

PREPARING TO VOLUNTEER IN DISASTER SITUATION

A Study of Volunteers' Experiences in the April 2015 Nepal Earthquake

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ABSTRACT

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This research emphasizes the significance of organized volunteering in disaster or emergency situations. It demystifies the consequences of unorganized volunteering and the importance of preparedness before volunteering in disaster situations to increase the work effectiveness. The research identifies the core skills and competencies the volunteers require before stepping up to volunteer in disaster situations. The reflection on the experiences of a group of people that flew from Finland to Nepal in order to volunteer during the April 2015 Nepal earthquake is a major base for the findings of this research.

A qualitative data collection method was applied in this research. The data was collected using semi-structured interviews. The purposive sampling technique was used for the selection of interviewees. Individual interviews were conducted. The data was transcribed in the form of documentation and audio recordings. Interview questions were mainly focused on experiences and input of the volunteers. Thematic content analysis with deductive approach was employed for evaluation and interpretation of the data.

The findings of this research reveal the importance of preparedness in order to accomplish the volunteering objectives. Unorganized volunteering adds burden to the victims more than helps. Enough research regarding the workplace and its real time situation should be taken into consideration before going to the field. Appropriate logistics should be carried out. Coordination should be efficient in all levels.

In conclusion, volunteers have to be well-prepared in order to confront substantial challenges while volunteering in disaster situations and preparations have to be done prior to volunteering in Nepal. Challenges during volunteering include group forming, work planning, risk calculation, group security and minimizing the comfort. Preparations are needed both in Finland and in Nepal. Preparations in Finland include forming a group, work place selection, resource allocation, work planning and distribution whereas legal proceedings, coordination, self-sustenance, arrangement of relief supplies and delivery arrangements constitute preparations in Nepal.

Key words: earthquake, disaster, emergency, volunteer, volunteerism, relief distribution, preparation.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The main aim of the research is to explore upon the challenges of the volunteers as being a part of disaster response team for relief distribution in earthquake hit Nepal; hence making people further aware about the necessary preparations while volunteering in disaster situations. The objective of this research is to illuminate the required skills encompasses and competencies of the volunteers who choose to volunteer during the aftermath of the natural disasters like the April 2015 Nepal earthquake. The research advocates preparedness in disaster situations so as to minimize the extent of the damage. The natural disasters come in various forms and shapes like the floods, landslides, hurricanes, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions etc. The natural disasters have been striking timely initiating the loss of the innumerable lives of people and demolishing the infrastructures, buildings and constructions of immense worth. On the context, an earthquake is a tremor of the surface of the earth, sometimes severe and devastating that results from shock waves generated by the movement of rock masses deep within the earth, particularly near boundaries of tectonic plates.

The major earthquake of magnitude 7.8 Richter scale struck Nepal on the 25th April, 2015 causing the deaths of nearly 9,000 people and injuring over 22,000 (Incident Report of Earthquake 2015). It is considered as one of the most devastating havoc that threatened the country's well-being marauding an unimaginable fortune. The study aims to capitalize on the roles of the volunteers during the aftermath of the catastrophe and acknowledging the effectiveness and usefulness during the relief operations. Volunteering is one of the indispensable means to minimize the consequences and the impact brought about by the natural disasters. It may not prevent the disasters and the hazardous impacts but can to some extent help in declining the adverse effects of the consequences.

Therefore the role of volunteers and volunteering activities can be vitally decisive during the catastrophes and the study is executed on volunteering during the disastrous situations in order to illuminate the vitality and significance of volunteering activities; put focus on the skills encompasses of the volunteers by

attaining the maximum valuable information from the volunteers that volunteered during the April 2015 Nepal earthquake. Also, the purpose is to exploit the data collected through qualitative method by conducting individual interviews that lead to the conclusive construction of the guidelines to the preparedness before enduring to volunteer in disaster situations. The experiences of the volunteers reflect the core procedure of volunteering during the disaster situations and further emphasize the efforts to enhance the volunteering skills. The implications of unskilled volunteering have also been highlighted and elaborated in the research. The study can supplant the guidelines for the future volunteers willing to volunteer in disaster situations and can pioneer through the complexities of volunteering. The study is based on the experiences of the Nepalese volunteers that had flown from Finland to Nepal in order to provide the helping hand to the relief works for the earthquake victims. This study emphasizes on how the volunteering activities could be made more efficient and effective by reflecting on the experiences and challenges the volunteers encountered while volunteering in the April 2015 Nepal earthquake.

2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

2.1 Country Profile: Nepal

Nepal is a landlocked country geographically located in the southern Asia between China and India with an area of 147,181 sq. km. (CIA 2012). It is a multi-ethnic, multilingual and multi-religious country. The country can broadly be divided into three ecological zones: the lowland (Terai region), the midland (Hilly region) and the highland (Himalayan region) inducing the diverse climate due to the country's altitudinal variation. Nepal owns eight of the world's highest mountains above 8,000 m, including Mt. Everest (8,848 m) which is the highest peak in the world. Nepal Census 2011 recorded the total population of 26.6 million consisting of 126 caste/ethnic groups and 123 languages spoken as mother tongue in Nepal (Nepal Population and Housing census 2011.) The new constitution of Nepal 2072 declared Nepal as religiously secular state.

Agriculture is believed to be one of the major backbones of Nepalese economy providing livelihood to about 76% households and comprising 32% of the total Gross Development Product (GDP). The April 2015 earthquake hit hard on various aspects of economic development of the nation from service sector to tourism, manufacturing industry and trade due to obstruction in highways caused by landslides resulting from frequent aftershocks (Macroeconomic Update Nepal, 2015 p9-11.) Nepal suffered a great loss in terms of economic development and many historical sites and cultural heritages were destructed due to the earthquake. The impact of the earthquake was visible in almost every aspect of human lives. Many industries and service sectors like schools, banks, public administrations, shopping centres etc. were closed for days. Roadways blockade due to landslides hindered the supply of foods in different parts of the country. The natural disasters in the form of earthquakes at times have devastated the country that have required years of time to recover from.

2.2 The April 2015 Nepal Earthquake

A major earthquake of magnitude 7.8 Richter scale occurred in Nepal on 25th April, 2015 at 11:56 NST resulting in the deaths of nearly 9,000 people and injuring more than 22,000 people (Incident Report of Earthquake 2015). Its epicenter was located in the Gorkha region about 80 km north-west of Kathmandu and is therefore known as the April 2015 Nepal earthquake or the Gorkha earthquake (National Seismological Centre, Nepal). The immeasurable demolition caused by the earthquake was the worst since that caused by the Nepal-Bihar earthquake in 1934 according to Joanna Sugden in *The Wall Street Journal* (India). The earthquake triggered irreparable ruination throughout the country causing the houses to collapse and crushing the villages into wreckage. At least 19 people lost their lives in the avalanche triggered by the earthquake on Mt. Everest considering it to be one of the deadliest incidents on the history of mountaineering. Various seismologists and other experts had anticipated and predicted the susceptibility and vulnerability of Nepal to earthquakes as the country was always a seismic prone zone (Achenbach 2015). The growing urbanization, unplanned settlement, fragile and unplanned building infrastructure and architecture may have helped to magnify the impact of the havoc; therefore resulting to an unfathomable loss.

