

Management of Children in Disaster-Affected Areas



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Objectives of the Session

Increased awareness and understanding of the unique needs of children in disaster situations

Discuss the challenges faced in managing children in disaster-affected areas and strategies to overcome them

Highlight best practices and case studies of effective management of children in disaster-affected areas

Emphasize the importance of involving women as equal partners in disaster management efforts and ensuring their active participation in decision-making processes

Encourage participants to share their own experiences and best practices in managing children in disaster-affected areas

Promote continued support and advocacy for children in disaster-affected areas.



[Managing Risk When Children Are Affected by Disasters \(fairobserver.com\)](https://www.fairobserver.com/2015/07/20/monsoon-floods-in-india/)



[un0286415.jpg \(1200x800\) \(unwater.org\)](https://www.unwater.org/india/2015/07/20/monsoon-floods-in-india/)



[Natural Disasters and Children's Lives: Photo Essay \(thecitizen.in\)](https://www.thecitizen.in/2015/07/20/monsoon-floods-in-india/)

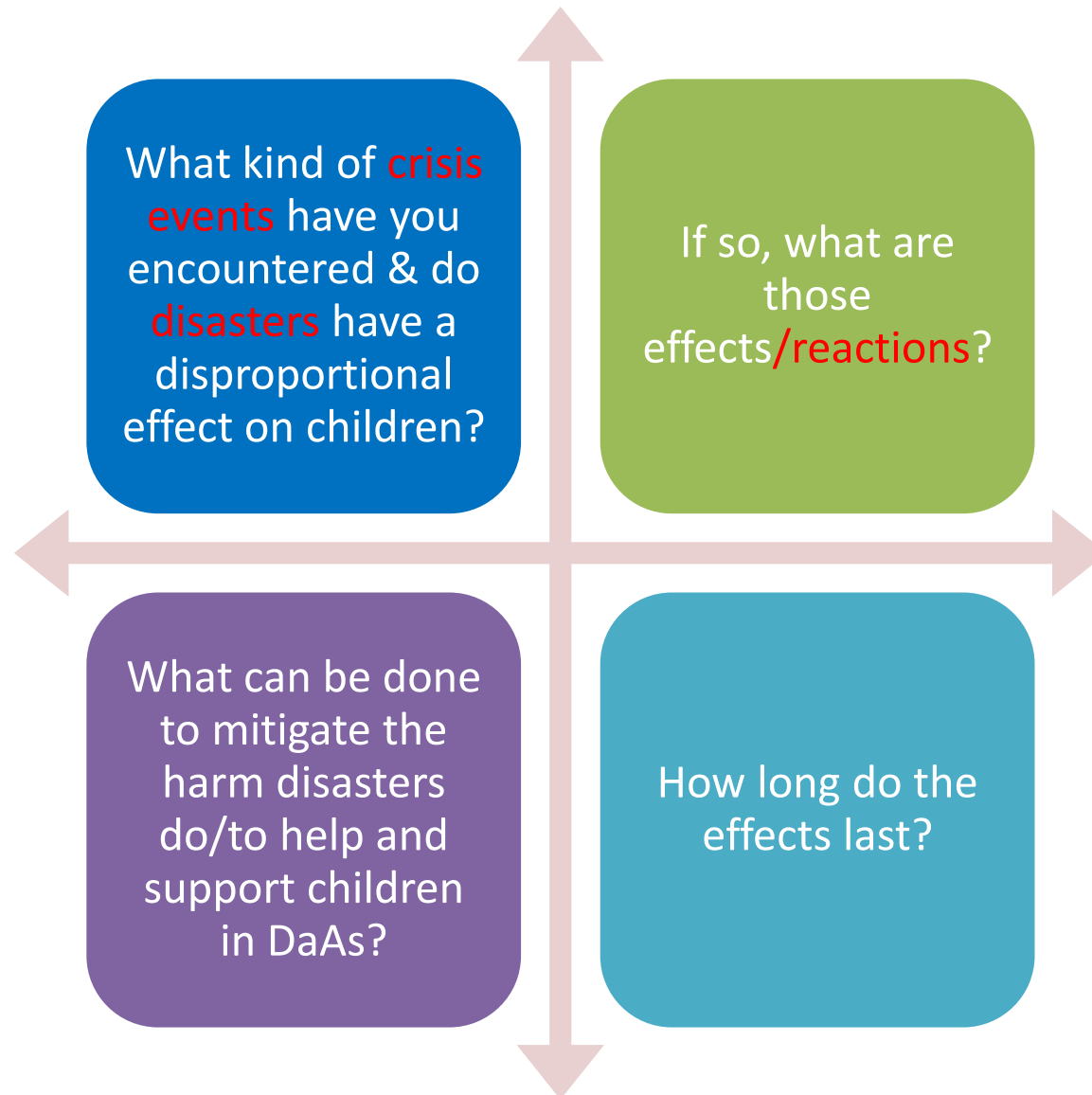


<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/02/07/middleeast/syria-quake-siblings-rescued-intl-hnk/index.html>



[Indian children at high risk of climate crisis impacts: UNICEF - India Today](https://www.unicef.org/india/story/indian-children-at-high-risk-of-climate-crisis-impacts)

Exercise



Impacts & Reactions



Social impact on children:

- Relations with others (family, friends, teachers) due to psychosocial effects of disaster on children.
- New or changed roles, opportunities and responsibilities (e.g. caring for siblings, drop out of school, work to support family).

Impact on family functioning:

- Family tensions and increased family conflict due to poverty and less earning opportunity to parents or caregivers.
- Change in roles & responsibilities, change family dynamic (financial impacts) i.e. fathers cannot earn money; mothers often have increased care burden.

Impact on community functioning:

- Reduced resources - divisions and conflicts due to limited existing resource and increase poverty and hunger.

Reactions

Trauma

- Traumatic Stress
 - Primary TS (exposed to event)
 - Secondary TS (exposed to survivor)
- *The effected person can't stop thinking about the event.*
- *Being easily reminded of the event by thing that are not very related.*
