

COMMUNITY RESPONSIVE MANAGEMENT

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NOTES FOR THE FIELD

WHO LISTENS? WHEN, WHERE, AND WHY

HUMAN FACTORS IN THE ADOPTION OF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS, MITIGATION, RESILIENCY, AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Building local capacity for disaster preparedness, recovery, vulnerability reduction, and sustainable resilient development.

by
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Revised 7-3-2012

To a great extent the knowledge and technologies already exist to prepare for, respond to, and mitigate against natural and technological hazards. Although the knowledge and technology exists, the adoption of this preparedness, response, and mitigation programs and technologies are not wide spread and a great many of our citizens still live in harm's way, make poor decisions, are unprepared, and unable to respond to hazards. This is particularly true for marginalized populations.

The adoption of preparedness and mitigation programs is most complex and the lack of preparedness and vulnerability reduction (mitigation) **cannot be** understood as simply lack of information or will. The adoption of preparedness and mitigation programs is **not** primarily an issues of information (having the right information) or morals (having the right attitudes, values, or will). The adoption process is much more complex and often our attitudes and statements about "those people" who have not prepared or mitigated is more of a revelation of our own prejudice and ignorance than about 'those people.'

We use the definition of vulnerability from *AT RISK*;

“Vulnerability is the characteristic of a people or group in terms of their capacity to anticipate, cope with, resist, and recover from the impact of a natural hazard... Key characteristics of these variations of impacts include class, caste, ethnicity, gender, disability, age, or seniority.”¹

We will base this paper on the work of Everett Rogers² as his work can be relates to disaster preparedness, vulnerability reduction, and mitigation and offer some guidelines and models for the introduction of disaster preparedness, and vulnerability reduction to vulnerable and other populations. Rogers was trained as a rural sociologist and spent years studying how people from all over the world and from many classes and cultures adopt changes in their live.

. When we speak of innovations of technologies in this paper we are speaking of **any new ways** of doing things or **any new tools**. We will seldom be speaking of ‘high tech.’ solutions or ‘high tech’ tools.

GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS VS GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT

~~getting the message across is different from getting the message out. Getting the message across is about the responsibility of the speaker or message sender and not the receiver/listener. It is useless to complain about or blame the ‘listener’s’ failure to comprehend or act. The speakers have the responsibility to understand the listeners and must take the responsibility for successful communication.~~

One of our guiding principles is that “the meaning of a message **IS ALWAYS DETERMINED BY THE RECIEVER.**” That is to say that “getting the message across” is different from and much more difficult than “getting the message out.” Both getting the message out and getting the message understood are both the responsibility of the speaker or message sender and not the receiver/listener. It is useless to complain about or blame the ‘listener’s’ failure to comprehend or act. The speakers have the responsibility to understand the listeners and must take the responsibility for successful communication.

A second rule, similar to the first, **THE MEANING OF A MESSAGE IS THE REACTION YOU GET.** No response means that the message did not work and not necessarily that the hearer did not listen. As program developers and administrators we may not like these rules of communication but they remain reality.

We conceptualize preparedness and vulnerability reduction as activities that are part of each **activity** of disaster response. Thus we need to consider programs and interventions for **Pre-Impact Vulnerability, Impact Vulnerability, Relief and Recovery Vulnerability, Development and Mitigation Vulnerability, and Preparedness and Preparedness Education Vulnerability**. In like manner we must seek to build the capacity of survivors and local caregivers in each part of disaster response.

A holiest understanding of vulnerability and vulnerability reduction will focus on the following.

¹ *At Risk*

² Rogers, Everett *Diffusion of Innovation* (2003, 1983).

³ See below.

