) in the same six program countries from Stage 2. PEER Program Objectives 1 and 2 are being implemented in the six program beneficiary countries, plus three new countries, namely, Cambodia, Lao PDR and Vietnam. American Red Cross is providing supplemental funding for the execution of HOPE and CADRE.

2. METHODOLOGY

This paper aims to present the experiences of NSET in implementing the PEER, limited to MFR and CSSR courses in the six program beneficiary countries, which are Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan and the Philippines.

The information presented in this paper comprises of experiences from PEER Stage 2 until present. Information was referenced from program reports, through formal meetings and informal interaction.

3. RESULTS

PEER objective is to develop instructors who will replicate the knowledge and skills in their respective countries to produce skilled emergency response teams. During PEER Phase 1 and initial period of Phase 2, the program engaged the services of U.S. based course coordinators and course monitors for course management, ensuring that program and course standards are being maintained. During PEER Phase 2, NSET had dynamically pushed forward for developing cadres of qualified instructors at the national level. The experienced local instructors were then considered to become course coordinators and course monitors, therefore, the training curriculum Master Instructors Workshop was developed. Until date, most countries have their own core of qualified MFR and CSSR course coordinators and course monitors. This achievement tapered the need for international instructors, thereby reducing related course expenses.

During PEER Stage 2 (2003-2009), NSET also introduced the concept of Partial Funding Assistance Program (PFAP). This scheme encouraged the countries to put on a share of their resources, in the form of material and/or human resources, which also became a gesture of program ownership.

Since the program's inception in Asia, there's recognition by the program countries on benefits gained from the program, such as improving the life-saving skills of their emergency response professionals. There was an acknowledgement of an increased level of proficiency by PEER-trained emergency responders, in terms of operational skills and also reported that lives were saved through simple pre-hospital patient care learned in MFR course. It was also reported by most PEER countries that CSSR skills learned were applied successfully in their response operations.

4. DISCUSSIONS

NSET works in collaboration with the national disaster management organizations for guidance in strategic direction for the implementation of PEER in the country. Partner training institutes, primarily engaged in emergency and disaster first response, such as fire departments, Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies, Police Departments and other rescue groups associated with government emergency response systems, are also identified and tapped to implement the conduct of MFR and CSSR courses.

In order to achieve PEER's objective of assisting countries in emergency response human resource development, a framework has been in place for instructors' development process. PEER's train-the-trainers strategy is a ladderized process that requires the potential instructor candidate to complete the basic courses of MFR and CSSR prior to proceeding to the next level – Training for Instructors (TFI), then later to specialized instructors' courses, the MFR Instructors Workshop (MFRIW) and CSSR Instructors Workshop (CSSRIW).

MFR is a thirteen-day course that aims to provide individuals with first response tasks the knowledge and skills necessary to assess, treat and transport sick or injured patient as a result of an emergency or disaster. Below are key lessons delivered in MFR course:

4.1 Highlights of MFR lessons

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|---|---|
| Emergency Medical Systems and the Medical First Responder | Musculoskeletal Injuries |
| Infectious Disease and Precautions | Skull, Spinal and Chest Injuries |
| The Incident | Burns and Environmental Emergencies |
| Anatomical References | Poisoning |
| Patient Assessment | Medical Emergencies, Part 1: Cardiovascular Emergencies and Abdominal Distress |
| Basic Life Support and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation | Medical Emergencies, Part 2: Respiratory Emergencies |
| Oxygen Therapy | Medical Emergencies, Part 3: Seizures, Diabetic Emergencies and Cerebrovascular Accidents |
| Haemorrhage and Shock | Childbirth Emergencies |
| Soft-Tissue Injuries | Lifting and Moving Patients |
| Report Writing and Preparation for the Next Call | Multiple Casualty Incidents and Triage |



Figure 1. MFR Course participants demonstrate appropriate pre-hospital treatment to a patient in an emergency scenario

CSSR is an eight-day course that aims to provide individuals with collapsed structure rescue tasks the knowledge and skills necessary to search for, stabilize and extricate victims trapped in collapsed

structures using the safest and most appropriate procedures. Below are key skills taught in CSSR course:

4.2 Highlights of CSSR course

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|----------------------------------|---|
| Planning | Emergency Building Shores |
| Rescue Scene Organization Search | Breaching and Breaking |
| Basic Medical Care | Final Drill- Structural Collapse Scenario |



Figure 2. CSSR Course participants learn skills in breaching through a collapsed structure scenario

Training for Instructors (TFI) is a general course that provides the participants the necessary skills to deliver and facilitate PEER courses. TFI participants are taught the key skills necessary for facilitation of trainings and course management.