2.3 Implications of the April 2015 Nepal Earthquake

The April 2015 Nepal earthquake had colossal consequences in terms of lives and wealth. Thousands of people lost their lives and properties of worth of billions were ruined (CEDIM, 2015). The housing infrastructures in the hilly regions and the mountain regions that are mostly built of stones, rocks, clay etc. cannot withstand the tremors and as a result collapsed (Tesfamariam & CEDIM, 2015). The hilly and the mountain regions were inflicted immensely comparing to the plain areas because of the topography. The buildings that were included in the UNESCO world heritage list were inflicted by the tremors. The epicenter and the areas surrounding it were completely dismantled; houses were col-

lapsed burying people and the properties within (Shrestha 2015). The topographical situation of the country augmented the already stupendous damage by hindering the accessibility to the affected places on time. The cracks and faults created by the earthquakes damaged roads that hindered the emergency rescue operations and relief distribution works. The bridges were ruptured and the landslides triggered by the earthquake obstructed the traffic and impeded the movement of the rescuers and volunteers with the essential medical supplies and other items such as food, clothing and tents etc. This added more to the problems for the victims as well as the organizations and volunteers involved in rescue and relief works. (Tefamariam, 2015.) The Center for Disaster Management and Risk Reduction Technology (CEDIM), 2015 reported that the total economic loss was in the order of 10 billion US dollars which is about the half of Nepal's GDP (CEDIM 2015). According to the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), the April 2015 earthquake will have grave long-term socio-economic impacts on people and communities in Nepal.

3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of the research is to explore the challenges of volunteering in disaster situations. Moreover, this study focuses on the roles and significance of coordination while it comes to volunteering during the disasters. Our study revolves around the two research questions-

1. What kinds of challenges volunteers confront while being a part of disaster response team for relief distribution?
2. What kinds of preparations have to be taken into consideration while traveling to Nepal as a disaster response team for relief distribution?

The research is based on the experiences of the volunteers that flew from Finland to Nepal with the aim of volunteering during the April 2015 Nepal earthquake. In our study, we are referring to the research literature basically on volunteering and preparedness in natural disasters and emergency situations. Our research portrays how enduring and arduous task volunteering can be in reality by reflecting and emphasizing on the challenges volunteers had to confront while volunteering in the April 2015 Nepal earthquake. The data for our research is obtained from the interviews of four Nepalese volunteers that volunteered during the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. The outcome of the research can be useful for the future volunteers opting to volunteer in the disaster or emergency situations in Nepal.

4 VOLUNTEERISM AND VOLUNTEERS

Volunteerism is prevalent in all the societies and communities as a conduit to expression of humanity, solidarity and compassion. In some societies, helping or providing assistance is an expectation of the culture and volunteering is not identified as a distinct form of activity (ILO, 2012). Whereas on the other, the participation and contribution of the spontaneous volunteers goes unnoticed comparing to the highly recognition of that of the professional volunteers and volunteers affiliated to disaster related agencies and organizations. The participation of local people in volunteering activities is a key principle of disaster risk reduction and resilience building (UNISDR, 2007). Most volunteers are motivated by their humanitarian values (wanting to help someone), although some also participate to increase understanding, gain career related experience, develop social network, address personal problems and to seek personal psychological growth (Clary & Snyder, 1991). The efficacy of volunteers depends on their skillfulness and efficiency to work in challenging situations like during the disaster and emergencies.

4.1 Definition of Volunteerism and Volunteers

Volunteering is a multi-dimensional concept that promotes social participation and active citizenship and strengthens civil society. According to the United Nations Volunteers, volunteerism is a conduit for universal value in terms of human rights, democracy, combating racism, solidarity and sustainable development (United Nations Volunteers, 200, p.10). It is a form of altruistic behavior bound to help others, a group, an organization, a cause, or the community at large, without expectation of material reward (Musick & Wilson, 2007). It is unpaid and non-compulsory work and time given by individuals without pay to activities performed either through an organization or directly for others outside their own household (ILO, 2012). It embraces both direct volunteering i.e. volunteer activities engaged in directly for other households and organization-based volunteer-

ing i.e. volunteering done for or through non-profit institutions or other types of organizations.

Volunteering is an expression of the individual's involvement in their community. Participation, trust, solidarity and reciprocity, grounded in a shared understanding and a sense of common obligations, are mutually reinforcing values at the heart of governance and good citizenship. (United Nations Volunteers, 2000.)

According to Butcher, volunteering work is a work a person does out of free will, that reaches out to invest time and service for the benefit of others or to a cause that is not profit-seeking and for which there is no monetary or in-kind payment (Butcher,2010). The decision to volunteer may be influenced by peer pressure, personal values and cultural or social obligations but the individual must be able to choose whether or not to act. Volunteerism can be of many types; as like in the military where a person enlists in the service with free will, in a project or in the crisis situations such as during the war or the natural disasters. The degree of emergency or urgency in the crisis situation measures the significance of the volunteering work. It is a noble act practiced selflessly for the well-being of the people at the receiving end. It is practiced according to one's own will without any interference from the outsider. Volunteers are persons who perform unpaid volunteer activities...through or for an organization (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008).

4.2 Volunteerism and Community Development

Community development and volunteers have a long-lasting acquaintanceship since the historical past. A group of people with a shared identity forms a community. Development is a process that increases choices which means new options, diversification, thinking about apparent issues differently and anticipating change (Christenson et. al., 1989).

Community development means that community itself engages in a process aimed at improving the social, economic and environmental situation of the country by relying on interaction between people

and joint action, rather than individual activity- what some sociologists call “collective agency” (Flora and Flora, 1993).

Community development improves the situation of the community, not just economically but also as a strong functioning community in itself and enhances the community capacities to collectively make better decisions about the use of resources such as infrastructure, labor and knowledge. Its broad aims are to eradicate discrimination and inequality in society through social change (Ollis, 1997). Many volunteers in the community services work with people who are vulnerable and often form a lower socio-economic background (Althusser, 1969; Marx & Engels, 1976).

Volunteers as individuals and groups contribute to the process of community development by committing time and energy for the benefit of society and the community, the environment or individuals outside or in addition to one’s immediate family. It is undertaken freely and without concern for financial gain (Department for Social Development, 2011).

Volunteerism is related with the community development in the sense that it is the principle of donating time and energy for the benefit of other people in the community as a social responsibility rather than for any financial reward. It is the indispensable element of community development on which the formulation and implementation of community development strategies rely upon. Awareness and consciousness of volunteers towards the economic, environmental and socio-cultural aspects enhance the well-being of people within the community. This induces empowerment that energizes individuals to commit for the welfare of the community prompting social changes that leads to positive developments. (Davis 2007.) For instance, volunteers can contribute in creating awareness about the sustainable management of natural resources and enhancing environmental sustainability that can prevent and mitigate the impact of disasters esp. when changing in climate patterns are increasing vulnerabilities of communities.

