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'Facilitating disaster preparedness using radio in North Sumatra tsunami affected areas'

ABSTRACT

This paper presents the findings of a Disaster Mitigation Preparedness (DMP) study conducted in the province of Aceh, Indonesia in 2008. The purpose of the DMP research was to assess the disaster preparedness of local residents. Using the tsunami survival experience as a background, the study was conducted in an effort to effectively develop radio programs and messages, resulting in stronger resilience in the wake of future disasters. Radio's role as an information channel was evaluated during, and after disaster, so that it can be used as effectively as possible facing crisis situations.

A total of 984 people representing nine sub-districts of Banda Aceh were interviewed. In addition, eight focus groups were conducted by local NGOs in the surrounding Aceh Besar area. Key informant interviews were conducted with six officials representing the Aceh provincial government agencies involved in the various aspects of disaster management, including disaster preparedness, mitigation and disaster response. The DMP survey is the first of its kind to interview a representative random sample of Banda Aceh residents.

The study revealed the importance of community and social networks, specifically in times of critical need; such as during disasters, when essential communications such as broadcast media are not functioning. In preparing for future disasters, a warning information system based on a multi-media approach needs to be developed for the area. The wider community needs to become involved in the planning, the education and the training of Banda Aceh and Aceh Besar residents to facilitate appropriate personal and community strategies for survival in future disasters such as tsunamis or floods. A surprise finding of the study was the number of people; 10% of the interviewed who stated they had become disabled as a result of the tsunami. A key role for broadcast radio programming to facilitate disaster preparedness through a Rapid Response Radio Unit is discussed.