4.3 Highlights of TFI course

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| Write performance and instructional objectives | Prepare and use audio-visual aids |
| Manage a classroom learning environment | Operate audio-visual equipment |
| Prepare lesson plans | Make presentations as an individual and as a member of a team |
| Use various methods of instructional communication | Test trainees for training effectiveness |

The Medical First Responder Instructors' Workshop (MFRIW) provides participants with the knowledge and practical skills necessary to deliver, facilitate and evaluate MFR course participants. Similarly, the Collapsed Structure Search and Rescue Instructors' Workshop (CSSR) is the specialized course for CSSR instructor candidates.

4.3 Highlights of MFRIW

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|---------------------------------------|--|
| MFR Course Review | Objectives, Evaluation and Exercises |
| Course Methodology | Course Materials and Audio/Visual Aids |
| Communication and Presentation Skills | Preparing and Presenting a Lesson |
| MFR Course Coordination | Facilities and Classroom Management |
| MFR Evaluation System Components | Managing Practical Stations and Exercises |
| Individual Presentations | Maintaining and Storing Equipment and Supplies |

4.4 Highlights of CSSRIW

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|---|---|
| Principles of Adult Learning | CSSR Course Evaluation System |
| How to Prepare and Present a CSSR Lesson | Tool and Equipment Cleaning and Maintenance |
| CSSR Review Group | CSSR Course Coordination |
| Managing Practical Stations and Exercises | Individual Presentations |

Institutionalizing the program is an important strategy in encouraging the countries to sustain the implementation of PEER. NSET has taken steps in support of institutionalizing PEER in each of the

six countries through course adaptation and translation. PEER was taken from a similar program implemented in the Latin America and the Caribbean; hence, there is a need to adapt the courses into the national context for a more efficient program delivery. After the successful outcomes of course adaptation, most of the program beneficiary countries recommended the need for translation of the curricula; hence, translation of MFR and CSSR curricula were initiated in most PEER countries but Philippines who maintained an English version of the adapted version. In addition to the regular courses, development of refreshers course for MFR and CSSR was recommended by the countries during the Regional Planning Meeting in Phase 2. The refreshers course curricula have been tested and available for use by the countries.

There have also been challenges in the course of program implementation. Institutionalization was not an easy process. Changes in political leadership – from the governmental (nodal agency) and partner institutes have an effect in the impetus of PEER. Varying priorities of the leaders have setbacks in sustaining the program; hence continued sensitization of leaders on PEER is needed. Institutional policies defining a training strategy for emergency response are inadequate or not existent in the beneficiary countries. Alongside, financial capability for course logistics, including training equipment, availability of classrooms, accommodation quarters were also a concern. Diaspora of skilled professionals, including those trained in PEER is also experienced by the countries, in addition to other factors such as promotion, reassignment, retirement and death are also challenges; hence, there is a need for a sustained level of qualified instructors.

5. CONCLUSIONS

NSET continues to pursue the importance of response preparedness through PEER. A long term vision for strengthening capabilities in emergency response of national governments needs to be chalked out. NSET proposes to countries a quantified analysis of the needs in human resources for disaster response. The concept is based on a similar training program implemented during the past 20 years in the Latin America and the Caribbean – that in every 50,000 of the population, there is a need for about 20 responders and 10% of them as the instructors (*personal communication by Rene Carillo, Regional Advisor for Disaster Training, USAID/OFDA – Latin America and Caribbean Regional Office*), which should be the target for Asian countries also. The PEER approach and methodology is a useful reference for analyzing the present situation and projecting the needs to be addressed.

NSET also established a database system that stores all pertinent information about the program – graduates, instructors, focal points from nodal agencies, partner organizations, course events and aims to develop a more interactive system that can provide mapping for a more effective and efficient use of experts, professionals and skilled responders in planning and decision making for DRR initiatives.

Strengthening emergency response systems is a big challenge but can be done. Policy frameworks, strong leadership, training curricula, human and material resources, are important instruments towards strengthening of capacities in emergency response.

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The MFR and CSSR courses have been adopted for use in other regions of the world. Recognizing the need for improved search and rescue (SAR) capabilities in seismically active countries, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) initiated the Program for Enhancement of Emergency Response in Asia in 1998.

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