GENERAL VULNERIBILITIES IN ALL PHASES

Gender, Race, Class, Age, Ethnicity, Human and legal rights violations

PRE-DISASTER AND PREPAREDNESS VULNERABILITY

Living in dangerous areas, Limited resources to prepare
Unemployment and underemployment, No insurance, Lack of information

DISASTER IMPACT VULNERABILITY

No way to evacuate, No way to increase safety, Loss of community social services
Loss of livelihood, Loss of personal and real property

RELIEF VULNERABILITY

Limited access to aid, No protection for property, Loss of neighborhood and community support, Fewer personal and resources of all kinds

RECOVERY VULNERABILITY

Lack of insurance, Renter, Dishonest contractors, Increased rent and less rental units
Discrimination in services

DEVELOPMENT VULNERABILITY

No input to planning and decision-making, Loss of livelihood, Loss of place to live
Loss of community support system

MITIGATION VULNERABILITY

No input to planning and decision-making, Lack of political power, Abuse of legal rights
No funding for family or livelihood mitigation, No resources for mitigation
Loss of livelihood

PREPAREDNESS AND PREPAREDNESS EDUCATION VULNERABILITY

Preparedness programs do not reach vulnerable people, Language and cultural differences, No planning and implication inputs

Following is an outline of the basic principles for what Everett Rogers calls the diffusion of innovations. Rogers research was in the area of technological and knowledge transfer and diffusion. Rogers studied how new technologies or ways of doing things (from simple to complex) are introduced to and adopted by people and communities.

Rogers speaks of the innovation – decision process as having five sequential parts.

KNOWLEDGE – People must receive information about the new ideas, methods, or technology. This information and the media used must be compatible not only with the community's communications systems, but also with the beliefs, and values of each community⁴.

⁴ See Peter Peck 'Participatory Research, Democracy, and Community' in PRACTICING ANTHROPOLOGY Vol. 19, No. 3 and R. Krajewski 'Participatory Program Development and Disaster Preparedness, response, and Mitigation'. Park addresses three types of knowledge he says are important - REPRESENTATIONAL or

Information must be internalized to the extent that the people have “knowledge” of the new technology and can embody (conceptualize) the meaning of adoption. Rogers indicates that the knowledge stage is essentially an INFORMATION-SEEKING AND INFORMATION-PROCESSING activity in which people and communities are motivated to reduce uncertainty about the advantages and disadvantages of the innovation.

PERSUASION – Information and knowledge are seldom enough to get people to undertake or support a mitigation project. **Persuasion is almost always necessary.** Occasionally a few persons will mitigate or get behind a community mitigation project simply because they received information, but in the vast majority of cases much more is needed. Persuasion usually involves the **informal communications networks, the community’s value systems, and the input of trusted change agents and community opinion leaders.**

DECISION – People must make a decision to mitigate or support a mitigation program. The decision-making process is a complex process and involves much more than knowledge and a ‘cost/benefit analyses of the new technology. **Values, culture, emotions, time and timing, and political and economic realities play major roles in the decision- making process.**

There are two kinds of rejection – ACTIVE and PASSIVE. Active rejection consists of considering adoption of the innovation (including even its trial) but then deciding not to adopt it. Passive rejection (also called non-adoption) consists of never really considering use of the innovation. The two are very different and it is **very** important to understand whether ACTIVE or PASSIVE rejection is at play in the rejection of a program. **Change agencies, according to Rogers, often do not look carefully at the reasons a program or technology is rejected. When they do investigate the reasons for the rejection they tend to look only at the knowledge stage and the information given.**

IMPLEMENTATION – Implementation is also a complex enterprise involving time and timing, skills, resources, and support. The easier implementation can be made and the closer the fit to existing technology, methods, and values the more likely the adoption of the technology. There is often RE-INVENTION that takes place when a technology, idea, or program takes place. Adopters, also, may soon forget the roots of the innovation process and the role of the change agents and change agencies. It therefore may be difficult to see what has in fact happened in the adoption process.

CONFIRMATION – In order for adoption to take place and last there usually needs to be **practical and visible conformation** of the new technology’s value. This is particularly true relative to the continued use of the new technology. **This confirmation comes both from the adopter and the community. (One difficulty with disaster preparedness and mitigation is that there is seldom a quick confirmation of its value but there are ways.)** **Local sustainability** is the key factor in the adoption of an innovation. The local adopters of the innovation must be able to continue with the innovation after all outside aid has left.