Volunteering itself is good for individual health and the more engaged communities are as a collective, the healthier they become socially and economically

(Volunteering England, 2008). Volunteers contribute to the execution of the values and principles of community development such as democratic, inclusive, social justice and equity, universality etc. The inclusion of volunteers in the strategic development structure of the community secures the accomplishment of development projects to a considerable extent. Volunteering practice is beyond social barriers and fragmentations that escalate mutual cooperation and compassion amongst the people of diverse cultures fostering prosperity in the community. Volunteerism has always been present in preparing for and coping with communities in times of disasters. Volunteers from within the communities are the first people to respond during crisis situations. Volunteering in emergency situations promotes solidarity between the affected and rescuers notwithstanding their diverse backgrounds such as religious and cultural differences. Democracy and self-sustainability are the determinants of a healthy and prosperous community and that is procured by the unified connection and social acquaintanceships of people within the communities stimulated by the volunteers and their volunteering activities. (Volunteer Now 2011.)

The intervention of volunteers in the inception of coordination and communication networks augments resources contributing to community development. Volunteers are also playing an increasing role in enabling communities to respond to disaster and other times of crisis (Brennan, Flint, & Barnett, 2005; Flint and Brennan, 2006). Volunteers interacting together also serve the transcending class and racial divides in the search for community well-being (Chavez, 2005). According to Barnes, volunteerism provides a mechanism to cut across gender barriers and more adequately include women, youth, and minorities in local decision-making (Barnes, 2005). Women and minorities are marginalized in most communities and their incorporation in decision-making mechanism is the sheer expression of community development.

Volunteers induce social value to the communities apart from economical values. Volunteering activities enhance mutual integration and solidarity amongst the people in communities and further stimulate them for their own recovery during crisis situations. The involvement of volunteers in the development and

implementation of strategic approaches to disasters helps to ensure the community resilience to disasters to an immeasurable extent. Volunteers work for the well-being of the most vulnerable, marginalized and disadvantaged groups of people and community who are most likely to suffer during the disaster situations due to the lack of resources and inadequate security. The volunteering practice enhances community empowerment, social change and justice as a part of social responsibility. Social work and volunteering may be different in terms but volunteering work addresses many significant social issues such as social change and cohesion, development, empowerment of the disadvantaged and marginalized people that induce well-being to the people's lives and communities. Therefore, proper utilization of volunteers and upgrading their volunteering competencies at times by linking them with broad-based community training facilitates the community development. (Brennan, 2007.)

4.3 Volunteerism in Disaster/Emergency Situations and Emergency Volunteers

Volunteerism in disaster or emergency situations refers to the formal or informal volunteering activities of the skilled, unskilled, affiliated and unaffiliated individuals or organizations that can be carried out on a continuum of informality to formality. Volunteering in disaster situations is usually stimulated by the act of solidarity, humanity and compassion towards the inflicted groups of people who are in urgent need of help and is one of the clearest expressions of human values that underpin the drive to attend to the needs of others.

Emergency volunteerism is momentarily uncompensated, willful action, be it spontaneous or organized, oriented towards the protection and/or restoration of symbols, interests, people or other high priority values of a personal or group nature (Wolensky, 1979).

The Emergency Management Australia defines an emergency volunteer as someone involved in emergency activity at the request (either directly or indirectly) or with the express or implied consent of the Chief Executive (however designated) or of a person acting with the Authority of the Chief Executive of the agency to which either the state emergency response or recovery plan applies.

The volunteers have to act in accordance with the legislation, policies and procedures of the organization they are affiliated with by remaining within the jurisdiction of the formal emergency management systems that recommends training and accreditation as the preliminary requisites. Shaskolsky has categorized emergency volunteerism into anticipated individual volunteers, anticipated organization volunteers, spontaneous individual volunteers and spontaneous organization volunteers (Shaskolsky, 1967). Anticipated individual volunteers tend to work for meeting the needs of the societies and communities at the individual level whereas the organization volunteers work for the organization. Spontaneous individual volunteers participate and contribute individually in the early stages in an emergency. Spontaneous organization volunteers come into practice only during the aftermath of the disasters. These volunteers may contribute by getting acquainted to some disaster related organizations, creating ad hoc organizations or some informal networks.

Spontaneous volunteers as individuals or groups of people who seek or are invited to contribute their assistance during and /or after an event and who are unaffiliated with any part of the existing official emergency management response and recovery system and may or may not have relevant training, skills or experience [The Australian Government Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra Spontaneous Volunteers Management Resource Kit (2010)].

In accordance with FEMA, unaffiliated volunteers are spontaneous volunteers self-deployed to assist in emergency situations but lacking certain credentials in the absence of any association with emergency management agencies (FEMA, 2013). Notwithstanding the fact that some of the interviewee volunteers were from the useful backgrounds such as Medicare and mass communication, the volunteers in our research were spontaneous in the sense that they were untrained and unaffiliated. Later, they felt the need for the affiliation with the local level organization in order to launch their objectives effectively and conveniently.

Responding to the emergencies can also take place outside the formal emergency and disaster management settings recognized as informal volunteerism.

Informal volunteers may act individually or in a group on a short or long term basis and before, during and after the disasters. Their participation may be spontaneous and unplanned or deliberate and carefully planned. The informal volunteering was practiced by the respondent volunteers in this research with no association to any formal organizations. They simply formed a group in Finland aiming to help for a short period of time in the disaster-stricken Nepal. Informal volunteerism resembles association to emergency/ disaster management informally via emergent and extending volunteerism. Digital volunteerism supplants the new revolution in volunteerism bolstered by the induction of advanced and sophisticated means of technologies enhancing the accessibility to information more conveniently.

Emergent volunteerism takes place in the immediate aftermath of the disasters when the requisites of the inflicted groups cannot be addressed by the formal response organizations. Emergent or unaffiliated volunteers are individuals who either call to offer assistance or arrive at disaster scenes and either are not affiliated with a recognized disaster agency or choose not to volunteer for the agency with which they are affiliated and who are assigned one or more volunteer tasks. Emergent volunteers respond to unaccomplished needs and may entail considerable deliberation, planning and organization prior to prevention or preparedness activities. The unpredictability of the conditions during the emergency situations demands the emergent volunteers to bear the traits to improvise and innovate that resemble some of the challenges the volunteers in our research encountered while volunteering in the earthquake in Nepal.

As Cottrell suggests, spontaneous volunteers are unaffiliated groups with or without relevant volunteering expertise reluctant to offer assistance following a disaster (Cottrell, 2010). The constitution of the groups and organizations without emergency or disaster functions and extending their volunteering activities during crises supplants extending volunteerism. Extending volunteers form a part of various community and religious groups or service organizations, sporting clubs, chamber of commerce etc. The features of comprehending community needs at the local level strengthen the motives of fulfilling the needs by draw-

ing on the available networks and resources. Corporate volunteering is becoming increasingly common as part of corporate social responsibility (Twigg, 2001).

The digital volunteerism induces the new revolution of participation in emergency situations in emergency and disaster management processes in the newest and truly innovative ways which was evident in March 2014 when 2.3 million people joined the search for missing Malaysian Airlines flight MH370 by scanning more than 24,000 square kilometers of satellite imagery uploaded to the Tomnod website. The increasing accessibility to advanced and sophisticated means of communication technologies has made the procurement and dissemination of the information more efficient and convenient than before. The intervention of social media and web based mapping software in disseminating the emergency related information has been overwhelming. Facebook, data mining and crisis mapping are some of the instances that can be very useful for digital volunteerism.