- *Continuing to react fearfully even when the danger has passed.*
- *Increase difficulty controlling emotions.*
- *Having nightmares related to the event.*
- *Being easily irritated.*
- *Having a low tolerance for stress.*
- *Being easily startle.*
- *Losing a sense of reality*

Signs of traumatic stress reaction



Common reactions of children affected by disaster or traumatizing events

Pre-school and young school-age children (0-6):

- Feel helpless and exhibit feelings of anxiety and fear.
- Difficulty expressing these feelings in words
- Trouble sleeping alone and separation anxiety.
- Others will lose some speech and wet the bed.

School-age children (7-12):

- Feel unsafe at home or school. Struggle to focus in school and performance may decline.
- Guilt or shame around their actions or inactions during a traumatic event.
- Sleeping problems: nightmares, having a fear of falling asleep alone, or being unable to fall asleep.
- Physical pain such as headaches and stomachaches, without an obvious cause to the pain.
- Behavior change may occur with aggressive and/or reckless behaviors.

Adolescents (13-18):

- Guilt or shame about the traumatic events and may fantasize about revenge and retribution.
- Some youth may engage in self-destructive or risky behaviors.

Importance of considering the needs of children in disaster management efforts, especially for women who are often primary caregivers:

- Children are among the most vulnerable groups in disaster situations, as they may be
 - separated from their families,
 - experience physical or emotional trauma, and
 - have difficulty accessing basic needs like food, water, and healthcare.
- Women are often primary caregivers for children and are therefore disproportionately affected by disasters, as they may be
 - responsible for their children's safety, health, and well-being in the aftermath of a disaster.
- Prioritizing the needs of children in disaster management efforts can help ensure their safety, health, and well-being, and can contribute to their long-term recovery and resilience.
- Women's active participation in disaster management efforts is critical to
 - ensuring that the needs of children are met, as they often have unique insights into the needs of children and their families, and
 - can play key roles in providing care and support to children.
- Gender-sensitive approaches to disaster management that prioritize the needs of children can
 - help address existing inequalities and
 - ensure that the most vulnerable groups receive the support they need to recover and rebuild their lives.