These five elements of the decision-making process run in sequence but one part will not necessarily lead to or generate another. Knowledge does not necessarily lead to persuasion and persuasion does not necessarily lead to decision and so on. **Because the adoption of a technology is a process with a number of steps interventions are needed throughout the whole five-stage sequence.** Most existing preparedness and mitigation projects are limited to information giving/knowledge and occasionally persuasion and therefore the likelihood of the adoption of the desired preparedness or mitigation activities are small.

Rogers lists 5 ADOPTER categories;

1. Innovators

Technological, KNOWLEDGE, REFLECTIVE or Value KNOWLEDGE, and RELATIONAL or Interpersonal KNOWLEDGE. All three are active in this first stage of the innovation-decision process.

2. Early adopters
3. Late majority
4. Laggards

Based on Rogers, we make the following generalizations about the adoptions of new ideas or technologies.

1. Earlier knowers of mitigation have **more education** than late knowers.
2. Earlier knowers of mitigation have **higher social status** than late knowers.
3. Earlier knowers of mitigation have **more exposure to mass media**.
4. Earlier knowers of mitigation have **more interpersonal channels**.
5. Earlier knowers of mitigation have **more change agent contacts**.
6. Earlier knowers of mitigation have **more social participation**
7. Earlier knowers of mitigation are **more cosmopolite**.
8. Late adopters of mitigation are more likely to **discontinue** mitigation
9. **Mass media** is more important at the **knowledge stage**.
10. **Interpersonal channels** are more important at the **persuasion stage**.
11. **Local channels** are more important for **late adopters**.
12. **Early** adopters of mitigation are more likely to be well educated.
13. Earlier adopters of mitigation have **higher social status**.
14. Earlier adopters of mitigation have a greater degree of **upward mobility**.
15. Earlier adopters of mitigation have **larger sized units (house, farm, etc.)**.
16. Earlier adopters of mitigation are:
 - More **favorable** towards change,
 - More **able to cope** with uncertainty,
 - Less fatalistic**.
17. Earlier adopters of mitigation have **greater empathy** than later adopters do.
18. Earlier adopters of mitigation may be **less dogmatic** than later adopters.
19. Earlier adopters of mitigation have a **greater ability to deal with abstractions** than later adopters do.
20. Earlier adopters of mitigation have **higher aspirations** (for education, occupation, and so on) than later adopters.

It can be seen from the above that to choose to work with later adopters and laggards is to choose a very long and difficult road. This journey takes much commitment, time, energy, and preparedness, and many resources. And in the end it is likely that the results will be mixed at best.

Successful mitigation innovations, according to Rogers, have the following attributes:

They have a **relative advantage**; that is, they fit well within the social, economic, and value systems.

They have **compatibility** with the beliefs, values, previous ideas, and needs of the people and their community.

They are **not complex** – the more complex the innovation the less adoption.

They are **'trialable'** – the community can have trials of the new technology without a big commitment or cost and see quickly that they work.

When a mitigation can be **observed** there is an increased likelihood that other will adopt the mitigation Since it is difficult to hold a ‘trial run’ on the effectiveness of disaster preparedness and mitigation the next best thing is testimonials from like people in like situations.

MITIGATION CHANGE AGENTS.

Mitigation change agents are project managers, educators, field staff, and consultants. All of these change agents provide a communication link between a resource system of some kind and a client system. Mitigation change agents provide the link between agencies and the client systems.

1. Mitigation change agents help develop the need for change.
2. Mitigation change agents establish an information exchange relationship.
3. Mitigation change agents enable the diagnoses of the community’s problems.
4. Mitigation change agents help create the intent for change in the clients.
5. Mitigation change agents foster intent into action
6. Mitigation change agents help stabilize adoption and help prevent discontinuance of the innovation.
7. Finally the mitigation change agents achieve a terminal relationship – which the change agent enables the clients to continue on their own. (Creates sustainability and local capacity.)