Maier's description of graduate students from Tufts University in Massachusetts launching a live crisis map just within hours of the 2010 Haiti earthquake to document the extent of the damage and the affected populations' urgent needs is a clear illustration of the impact digital volunteerism can have on the crisis and emergency situations. The key feature of digital volunteerism is its efficiency to speedily update the factual and contextual information in no time. It aids to the dissemination of information as well as enhances the production of knowledge. Digital volunteerism has empowered the scope and dimension of involvement in emergency situations and management by capacitating people's participation not just by their presence on the disaster affected areas but from any part of the world with the best of the virtues to deliver.

4.4 Models of Volunteer Practice

Volunteers and volunteering practices are influenced by the ideology of the affiliated organization and that of an individual's own values and beliefs (Ollis, 2001). The interviewee volunteers in our research were spontaneous i.e. unaffiliated and therefore their practices were moreover driven by the ideologies of their own personal values rather than that of the organization. The models of volunteer practice connect the volunteering activities to the ideology of the volunteering organization or that of an individual volunteer. In volunteer practice, there are three types of volunteering: conservative volunteerism, pluralist volunteerism and social change volunteerism.

4.4.1 Conservative Volunteerism

This volunteerism is motivated by humanity, compassion and altruism. It emphasizes on working for others' well-being as there exist many needy people with the limited available resources with the government as was in the case of the April 2015 Nepal earthquake. A lot is expected from the volunteers according to this volunteering practice that may exploit the volunteers' aptitude.

4.4.2 Pluralist Volunteerism

Lack of support from the governmental level is the pushing factor for this volunteering practice. Volunteers pursuing this model believe their participation can bridge the gaps between the organization's needs and vindicate the government for funding. Volunteers are trained and their efficiency enhanced according to this model of practice.

4.4.3 Social Change Volunteerism

This model of volunteerism observes and specifies the differences and inequalities within the societies and communities and further advocates for social reforms. Political activist groups, social movements and organizations working towards social reforms are the constituents of this volunteerism. Volunteers are

unpaid workers and therefore accepting government funding is not acceptable which may affect the motives of social movements and politicization according to this model of volunteerism.

5 SIGNIFICANCE OF VOLUNTEERING WORK IN NEPAL

Volunteerism occupies a huge scope in today's world and particularly in developing countries like Nepal. The aftermath of the natural disasters poses numerous challenges for communities, organizations, businesses, households, and individual citizens at the local level. Essential infrastructure may be destroyed, basic services are often disrupted, numerous livelihoods are endangered and the local economy may be in shatters (Berke, Kartez & Wenger, 1993; Smith, 2001). Local people are widely believed to lack the capacity and skills to cope with and recover from disasters. Communities affected by natural disasters are often depicted as being passive with regard to disaster prevention, mitigation and responses, and waiting only for government assistance in the aftermath of such events (Blaikie et al., 1994; Morris, 2012). On the contrary, Steward and Donovan (2008, p.219) hold the depiction of disaster victims as dazed, confused and helpless individuals, suddenly dependent on external handouts is a fallacy.

Therefore, it's simply unimaginable for a developing country like Nepal to cope with the devastating aftermath of the catastrophes without the intervention and participation of the volunteers. Conservative and pluralist models of volunteering practice (See chapters 4.4.1 & 4.4.2) are common in the context of Nepal. The country doesn't possess adequate resources to combat the disaster situations and therefore the role of the volunteers can be vital in the crisis situations. Technological backwardness is the hindrance to digital volunteering in the country. In such situation, the role of spontaneous and emergent volunteers (See 4.3) can be vital to the relief operation. The contribution of corporate volunteering can also be of significant value in the disaster situation in Nepal.

5.1 Volunteering in the April 2015 Nepal Earthquake

The April 2015 Nepal earthquake witnessed the outpouring of volunteers from

all around the world. Different countries offered their help in terms of expert human resources, essential supplies and logistics according to the Humanitarian response to the 2015 Nepal earthquake. Volunteering in tragic situations in disaster-stricken Nepal is always an arduous task but it's even more strenuous and challenging when one has to volunteer in the areas where topography is an obstacle to achieving the goals. Mobility of the volunteers ought to be convenient for volunteering to be more effective. But when the transportation is hindered by the faults and cracks on the roads and obstructed by the landslides that have been triggered by the earthquake, volunteering can be even more formidable (Free Press Journal, 2015). The frequent aftershocks occurring every 15-20 minutes kept threatening the lives of the volunteers. According to the media and newspapers, most of the rescue and relief operations were focused in the Kathmandu valley but enough wasn't done to the most afflicted places like Sindhupalchowk and Gorkha districts that were completely annihilated by the temblor. According to Orla Fagan, the United Nations' regional public information officer in Kathmandu, the topography is the major hindrance to delivering aid thus creating logistical problem during disaster situations. This has the direct impact on the volunteering activities hindering and slowing down the relief works.

6 REFLECTION ON VOLUNTEERING IN DISASTER SITUATIONS

In this chapter, we have discussed on the relevant studies on volunteering in disaster situations. The effectiveness of spontaneous volunteering during disasters has been assessed by reflecting on the participation of spontaneous volunteers in the Sichuan earthquake. Various researchers' points of view have been brought into context in order to reflect on the preparedness prior to volunteering and competencies required to volunteer in disaster situations by emphasizing on the implications of unskilled or spontaneous volunteering.

6.1 Volunteering in the Sichuan Earthquake

Volunteers have played vital roles in times of disasters and emergencies. The aftermath of the Sichuan earthquake that struck China in 2008 with the magnitude of 7.9 Richter scale witnessed the outpouring of people from all around the world into the disaster affected areas to bolster the rescue and relief operations as volunteers. The earthquake caused immense devastation killing 69,197 people injuring 374,176 with 18,222 people missing according to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2008) and Xinhua Net (2009). Notwithstanding the impossibility of the exactness of the number of volunteers, the reports roughly indicated the registration of 1,087,000 people as volunteers during the first ten days after the aftermath of the quake (Chinese Communist Youth League, 2008).

The observations after the relief operations at the aftermath of the Sichuan earthquake concluded that majority of the participating volunteers lacked the efficiency of volunteerism resulting in their ineffectiveness to the relief work and simply left being burden in times of emergency. The overwhelming number of spontaneous volunteers following a disaster can be an expression of solidarity on one hand and on the other can pose challenges for disaster relief and recovery services. They could also become the secondary victims at least at the psy-

chological level when encountering horrendous scenes. According to Shih, Liao, Chan, Duh and Gau, the volunteers are highly probable of being psychologically afflicted after volunteering in emergency situations (Shih, et al., 2002). Studies have also shown that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is high among rescue workers (Ursano, et al., 1999). Emotional distress and burnouts are common among volunteers participating in emergency disasters. The emotional labor required expressing empathy; optimism etc. leads to emotional exhaustion among emergency volunteers (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993).

