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Natural and Social Disasters: Conceptual Meaning

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Abstract: The term 'Disaster' originated from the French word 'Desastre' which is the combination of the article - 'des' and 'astre' meaning 'star'. Social disaster is an event which may cause tremendous disruption to a society, such as natural disasters, pandemics, civil unrest, wars and economic crises. A Social disaster is the highly harmful impact on a group, society or community which is usually caused by a social or natural hazard event. We define Society as a group or aggregate of people living together in an organized and structured way and sharing the work that needs to be done. Social disasters are usually out of human control and they have huge repercussions on the society just like a war or combat or a similar natural disasters. Some examples of social disaster events may include: terrorism, flooding, drought, earthquake. A social disaster can cause loss of life or damage to the property. The severity of the damage depends on the affected population's resilience and also on the infrastructure of the population's country. Natural disaster and Social disaster are both interrelated.

Index Terms - Disaster, Society, Community, Hazard, Social Disaster, Flood, Drought, Natural Disaster.

I. INTRODUCTION

Social disasters are the events that cause significant disruption to a society. Social disasters include natural disasters, pandemics, civil unrest, wars and economic crises. Social disasters generally have a harmful impact on a community which can lead to loss of life, displacement and economic hardship. The term social disaster refers to the exposure of the society to various kinds of harmful calamities, like, floods, earthquakes etc which may threaten the very essentials of the Society or bring untold miseries to its people.

II. WHAT IS A SOCIAL DISASTER?

Social disaster is an event which may cause tremendous disruption to a society, such as natural disasters, pandemics, civil unrest, wars and economic crises. These events generally can have a far reaching impact on a community, leading to loss of life, displacement and economic hardship.

Social disasters can have wide-ranging and long-lasting impact on individuals, groups, communities and societies.

As per IFRC disasters are serious disruptions to the functioning of a community that exceed its capacity to cope using its own resources. Disasters can be caused by natural, man-made and technological hazards, as well as various factors that influence the exposure and vulnerability of a community.

III. ORIGIN OF THE WORD 'DISASTER'

The term 'Disaster' originated from the French word 'Desastre' which is the combination of the article - 'des' and 'astre' meaning 'star'. In earlier days a disaster was considered to be due to some unfavourable star. Now, the term 'Disaster' is commonly used to denote any odd or unexpected event, be natural or man made, that can bring immense sorrow to a region or population. It becomes very difficult to cope with the situation through local resources during the times of a disaster.

IV. TYPES OF DISASTERS

The dictionary meanings of Disaster are:

1) Disaster is a sudden or great misfortune, calamity (Concise Oxford Dictionary)

2) Disaster is a sudden calamitous event producing great material damage, loss and distress. (Webster's Dictionary)

District Administration (PUDUCHERRY DISTRICT) defines "A disaster is a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources. Disasters can be caused by naturally occurring events, such as earthquakes, hurricanes, flooding, or tornadoes, or they can be due to man-made events, either accidental (such as an accidental toxic spill or nuclear power plant event), or deliberately caused (such as various terrorist bombings and poisonings)".

The term "social disaster" refers to a catastrophic damage that impacts a society, group or community on a large scale and leads to significant disruption of social order, institutions and norms. Social disasters can result from a number of natural events, like earthquakes, hurricanes, floods or pandemics. Social disasters can also be caused by human actions, such as wars, economic crises, or political unrest.



(TNAU-2015)

Flood



Earthquake

Disaster



Drought



Landslide



Tsunami



Forest Fire

Social disasters are not limited to mere immediate physical damage they cause. They can also lead to widespread displacement and disruption of populations, loss of livelihoods, breakdown of social order and increased vulnerability to further risks and hazards. Some times Social disasters increase existing inequalities and social injustices within a society and may affect marginalized groups such as the women, poor, elderly, children, or minorities in an unjust way.

According to Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) following types of disasters may be noted-
Natural Disasters

Natural disasters are large-scale geological or meteorological events that have the potential to cause loss of life or property. These types of disasters include:

- Tornadoes and Severe Storms
- Hurricanes and Tropical Storms
- Floods
- Wildfires
- Earthquakes
- Drought

Severe storms and floods are one of the most common types of natural disasters. These meteorological events are occasionally preceded by emergency declarations and require systematic planning prior to the event, such as evacuations, protection of public assets and accumulation of resources.

Human-Caused Disasters:

Examples of Human-Caused Disasters include industrial accidents, shootings, acts of terrorism and incidents of mass violence. In line with natural disasters, these types of serious events may also cause loss of life and property. They may also prompt evacuations from certain areas and cause behavioural health resources in the affected communities.



Natural Disasters:

- Earthquakes
- Floods
- Landslides
- Cyclones
- Tsunami

Man-Made Disasters:

- Nuclear and Radiological Disaster
- Biological Disaster
- Chemical Disaster
- Terrorist Attack
- Bomb Blast
- Hijacking
- Hostage Situation

IV. Conclusion: Disasters and Social Change

Disasters can have a deep and long-lasting impact on societies. In the aftermath of disasters, people are often forced to confront the loss of loved ones, homes, and livelihoods. This leads to feelings of grief, anger, frustration and despair. Recapturing the sense of community and cultural identity has been complicated because so much of community's history was tied up in geographical locations that have since been destroyed. Some may perform better than others and may find new ways to preserve their heritage through traditional practices. Few studies suggest disasters may result in lowered levels of community attachment, satisfaction with life in the community and mistrust in government. Research suggests such declines may be related to the blaming processes and conflicts that can develop in the wake of disasters. The primary population where the disasters have a direct effect suffers a lot and suffering be found in the direct path of the natural disaster. The impact on this group includes death, homelessness, injury and trauma. It also includes psychological disorders.

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