Mitigation change agents **need to be sensitive to the realities of the communities in which they operate. One basic sensitivity, among others, is that communities define themselves and are not defined from the outside.**

Mitigation change agents are successful to the degree that they:

1. Contact **many** clients and client systems.
2. Are **client orientated** and not agency centered.
3. Develop programs to **meet clients felt needs**.
4. Have a real understanding of and **empathy** with the clients.
5. **Relate** to a higher social status of clients.⁵
6. Have greater **social participation** among clients.
7. Have **credibility** in the client’s eyes.
8. **Works through opinion leaders.**
9. **Increase the client’s ability** to evaluate the innovation.
10. Mitigation change agents’ success is positively related to the extent that they **work through opinion leaders.**

⁵ Higher social class clients increase the likelihood of the adoption of a new technology and are one reason some Mitigation and Preparedness programs are aimed at higher classes – so the results will be better. When Rogers suggesting that change agents will have higher success rates with clients of higher social status. HE IS NOT SUGGESTING THAT PEOPLE WITH LESS SOCIAL STATUS NOT BE SERVED. He is saying they are harder to work with.

The reality is that mitigation change agents are very limited in what they can do and are dependent on the good will and hospitality of the host communities and their informal and formal leaders.

MITIGATION CHANGE AGENT CREDIBILITY –EXPERT AND TRUST

Mitigation change agents will usually have high competence credibility – technical and **expert** knowledge but may lack **trust** credibility – **the trust of the client populations which is critical in all but the information stage**. Rogers introduces the role of the paraprofessional aid as a key element in the adoption process. Aids are from or ‘close to’ the client populations and are trusted by the clients. Some systems call these paraprofessionals validators.

PARAPROFESSIONAL AIDS

PARAPROFESSIONAL AIDS are often important in the adoption process and often these paraprofessionals have some advantages over professionals. Paraprofessional aids are closer socially to the lower-status members of the user system.

Selecting aids according to such factors as gender, education and personal knowledge of the community and the trusting relationship between the aid and the community are critical for success.⁶ Aids can help minimize the distance between the change agent system and the client system. Professional change agents are sometimes guilty of believing that they and their ‘chosen media’ can reach anyone and everyone or that they can run the program because of their knowledge and experience better than a local.

OPINION LEADERS

Rogers uses the term OPINION LEADERS to describe what other call validators and network leaders. Opinion leaders are more often than not persons other than the elected or official leaders of a community. A mitigation opinion leader is a person who is able to influence informally other individuals’ attitudes or overt behavior in a desired way with relative frequency.

Change agents must discover and relate to the large number of mitigation opinion leaders and the various networks they operate in. We too often assume that there is ONE community, ONE opinion leader or one ‘class’ of opinion leaders, and ONE network or type of network when the facts are that communities and people may have much more complex social and communication systems than is obvious.

Mitigation Opinion leaders:

1. Have a greater exposure to the media⁷.
2. Have greater social participation.
3. Have higher socioeconomic status⁸.

⁶ See R.L. Krajieski and K.J. Peterson, *After Action Report on the Miller’s Reach Wildfire Big Lake, Alaska VOL.I* pages 15ffand Krajieski and Peterson “*But She is a Women and This is a Man’s Job* in *The Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters*.

⁷ Opinion leaders will have more exposure to both the more formal media and the less formal social communication networks.

4. Are more innovative.
5. When a social system favors mitigation, mitigation opinion leaders are more innovative, **BUT** when the norms do not favor mitigation change, the mitigation opinion leaders are not especially innovative. If the innovation is perceived as particularly negative opinion leaders will in most cases work against its adoption directly or indirectly.

DIFFUSION NETWORKS

1. Individuals tend to be linked to others in close physical distance and from the same social groupings.
2. Information exchange is usually limited to similar groups.
3. Influential exchange may be high in similar type groups.

Disaster preparedness, response, and mitigation will always be difficult and frustrating. Unlimited funds and receptive people and systems would help a great deal. But even in ideal situations people will suffer

⁸ We need to keep in mind that status is a VERY relative term.