6.2 Implications of Untrained and Unskilled Volunteering

Fernandez et al. have highlighted the failure to effective utilization and disruption and reduction of the available resources to the afflicted people as the major risks in dealing with the untrained and unaffiliated spontaneous volunteers. For instance, a 32 km traffic jam created by the overwhelming mass of spontaneous volunteers after the 1999 Golcuk earthquake in Turkey which killed 17,000 people halted the emergency services' attempts to access the disaster area. The unpreparedness of the people volunteering after the 2007 Hebei Spirit oil spill in South Korea resulted in the suffering from skin diseases which suggest that volunteers if unskilled may not only harm the rescue/relief operations but also harm themselves. The volunteers were found overwhelmed by the emotional impact of their volunteering activities following the 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City. Liath noted that such condition could result in traumatization and the serving volunteers could resemble the secondary victims of the disaster (Liath, 2004).

Jayne Cravens (2010-2014) asserts that unaffiliated and untrained volunteers can add more problems than alleviating in the disaster situations. Working with unlimited workload at highly stressful situations during disasters requires self-sustainability skills and sheer determination according to Cravens. Incompetence of the volunteers to deliver correctly may consider them to be the victims of anger. She further emphasizes on the importance of the legal procedure

while traveling to volunteer abroad. The know-how skills of situation assessment, incident management or chain of command can benefit the volunteers in disaster situations. According to Cravens, supervision has to be taken by the volunteers about cultural values and legal boundaries before volunteering abroad which may otherwise place them in a predicament. (Cravens, 2010-2014.)

6.3 Skills and Competencies for Volunteering in Disaster Situations

People with the knowledge, experience or qualification in the administration/management, building and construction, chemistry, computing, education and training, electronic and mechanical engineering, mass communication, medical care, psychological counseling, transportation etc. can be very useful during the aftermath of the disasters. Adaptability and resilience increase effectiveness in volunteers' work and therefore are more likely to experience positive outcomes. They tend to feel more satisfied and emotionally stable in their volunteer work (Judge, Heller & Mount, 2002) and experience fewer negative outcomes such as burnout (Michielsen, Croon, Willensen, De Vries & Van Heck, 2007).

Ployhart et al. have emphasized on the significance of adaptability while volunteering in disaster situations. They state that individuals with high adaptability are more likely to have a better person-environment fit in dynamic circumstances (Ployhart & Bliese, 2006; Wang, Chan, McCune & Truxillo, 2011). The traits to improvise and innovate to tackle the unexpected challenges the disasters may present enhance the efficiency of volunteering in disaster situations. Morrison and Hall have further advocated adaptability as a person's predisposition to read a situation and respond effectively in a changing environment, to explore one's self identity in order to modify it effectively, to integrate appropriate response behavior into one's personal identity and to motivate oneself to develop adaptive competence or ability to adapt (Morrison & Hall, 2002, p. 225).

In the stress and coping literature, it has been shown that more resilient individuals are less likely to suffer negative consequences when exposed to stressors (Agaibi & Wilson, 2005; Klohen, 1996). Most of the disaster relief volunteers (DRVs) are unskilled and untrained and therefore have to rely more upon their own psychological capacity to cope with the challenges during disasters. Volunteers with a wide range of skills and knowledge are more likely to feel valued and satisfied by the greater sense of accomplishment. On the contrary, the work overload and inadequate support may result in the burnout of the qualified volunteers in crisis situations. Another possibility is that some tasks are comparatively more unpleasant therefore putting the incumbents in a greater risk of burnout and dissatisfaction and even disappointment with the relief organization. It causes a feeling of overwhelming emotional strain, feeling of being detached towards the clients, and feelings of incompetence and lack of achievement (Maslach, 2001). Studies also suggest that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is high among rescue workers (Ursano, Fullerton, Vance & Kao, 1999).

6.4 Preparedness to Disaster Situations

Natural disasters or emergencies offer very little or no time to react or to get prepared for. So in order to cope with and minimize the consequences of the hazards, it's better to get prepared before the occurrences of the disasters and emergencies. Therefore, we have discussed in brief about the preparedness prior to the disaster or emergency situations that can help to decline or at least minimize the consequences of the disasters.

Preparedness is a state of readiness to respond to environmental threats that results from a process in which a community examines its susceptibility to the full range of environmental hazards (vulnerability analysis), identifies human and material resources available to cope with these threats (capability assessment) and defines the organizational structures by which a coordinated response is to be made (plan development).

Preparedness to emergency or disaster situations refers to the readiness to react constructively to threats from the environment in a way that minimizes the

negative consequences of impact for the well-being of individuals and communities. Godschalk (1991, p.136) views preparedness as actions taken in advance of an emergency to develop operational capabilities and to facilitate and effective response in the event an emergency occurs. Mileti (1991, p.215) declares that the purpose of preparedness is to anticipate problems in disasters so that ways can be devised to address the problems effectively and so that the resources needed for an effective response are in place before hand. The achievement of emergency preparedness takes place through a process of planning, training and exercising accompanied by the acquisition of equipment and apparatus to support emergency action (Gillespie and Colignon, 1993). The presence of Red Cross volunteers on the ground just hours after a 6.3 magnitude earthquake struck Christchurch, New Zealand on 22 February, 2011 is the typical instance to disaster preparedness that demonstrates disaster response can be more efficient and far reaching if well-prepared.

7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is an approach in general, which is also a guideline to precisely study the research topic (Silverman 2006, 109.) This section of our thesis explains how the research has been conducted by applying the appropriate research method to meet with the aim of this research.

7.1 Aims of the Research

The aim of the research is to explore upon the challenges the volunteers had experienced as being a part of disaster response team for relief distribution in earthquake hit Nepal; hence making people further aware about the preparations that have to be undertaken at different level for the smooth accomplishment of the work. In order to achieve our aim we have had two research questions:

- 1) What kinds of challenges volunteers confront while being a part of disaster response team for relief distribution?
- 2) What kinds of preparations have to be taken into consideration while traveling to Nepal as a disaster response team for relief distribution?

After the brief study of earlier researches done similar to our research topics, we prepared a set of questions revolving round the periphery of our main research question and interviewed the volunteers who have flown to Nepal as a member of relief distribution team. We talked with them about their experiences of volunteering as a matter of finding answer to our research question. The findings are subjected to help preparing for the well-organized volunteering during the disaster situation.

7.2 Qualitative Study of the Topic

Silverman have talked about the appropriate selection of the research method. According to him, there is no right or wrong method but there are methods, which are appropriate. The appropriate method could help answer your research question the best (Silverman 2006, 112). Our research seeks to explore upon the experiences of volunteers who were part of the disaster relief team flying from Finland to Nepal after the great earthquake 2015.

Qualitative research is characterized by its aims, which relates to understanding of social life, and its methods that generates words as data rather than numbers. It generally aims to understand the experiences and attitudes of people. It gives insights to people's individual experiences. It aims to answer the exploratory question format like 'what', 'how' or 'why' of a phenomenon and the data gathered are hence descriptive (Grbich 2013, p26.). The questions regarding the feelings of an individual can be addressed through qualitative research method such as interview. One of the virtues of qualitative research is that there are many alternative sources of data. The researchers can use interviews, observations, videos, documents, drawings, diaries, memoirs, newspapers, biographies, historical documents, autobiographies, and various other sources. Hence, qualitative researches are more exploratory (Corbin and Strauss 2008, 25-27).

