Turkey

Umraniye Women's Outreach Community Disaster Preparedness Project

Location:	Umraniye District, Greater Istanbul
Date:	2002
Sector focus:	Natural hazard preparedness knowledge, awareness & practice (KAP)
Spatial focus:	District (Municipality)

Bibliographical reference

Marla Petal, Suha Ulgen, Gul Okoh, and Umit Alniacik, *Umraniye Women's Outreach Community Disaster Preparedness Project.* Final Report. October, 2002. Istanbul: Bogaziçi University, Kandilli Observatory and Earthquake Research Institute.

Abstract

The project surveyed knowledge, awareness, and practice (KAP) of a range of self protection methods for reducing death, injury and loss in earthquake. The survey was carried out before and after the outreach education activities of women trainers who met with citizens in public meetings and individually in home visits. The project trained the women trainers, and involved their own input into the survey research tools, evaluation of the process and analysis of the before and after results of the KAP survey.

Results provided the humanitarian assistance sponsor, the university disaster preparedness education center, and other government and non-governmental entities in Turkey with a model for training trainers as well as data on the effectiveness of outreach.

The training and evaluation methods are likely to be of interest to urban planners and risk communication teams in all cities that face earthquake hazard, or, more generally, those concerned with risk awareness and training in urban situations of middle income developing countries.

Technical description

Hazard/risk type: Earthquake.

Type of assessment: Assessment of knowledge, awareness, and practice of appropriate earthquake risk reduction behaviors at the household level & evaluation of methods for training outreach trainers.

CRA process

Collection of background demographic, social, and urban geographic information; five day training course for women outreach trainers in disaster awareness training (one-half day for five days), non-structural earthquake risk reduction techniques and program impact research methods, including population sampling, data collection and coding, and pre- and post-testing methods.

Methods used: Trainees themselves were invited to reflect on their own experience, especially of the 1999 earthquake in Turkey. Trainees also practiced team-building and communication skills including active listening and self expression. Outreach was modified on the basis of a first round of results, and trainers were supported by bi-weekly team meetings. Trainees participated in analysis of findings and conclusions based both upon quantitative and experiential data.

Was livelihood analysis part of the process? Yes, to the extent that socio-economic conditions and hence livelihood was discussed during the training as a factor that would likely influence practice of some of the risk reduction methods recommended.

Was external specialist knowledge introduced? Yes. Disaster mitigation educators, trainer in methods of fastening furniture to building, engineering and public health knowledge (e.g. epidemiological analysis of patterns of injuries and deaths in Turkish earthquakes) were the basis of the "package" of household behaviors and actions recommended. All of these provided evidence-based reasons for adoption of recommended measures.

Vulnerability analysis

In work with the trainers, it was made clear that earthquake impacts are in no way random, and that the most significant vulnerability factor is building design, quality, and maintenance. Many household mitigation and preparedness measures are taught with the most vulnerable family members in mind (small children, elderly, and disabled). Attention was also drawn to the needs for measures to be taken at home, work, school and community settings in order to address potential age and gender differences in vulnerability due to location.

Upon completion of the outreach project the trainers shared their common observation that the people they had reached out to in lower-income neighborhoods were more interested, welcoming and more aware of their vulnerabilities, compared to upper-middle class households which expressed complacency, and the perception that their economic status itself would be protective. This strengthened their belief in the value of such outreach for everyone.

Capacity analysis

Resources available: *Financial*: CARITAS and CORDAID provided financial support. USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance supported the community-based disaster mitigation program development and training specialists. In-kind support came from Bogaziçi University. *Local Resources*: include district government, local neighborhood headpersons, several community organizations and NGOs and considerable numbers of volunteers.

Limitations to capacity: Socio-economic conditions limit the ability of citizens to carry out the more expensive or time consuming non-structural measures recommended. Mean family monthly income in the 14 neighborhoods comprising Umraniye was the equivalent of US$ 400. For example, having an engineer check one's house for safety only increased from 22% to 25% of the sample, purchase of earthquake insurance grew from 16% to 25%, and having the house retrofitted (strengthened) from 17% to 22%; while something time consuming like attending first aid classes increased from 7% to 13%. By contrast, knowing not to use the telephone after an earthquake increased from 44% to 88% and household storage of emergency drinking water from 47% to 84%.