Ensure that the voices and needs of women and children are heard and addressed in disaster management efforts, leading to more effective and inclusive outcomes.

Relevance for participants

- **Role in disaster management:** As Talati-cum-Mantri, the participants play a critical role in disaster management efforts at the grassroots level. They are responsible for identifying and addressing the needs of the affected population, including children, in their respective areas.
- **Vulnerability of children:** Children are particularly vulnerable in disaster situations due to their age, dependency, and lack of resources to cope with the aftermath. Women, who are often primary caregivers for children, are also vulnerable in disasters. Therefore, it is important for the Talati-cum-Mantri to understand the unique needs of children and women in disaster situations to ensure their safety and well-being.
- **Importance of gender-sensitive approaches:** The Talati-cum-Mantri are in a position to ensure that disaster management efforts are gender-sensitive and inclusive, recognizing the different needs and vulnerabilities of women and men, girls and boys. By incorporating gender-sensitive approaches, the Talati-cum-Mantri can help ensure that the needs of children and women are prioritized in disaster response and recovery efforts.
- **Community-based systems for child protection:** The Talati-cum-Mantri can play a key role in establishing and strengthening community-based systems for child protection in disaster affected areas. This includes establishing child-friendly spaces, providing psychosocial support, supporting education continuity, and identifying and responding to cases of child abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Therefore, understanding the management of children in disaster affected areas is crucial for Talati-cum-Mantri to effectively respond to the needs of the affected population, particularly women and children, and to ensure a sustainable recovery from disasters.

Understanding the needs of children in disaster affected areas

- Children have unique needs during and after disasters, including physical, emotional, and psychological needs (*brainstorming to list the needs*)
- examples of how disasters can impact children, such as separation from parents, loss of homes and schools, and exposure to violence
- Children require special attention and care to ensure their well-being and recovery
- the importance of gender-sensitive approaches to addressing the needs of children in disaster affected areas

"You cannot manage your disaster risk if you are not measuring your losses."

- Mami Mizutori, UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction

Management of Children in Disaster Affected Areas

Needs	Impact if Needs are Unmet	Response	Important Interventions
Physical	Exposure to hazards like injuries, illnesses, and malnutrition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provide immediate medical attention and access to basic necessities like food, water, and shelter. ✓ Infants and young children may need special formula or breastfeeding support, while older children may require specific medical care for pre-existing conditions or injuries sustained during the disaster. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ensure safe drinking water and sanitation facilities. Provide adequate nutrition, including micronutrient supplementation and food fortification. ✓ Provide age-appropriate healthcare services, including immunization and treatment of injuries and illnesses. ✓ Identify and address the special needs of children with disabilities or chronic illnesses.
Emotional	Feelings of fear, anxiety, and confusion; grief and depression due to loss of family members, friends, pets, and possessions; separation from caregivers or displacement from homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provide emotional support and a sense of stability to help children cope with the emotional impact of a disaster. ✓ Providing a safe and supportive environment that promotes the well-being of children can be critical for their emotional recovery. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provide opportunities for socialization and play to help children feel safe and connected. ✓ Use age-appropriate methods of communication and provide information about what is happening. ✓ Involve caregivers and families in the recovery process. ✓ Provide resources and support for addressing traumatic stress reactions, such as nightmares, bedwetting, and changes in behavior.
Psychological	Long-lasting psychological effects like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, or other mental health problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provide access to mental health resources to children and their families to address psychological issues arising from the disaster. ✓ Psychosocial support, including counseling and group activities, can help children process their experiences and emotions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Provide access to trained mental health professionals. ✓ Offer psychological first aid and peer support groups. ✓ Build community resilience and social support networks to prevent long-term psychological harm. ✓ Encourage self-care strategies for children, such as mindfulness and breathing exercises.