Like those of many qualitative researchers, we also believed that qualitative research and the data generated via interviews could provide us a deeper understanding of people experiences than that would be obtained from numeric (Silverman 2006, 112) Since the research is the exploratory study of volunteer's experiences and perspectives of voluntary work they conduct in earthquake hit Nepal, detailed interview would cover their various aspects of journey from preparation to challenges phase (on and off the field). Unlike standard survey in quantitative research, qualitative interviewing can be conducted among smaller sample size and in short-time period (Steinar, 1996.)

7.3 Sampling: Selection of Interviewees

Sampling is the process of selecting a subset, of people or social phenomena to be studied from the larger group or audience. To select a sample researcher should consider two important factors; first the resources available and second the nature of information s/he is looking forward to extract from the selected (Payne & Payne 2004, 205.) According to the authors, a resource includes all the availabilities from manpower to time frame and budget. Sample sizes are typically small in qualitative work. One way of identifying how many people you need is to keep interviewing until, in analysis, nothing new comes from the data – a point called ‘saturation’ The sampling goal in qualitative research is one of attaining ‘completeness’, i.e. the researcher sets about to choose people who are knowledgeable about the subject and talk with them until what is heard provides an overall sense of the meaning of a concept, theme or process (Robin & Rubin 1995, 71-76).

Payne and Payne (2004, 205) have defined resources as everything that is available for researchers disposal. We were two involved for this research. We had in consideration the resources available for us. We were supposed to complete and submit our work in given time frame of our school. In supervision from our teacher and based on the feedback of the audiences during the proposal presentation we planned to conduct 4-5 interviews. One, among the two researchers is also a member of relief distribution group who have flown to Nepal after the great earthquake. So, this researcher had a chance to know the people who were there working as a volunteer. Contacting these people to set for an interview was hence not a challenging task for the researchers.

Purposive Sampling has been used in this research. In purposive sampling, sample sizes may or may not be decided beforehand and depend on availability of time and resources and study objectives (Family health international 2005.) The sample size is basically small. Four people who had flown from Helsinki to Nepal as a volunteer for the disaster relief distribution were chosen to give an interview. All of them made an immediate visit to the field of devastation, i.e

within one week time period after the earthquake. All of them were Nepalese citizens and their working area was basically the hilly district. So some kind of homogeneity has been traced in their experiences, also creating an impact in the data extracted.

7.4 Collecting the Data

This research embraces interview as a tool of data collection. Among various data collection method in qualitative research, we found interview more guiding towards the aim of the research. Interview is an interactional exchange of dialogue that can happen between one-to-one or one-to-many in face to face basis or also over the telephone and internet (Mason 2002, 62.) The perspectives of the relief distribution volunteers were collected meeting everyone in person at different place and time.

Jennifer Mason in her book *Qualitative Researching* writes,

“most of the qualitative research operates from the perspective that knowledge is situated and contextual, and therefore the job of interview is to ensure that the relevant contexts are brought into focus so that situated knowledge can be produced”.

With the direct personal interview, we tried to extract the situated knowledge in our respondents about the preparations that have to be done prior to volunteering for relief distribution in Nepal during the earthquake.

This research paper intended to explore the exact picture of volunteering during the earthquake, taking into accounts; the knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations and experiences of the people who worked to distribute the relief among the victims. So semi structured interview could best serve its interest. Semi structured interview unlike, one-size-fits-all structured approach, could create more space for the construction of contextual knowledge. It involves peoples reasoning and judgments on specific events or situations stepping on the approach of simply taking the views on something. Structured interviews are

very often designed to minimize the bias, seeking for the to-the-point answers. Semi structured interview gives interviewee more freedom to express their understandings, knowledge and views on the subject matter. Hence it is more likely to generate a fairer and fuller representation of interviewee's perspectives. It also gives an opportunity to the interviewer to be responsive towards the answer given and create discussion on unclear topics. The regular two-way interaction could also be a helpful approach of creating comfort situation among the parties involved (Mason 2002, 63-67.) The interview was supported by some open-ended questions. Open-ended questions allow the respondents to express them freely without having any obligation to pick the one from the list (Kumar 2014). The set of question was predetermined still the moments of deviation from the main theme was experienced at various points for which the researcher had to work on their feet during an interview to bring the thematic context again into play.

7.5 Analyzing the Data

Data analysis is the descriptive approach of interpreting the data gathered in researchers' own words. The interpretation is made in the light of the researchers' knowledge, which s/he has gained through reading, re-reading and journaling the thoughts, ideas and experiences during research process. Data analysis is a very dynamic process. One have to undergo brainstorming the ideas, experimenting, filtering or eliminating from the jungle of ideas and finally coming to the conclusion that only few can lead research to the expected direction (Corbin and Strauss 2008, 46.)

There are no standard set agreements and rules existed on how one should make the analysis of qualitative data. Unlike quantitative data qualitative data is always analyzed during the process of making data but not in the end of process. Even though there are no set agreements and rules for analyzing the qualitative data, there are however agreement on the processes undertaken.

Researchers have made thematic analysis of contents in the data. In thematic analysis the themes are identified from the narratives, which should reveal different perspectives that can be written by the use of metaphor and conceptual linking (Grbich 2013, 96).

When all four interviews were transcribed, these were to be organized as a data. Nine boxes were created in order to tabulate the data. Each box contained six sections: first one for the question asked, four for the answers from four different respondents and last one to take the notes based on closely connected, ideas, words and concepts in the data.

TABLE 1. Data organizing table

Question: How significant did you find the role of coordinating bodies? How did they help you implement your action plan?
Answer A: Working with the Tech For Nepal (TFN) in a relief distribution makes the work lot easier with their broader knowledge about the specific area and good connection with local communities and the authorities which they shared among us....
Answer B: With the co-ordination with Help Nepal Network (HNN) we managed to find the Dalit community, hence provided them with the fund to build tunnel houses.
Answer C: We did not have concrete coordinating partners but different sectorial helps from government authorities, doctors, business personnel, blood banks, local people etc. helped us in different phases of work.
Answer D: At times when volunteers are not aware of local situations, disaster victims may confront them with lot of questions for which one is not really prepared for that may anger the affected people. Hence co-ordination with reliable organization is a safer move.
Notes: makes work easier, for info regarding place and situation, volunteer's safety, bridges the communication gap.

Note taking was further based on word-to-word reading and re-reading of the transcribed interviews. During these frequent readings, we also considered recalling our main research questions, theoretical frameworks, research methodology and literature in order to make note of what appropriate and relevant to our research could be derived from their answers.

According to Devenish (2002), there are two modes of transcribing the theme; first the ideographic mode which guides to gather the closely connected ideas, words and concepts from the data and second the nomothetic mode which guides in searching the abstract principles in the data (cited by Grbich 2013, 96-97). We considered underlining the repeating phrases, words and ideas with similar expressions appearing in the interview. Later, these words, phrases and ideas we noted, are grouped as themes.