Action planning and implementation

What actions were actually planned? Trainees provided participatory input to the earthquake preparedness outreach campaign during the course of their training.

What actions were actually carried out? Outreach campaign did take place. Nearly 8,000 people were directly reached. 7,000 information cards were distributed at 84 public meetings at public health centers, schools, a meeting of an association of people with disabilities, arts & crafts seminars, conference centers, and in the evenings in front of buildings where neighbors meet informally. In addition, there were more than 1,000 home visits and a follow up telephone survey with 609 of the households.

Have these actions turned out to be sustainable? Yes because of government and non-governmental support for continuing outreach on these issues. As a result of being able to prove the effectiveness of the training - and that once educated people really do change their behavior, led the Ministry of Education to agree to put its resources into a school-based disaster mitigation education program to reach 5 million children and 25,000 school-based instructors in 50 provinces.

Were there any unanticipated additional benefits of the actions? The project reinforced media interest in the issue of earthquake preparedness as CNN TURK covered the initial training meeting and towards the end of the project, one of the trainers appeared in a television documentary on NTV made to commemorate the August 17th, 1999 Kocaeli earthquake.

The most striking additional benefit is in the empowerment of the trainees, whose own evaluation of the training course and experience of leading public meetings and conducting home visits were very positive. This was definitely a confidence building exercise encouraging Turkish women to be active in public life, and to strengthen their role as social mobilizers.

Were there any unanticipated negative consequences of the actions? N.A.

Limitations on action/ sustainability of actions: Organization of outreach programs of this kind on a large-scale basis for mega-cities poses an extreme challenge. The structures for spearheading public health education campaigns of this type and the financial resources and funding mechanisms have not been found. The printing and distribution of information cards, posters, making of public service announcements for radio and television, follow up and refreshers for the public on the subject of non-structural mitigation requires allocation of scarce municipal financial and human resources and require some structures to coordinate the involvement of public, voluntary, NGO resources and private sector resources.

Indicators

As there has not been an earthquake, the effectiveness of outreach cannot be directly measured. However, the pre- and post-survey data suggest that a large percentage (81%) practice some of the behaviors recommended by outreach programs. A baseline database now exists which can be used for such evaluation research should there be a major earthquake in the next decade.

Contextual notes

Existence/ role of prior or contemporaneous conflict? No, except that some new migrants are likely to have come from areas affected by conflict over many decades in the Kurdish areas in eastern Turkey (see below).

Role of displacement/ relocation? The Umraniye District of Istanbul is home to huge numbers of recent immigrants from rural areas, and is also known for some of the poorest quality of squatter housing.

Role of prior disaster & prior recovery attempts? The memory of the deadly 1999 earthquake was fresh enough to motivate most citizens to cooperate with the home visitations and survey.

Significant historical, geographic, economic, political, or cultural issues that influenced this instance of CRA and its consequences? There was some resistance to home visitation and discussion in the lowest income, new-migrant neighborhoods of the municipality because of residents' fears of being identified for illegal practices such as squatter housing and having multiple wives.

Strategic notes

How has this practice of CRA influenced change in policy and practice at the national level? The Ministry of Education nationally has come to appreciate the effectiveness of community-based disaster risk mitigation, and the value of education in promoting these practices at the household level. As a result, basic disaster awareness education is being institutionalized in K-12 education in cooperation with Bogaziçi University, Kandilli Observatory and Earthquake Research Institute.

How has this practice of CRA influenced change in policy and practice at local level? The Kadikoy district of Istanbul has mobilized volunteers from each neighborhood, and arranges for instructor training from Bogaziçi University. The University has also turned a project into an ongoing and recognized "Disaster Preparedness Education Unit" that continues to organize community-outreach education.

How has this practice of CRA influenced the level of organization and solidarity in the locality where it was carried out? Unknown. Currently being investigated (September 2005).