Strategies for managing children in disaster affected areas

- Establishing **child-friendly spaces** to provide children with a safe and supportive environment (to play and receive psychosocial support)
- Providing **psychosocial support** to address the emotional and psychological impacts of the disaster (counseling services to affected communities)
- Ensuring **access to basic needs** such as food, water, and healthcare
- Supporting **education continuity** through temporary learning spaces and school supplies distribution and teacher training
- Ensuring child protection through child registration and reunification services
- Strengthening **community-based systems for child protection** (help prevent exploitation, trafficking, and other forms of harm to children during and after disasters. This can involve working with community leaders, families, and child protection agencies to identify and respond to risks)
- Importance of involving **women as equal partners** in disaster management efforts and ensuring their active participation in decision-making processes



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- Engaging children in disaster risk reduction
 - build their resilience and preparedness
 - involved in activities such as hazard mapping, developing emergency plans, and participating in disaster drills
- Providing specialized care for vulnerable children
 - due to disabilities, illness, or other vulnerabilities- medical treatment, psychological support, and other services
- Facilitating family reunification
 - tracing services, reunification centers, and other mechanisms
- Providing education and recreational activities
 - help regain a sense of normalcy and promote their well-being - recreational activities - sports, games, and art therapy
- Integrating child protection into all phases of disaster response, including preparedness, response, and recovery
 - identifying and responding to risks such as exploitation, trafficking, and violence against children, and providing specialized care for children who have experienced harm.



Important Skills

- Interpersonal communication
- Making right referral
- Service Mapping
- Reporting
- Self Care
- Avoid burnout
- Stress management



Talking to children about disasters

1. Use age-appropriate language:

Use language that is appropriate for the child's age and developmental stage. Avoid using technical terms that may be confusing or overwhelming for younger children.

2. Listen and be supportive:

Allow the child to express their feelings and concerns. Let them know that feeling scared, sad, or angry is okay. Provide emotional support and reassurance that you are there to help them.

3. Be honest and factual:

Provide accurate information about the disaster, but only share what is necessary. Don't overload the child with information or details that may be too upsetting.

4. Focus on safety:

Reassure the child that they are safe and that you are taking steps to keep them safe. Provide them with tips on how to stay safe during a disaster, such as finding a safe place to hide during an earthquake.

5. Provide routines and structure:

Maintaining a routine can provide a sense of stability and normalcy for children during times of disaster. Stick to regular routines as much as possible and provide structure to help children feel more secure.



Resilience-building in Children is a key!

- A powerful way to manage the impact of disasters on children
- Activities promoting emotional regulation, social connection, problem-solving, and positive self-esteem
- By investing in resilience-building activities for children, we can help them develop the skills and resources they need to cope with disasters and thrive in the face of adversity.
- Use a game or a role-playing activity to demonstrate how child-friendly spaces work and the benefits they provide to children
- Use pictures and videos to showcase successful disaster response and recovery efforts that prioritized the needs of children
- Provide hands-on activities, such as making emergency preparedness kits, to demonstrate how communities can prepare for disasters and reduce their impact on children

Talking to affected/children in DaAs

1.Be patient and understanding:

Children who have experienced a disaster may be struggling with a range of emotions. Be patient and understanding as they process their feelings.

2.Offer practical help:

Offer practical assistance to help children meet their basic needs, such as food, water, and shelter.

3.Provide outlets for expression:

Encourage children to express their emotions through art, music, or other creative outlets. This can help them process their feelings in a safe and healthy way.

4.Seek professional help if needed:

If children struggle to cope with a disaster's aftermath, seek professional help. There are many resources available, such as counsellors, therapists, and support groups.

Psychological First Aid/Psycho-Social Support

- Address mental wound
- Prevent distress and suffering from developing into something more severe
- to help deal with distress, suffering, and sorrow and to ultimately recover

Primary focus on physical and material care and protection people from danger.