7.6 Ethical Considerations

British Sociological Association's (BSA) Statement of Ethical Practices highlights upon the responsibility of a social science researcher to ensure the psychosocial wellbeing of the research participants. Researchers should therefore strive to protect the rights of those being studied, their sensitivities and privacy. In order to promote the participants well-being the combination of informed consent and assurance of confidentiality could be the key. (BSA 2002, cited by Payne & Payne p68.)

We explained our participants about the nature, purpose and publication of our research work before conducting the interview. Informed consent involves ensuring the voluntary participation of a respondent after the research purpose is stated clear. In some cases, the competencies of the respondent (children) could be the question mark where researchers are obliged to take the consent by proxy (parents) (Kent 1996 19-20, cited by Silverman 2006, 32.) It is among the researchers responsibility throughout the research process to treat their participants the way they like to be treated (Corbin and Strauss 2006). We also

considered their comfortability on recording their voice by the use of mobile device. One of our participants was not comfortable with record device. In her case we considered taking the notes of her interview. For the rest 3, we made a verbal agreement on recording their voice and used it for transcribing.

Corbin and Strauss in their book Basics of Qualitative Research have cited Loafland et al.:

One of the central obligation that field researchers have with respect to those they study is the guarantee of anonymity via the 'assurance of confidentiality'- the promise that the real names of the persons, places and so forth will not be used in the research report or will be substituted by pseudonyms.

We assured the interview participants of anonymity and confidentiality and replaced them with pseudonyms such as A, B, C or D in the research report. At the end of the day, we also provided our respondents with light refreshment as a compliment.

7.7 Research Process and Division of Labor

The research was conducted in a pair. There was a need for a division of labor to conduct the research efficiently and in an organized way. The proposal of our research work was accepted on 30.9.2015. We had also submitted then our work plan and work division in brief. Based on the table of contents we had outlined in the proposal, we chose the topics in which we thought we could better flow ourselves. One of us chose to write the first part of the research work including introduction, background, aims and objectives of the research. In the meantime, the second researcher involved himself in preparing the interview questions after the brief study of existing literature. Once the research area, research topic, research question, working methods and aims were finalized with mutual discussion, we stepped forward to collect the data. We both involved

ourselves in finding the participants for our research work. Contacts were made through personal links via phone and by the use of social media. Interview dates and time were fixed based on the availability of the interviewees. We divided two interviewees each to conduct an interview.

The interview answers were first recorded by using mobile device in order to keep the data accurate. We thought memorizing each and every word and at the same time taking notes would be problematic, so we chose not to do that. We considered data as the backbone of our research so we were all the time very careful and had it saved in multiple drives. Interviews were conducted in English, though all our respondents were Nepali nationals. That also helped us save our time and effort in translating the data into English. One of the researchers took responsibility of transcribing the interviews while the other took the chance of reading literature on methodologies. Transcription of the data was made after carefully listening to the interviews time and again. At times, there were information quite lengthy and in contextual, so we had to consider filtering the data and put useful and necessary information only.

For the analysis part we agreed upon doing it together. The themes were identified after reading the transcribed data in the light of existing literature. We involved ourselves in regular discussions on the subject matters. For the findings and discussions part, we even gave more time and effort. We thought we had equal participation in writing process because we did not want to burden one another with more workload. Both of us handled the responsibilities with honesty. We also made crosschecking of each other's work in a timely basis. For that we read other's work thoroughly and made comments. Corrections were made in several occasions in the writing. We kept each other updated about the changes and modifications made throughout the development of this research paper.

8 ANALYSES AND INTERPRETATIONS

The aim of this research work is to assist for the preparations while it comes to traveling to Nepal as a volunteer during the disaster situations. The researcher also had a set of objectives, which could possibly bridge them to their aim. One of the prime objectives was to explore upon the challenging situations the volunteers had to face during the run of volunteering in earthquake hit Nepal. Simultaneously, the other objective was to explore if the volunteers traveled have worked independently or in coordination with any bodies (individual, government, NGOs/INGOs). Along with the significance of coordinating bodies to successfully launch the action plan, the data extracted also deal with the working plans, methods and the roles and responsibilities of the volunteers in brief.



FIGURE 1. A conceptual map of preparing for volunteering

The figure 1 is a conceptual map. The idea of the conceptual map is to provide readers a visual display of interconnectedness between the databases. This conceptual map was drawn based on the themes derived from the interviews. According to Grbich (2013, 63), conceptual map gives a broad overview of the subject and quick view of the specific aspect in the data (Grbich 2013, 63). The author also suggests that there can be as many conceptual maps for as many questions asked and for as many themes derived in the process. We chose to develop two conceptual maps in the latter parts i.e. preparations in Finland and

preparations in Nepal which is one of the major highlights of the findings of this research. The themes specified are based on the experiences of volunteers flying from Finland to Nepal as members of disaster response team for relief distribution, the co-ordinations they made, the working methods they followed and the challenges they had to undergo while volunteering.

Respondents' reactions when they first heard about the earthquake were asked in order to ice break the context of the interviews. They shared the griefs of being far away from their families and relatives. The situation was quite unbelievable to all the respondents. The news feed appearing in the social media shocked them a while after. It was a panicking moment to all of them. Respondent A shared her reaction:

I was all shocked to see what's been going around. The first thing that came in my mind was my family, friends and relatives back home.

Entering the context of the interviews, researchers had their questions about the motivational factors, which convinced the respondents to travel as volunteers. The motivations of our respondents were mostly guided by the inner human sentiments and emotions as their families, friends, relatives and the fellow Nepalese were suffering the harshness of life, offered by the nature. The inability of the Nepal Government to quickly address the loss in the emergency situation to accelerate the rescue and relief distribution process was also a motivationally pushing factor for one of the respondents to travel as a volunteer. On this note respondent D shared his expression:

There was news regarding helps entering Nepal continuously from various national and international bodies but most of them ended up lodging within Kathmandu district only. Gorkha and Sindhupalchowk were among the harshly devastated areas where the victims suffered for days. Government could not address the sufferings of those people in time and I decided to go and help in whatever way I could.

Third question was about their preparations in Finland. Respondents were from different backgrounds (gender, education) affecting their roles and responsibili-

ties in the group. They traveled to Nepal with different groups. Since the disaster was unexpected and their motive was to volunteer in relief distribution, they had to plan everything very quickly and spontaneously.