Less divided along class, gender, age, ethnic lines? The women who participated as trainers expressed their own recognition of the receptivity of people of all backgrounds to the underlying message that we are all in this together. Their own prejudices were undermined, and their ability to communicate with people across class, gender, age and ethnic lines.

More divided along these lines? No. A greater feeling of solidarity has been expressed by all involved.

Are the people living in this area more able to speak out on issues that concern them? We think so. Some of the trainers reported starting conversations on public transport minibuses with strangers to discuss their concerns. Both the public meetings as well as the home visits and telephone survey provided a wide array of opportunities for people to speak out about their perceived needs and what the authorities are doing right and wrong.

Have new civil society organizations been created directly or indirectly because of this practice of CRA? N.A.; however, the trainees may well end up involved with and catalyzing volunteer and NGO activities or moving into professional activities related to risk awareness and emergency management. We also expect to involve trainees in continuing voluntary outreach efforts.

Lessons learned

- Women acting out of concern for their local communities can mobilize significant social change.
- Unsolicited outreach training can lead to significant adoption of important household hazard adjustments.
- Less expensive and less time-consuming measures are readily adopted.
- Local women leaders are interested in, and capable of using and contributing to, scientific research methodologies.
- Assessment and action should remain closely wed.

Keywords

Earthquake, urban preparedness, non-structural risk mitigation, training of trainers, knowledge-awareness-action (KAP), evaluation, survey methods, local government.

Resource person(s)

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Turkey

Umraniye Women's Outreach Community Disaster Preparedness Project

Location: Umraniye District, Greater Istanbul

Date of update: 05 March 2008

Background

In 2002, 13 women from the Umraniye district of greater Istanbul were trained as basic disaster awareness and risk reduction educators. Over a two-month period they reached more than 4,000 residents, who responded to door-to-door education and group seminars by adopting a variety of concrete household risk mitigation and preparedness measures including planning, physical protection, response skills and provisioning. Pre- and post-intervention surveys and participatory action research determined that while both door-to-door and group training were equally effective, the women themselves felt that more was accomplished in reaching out to vulnerable populations, by reaching individuals, families and neighbors, door-to-door.

Update Time Frame, Mode of Follow Up & Confidence Level

Five years after the case study report and nearly six years since project inception, the original project coordinator, Gul Sat, interviewed four of the original women trained. The results of the interview have been annexed as a 2007 Annex to the project final report, dated 2002. ProVention contact Marla Petal was kind enough to forward this report. Confidence level is very high as this constitutes direct follow up observation.

Sustainability

The women trained originally continue to meet, and they continue to pursue earthquake awareness activities in various neighborhoods of greater Istanbul. Some had moved out of the area and some had taken full time employment. Nevertheless some carried on in their role as volunteer trainers.

Actions implemented

Those interviewed had all implemented in their own homes to varying degrees the preparedness and mitigation measures recommended: having a family disaster meeting, learning how to turn off gas and electricity, storing water and having flashlights handy by the bed, gathering essential items into a "go-bag," and anchoring heavy furniture so it does not fall in an earthquake.

Welfare/security results

Some of the women report more self confidence and less fear of earthquakes.

Replication of method/approach

This training program content was used on a large scale in the period 2002-2006, in the course of which instructor-trainers were trained to train school-teachers throughout 50 provinces in Turkey. This resulted in reaching more than 5 million children and 1 million adults through schools in Turkey's most earthquake prone zones.

Lessons learned/open questions

1. Frustration was expressed by the women interviewed that government civil defense follow up has been nil. On several occasions government officials have asked for names, but there has never been follow up for further training. They also find that even as awareness of earthquake risk rises among the general population, local government has been slow to introduce earthquake planning. This raises the problem of articulation of civil society initiatives with government.

2. On the positive side, the dedication of some of the women trained is impressive and suggests that intensive training, in-service support and mentoring pays off in the recruitment of long term advocates for a "culture of prevention."

Keywords

Earthquake, megacities, women, intensive training-mentoring, household mitigation and preparedness.

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