Immediate intervention: be direct, active and remain calm

Focus on the “here” and “now” situation

Provide accurate information about the situation

Do not give false assurances

Recognize the importance of taking action

Reunite with family members

Provide and ensure emotional support

Focus on strengths and resilience

Encourage self-reliance

Respect feelings of others

Challenges in managing children in disaster affected areas

- Limited resources and personnel to address the needs of all affected children
- Communication barriers, language differences, and cultural sensitivity issues
- Difficulties in ensuring access to education, healthcare, and protection
- Other?

Some resources and organizations responding to children in disasters in Gujarat

- UNICEF Gujarat
 - UNICEF is a UN agency that provides humanitarian and developmental assistance to children and mothers in developing countries.
 - UNICEF has a dedicated division for emergencies and humanitarian action, which provides support to children in disaster affected areas. Website: <https://www.unicef.org/india/where-we-work/gujarat>
- Save the Children Gujarat
 - Save the Children has a presence in Gujarat and works to improve the lives of children in the state. The organization provides support and assistance to children affected by disasters in Gujarat. Website: <https://www.savethechildren.in/where-we-work/gujarat/>
- ActionAid India Gujarat
 - ActionAid India has a presence in Gujarat and works to promote human rights, social justice, and gender equality in the state. The organization supports and assists communities, including children, affected by disasters in Gujarat. Website: <https://www.actionaidindia.org/where-we-work/gujarat/>
- SEEDS India Gujarat
 - SEEDS India is a disaster response organization that provides relief and assistance to communities affected by disasters. The organization has worked in Gujarat in the past and provides support and assistance to children and communities affected by disasters in the state. Website: <https://www.seedsindia.org/>
- Gujarat Institute of Disaster Management (GIDM)
 - GIDM is an autonomous institute that conducts research and training in the field of disaster management. The institute provides training and capacity-building programs to stakeholders involved in disaster management, including those who work with children. Website: <https://www.gidm.in/>
- Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority (GSDMA)
 - GSDMA is the primary agency responsible for disaster management in the state of Gujarat. The authority provides relief and assistance to affected communities, including children, during times of disaster. Website: <http://www.gsdma.org/>

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Plan International

- Plan International is a global children's charity that works in over 75 countries to advance children's rights and equality for girls. It provides emergency relief and recovery support to children and communities affected by disasters. Website: <https://plan-international.org/emergencies>

World Vision

- World Vision is a Christian humanitarian organization that works in nearly 100 countries to address poverty and injustice. It provides emergency relief and recovery support to children and communities affected by disasters. Website: <https://www.wvi.org/emergencies>

ChildFund International

- ChildFund International is a child-focused development organization that works to improve the well-being of children in some of the world's most vulnerable communities. It provides emergency relief and recovery support to children and communities affected by disasters. Website: <https://www.childfund.org/emergencies/>

Sphere Handbook

- The Sphere Handbook is a set of guidelines and standards for humanitarian response that outlines minimum standards for disaster response. The Handbook includes standards for protection, shelter, water and sanitation, food security and nutrition, and health services. Website: <https://handbook.spherestandards.org/en/sphere-handbook/>

Conclusion

- The importance of prioritizing the needs of children in disaster management efforts and involving women as equal partners
 - Continued support and advocacy for children in disaster-affected areas
 - Please share your key takeaways and how can you apply them in your personal or professional lives
 - Questions and comments
- Thank you....**

References

- Carolyn Kousky, Impacts of Natural Disasters on Children
<http://www.futureofchildren.org/publications/docs/Climate%20Change%20Full%20Issue.pdf> (ed.gov)
- Websites:
 - UNICEF: <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies>
 - Save the Children: <https://www.savethechildren.net/emergencies>
 - World Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/emergencies/en/>
 - International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies:
<https://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/disaster-management/about-disasters/>