

Disaster Management: Responding to Disasters

Learning objectives

- To know the phases of disaster management
- To understand how to respond to disaster such as Tsunami, earthquake, riot and fire
- To describe the measures to manage riots disaster



Case Study - Tsunami

Shortly before 8 am on 26 December 2004, the cicadas fell silent and the ground shook in dismay. The Moken, an isolated tribe on the Andaman Islands in the Indian Ocean, knew that the Laboon, the 'wave that eats people', had stirred from his ocean lair. The Moken also knew what was next: a towering wall of water washing over their island, cleansing it of all that was evil and impure. To heed the Laboon's warning signs, elders told their children, run to high ground. 'If the water recedes after an earthquake, run immediately to high ground'

The tiny Andaman and Nicobar Islands were directly in the path of the tsunami generated by the magnitude 9.1 of earthquake off the coast of Sumatra. Final total put the islands' death toll at 1,879 alone with another 5,600 people missing. The islanders who had heard the stories about the Laboon or similar mythological figures survived the tsunami essentially unscathed. Most of the casualties that occurred in the southern Nicobar Islands were outsiders, leaving them with no indigenous tsunami warning system to guide them to higher ground.

Introduction

Humans have passed down stories through the ages that helped cultures to cope when disaster inevitably struck. These stories were fodder for anthropologists and social scientists, but in the past decade, geologists have begun to pay more attention to how indigenous people understood and prepared for disaster. These stories, which couched myth in metaphor, could ultimately help scientists prepare for cataclysms to come. In this lesson, you will learn about how to respond to certain disasters to become resilient.

A disaster is "a catastrophe that causes great damage or loss of life and property".

8.1 Disaster Response

Disaster response entails restoring physical facilities, rehabilitation of affected population, restoration of lost livelihoods and reconstruction efforts to restore the infrastructure lost or damaged. The Response Phase focuses primarily on emergency relief: saving lives, providing first aid, restoring damaged systems (communications and transportation), meeting the basic life requirements of those impacted by disaster (food, water and shelter) and providing mental health and spiritual support and care.