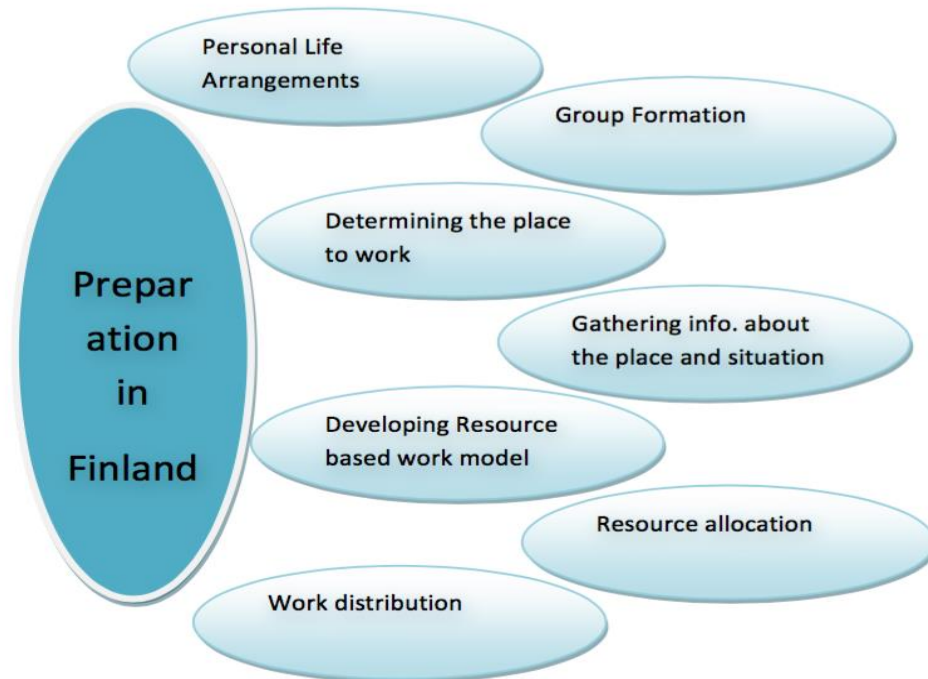


FIGURE 2. A conceptual map of preparations in Finland

Respondents reflected upon their personal life arrangements, group formation experiences, researches and planning phases of the project, budget and resource allocation along with the work distribution among group members while answering the questions regarding figure 2. Preparations in Finland were in all the cases, similar. Researches, planning and effort to allocate the resources were better emphasized by all of the respondents.

It is not always necessary that people will go to volunteer only in the place they know better. Though all the four respondents were Nepali nationals, the place they chose to volunteer was not exactly their birthplace except for one. They didn't have any previous connections regarding the place where they chose to work during the aftermath. So the researchers were keen to know how they had

fixed their arrangements in Nepal.

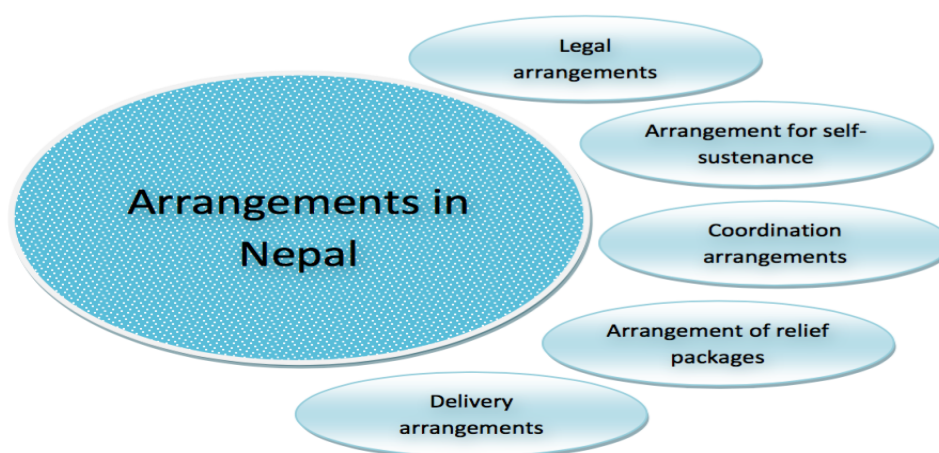


FIGURE 3. A conceptual map of arrangements in Nepal

Every respondent traveled with the group they formed in Finland to the pre-determined area as they reached Nepal. The respondents involved in necessary arrangements rather than making their ways direct to the fields as soon as they landed at the Tribhuvan International Airport (TIA), Kathmandu. The legalities had to be fulfilled in order to launch the help. The permissions from different level authorities had to be taken. Similarly the coordination had to be managed. The nature of help was different that was offered by the relief distribution team the respondents were involved with. So they had to undergo the arrangements of necessary relief packages, wait for the supply and work for the delivery of the packages to the targeted places. They also had to make an arrangement for their self- sustenance while working in the field.

International Federation of Red Cross (IFRC), while talking about the preparedness regarding volunteering for relief distribution have highlighted upon significance of coordination. According to them, coordination leads to organized volunteering decreasing the chaos. Coordinating organizations in most of the cases worked as the supervision to our respondents. Respondent D speaks:

It is simply difficult to imagine working without any coordination unless you belong to that place since long. Working with Teach For Nepal in a relief distribution made our work a lot easier. Unlike us, they had broad knowledge about the area, connection with the local people and the authorities. They helped us access their data of the situation of Sindhupalchowk. The data helped us calculate the necessities in our desired area of work, hence plan accordingly. Their support and coordination significantly bridged us to reach the victims and lodge our help without any chaos and uncertainties.

Respondent B laid the similar response:

Nobody should be going to the victims alone just willing to help; one can be in trouble. One has to have a very well organized group. The best thing one can do is to get connected with one of the local organizations working for that community and work in coordination with them. Working in coordination with the Help Nepal Network and then Mr. Khatri (pseudonym), we managed to find the Dalit community who were affected by the disaster. Hence, we worked with that group, provided them with the funds so that they could build 52 temporary shelters in the form of tunnel houses.

Respondents believed that they got the real time situation of the intended working areas because of coordination. Furthermore, assistance from the local people and authorities gave their work a safe landing.

Disasters like earthquakes not only result on taking the lives of people but also leave the survivors with injuries and hardly anything for them to eat or sleep. Disaster inflicted areas are completely isolated because of the lack of services and facilities. The respondents in this research worked to address these shortages resulting due to the earthquake. The roles and responsibilities of the volunteers were also asked in order to provide clear details of their tasks. Respondent A shared with the roles and responsibilities:

I am a nurse by profession. The prime purpose of traveling to Nepal was to help the people with my expertise. I have been taking care of sick people since long. I have knowledge about medicines and taking care of wounds. I might be unauthorized to prescribe the medicines in the absence of doctors, but surely I could recommend the appropriate anti-biotics for immediate cure. I gave the first-aid cure to their wounds. I tested the body temperature, blood pressure and sugar level in their body and suggested accordingly. I cleaned

their wounds and bandaged them. Our team also provided the water purifier, soap, masks and phenyl considering the sanitation issues in those surroundings.

Two among the four respondents appearing in this research work were leading the groups as coordinators and making necessary arrangements in their groups while one was working to help with his expertise in nursing field and other was managing logistics and at the same time keeping record of the packages being distributed. Respondent C and D worked to distribute food supplies as relief packages in Gorkha and Sindhupalchowk districts respectively. Respondent B worked to provide shelters in forms of tunnel houses to the victims in Dolakha while respondent A worked to organize health camp and distribute tents in Sindhupalchowk.

Respondents in this research experienced different hardships in the run of conducting volunteering work in earthquake-hit Nepal. They had to prepare themselves to work in worst possible settings depending upon the nature of work they were going to perform. The news regarding the fight-breakouts in different parts of the nation due to miscommunication between the locals and relief distribution teams and in many cases relief packages mishandling by authorities scared the respondents. Respondent C and D also experienced similar chaotic situations. The presence of coordinating organizations helped them settle the issue. Respondent A shared us with the experiences of not being able to take shower for days because of lack of water. Furthermore, this respondent adds:

Despite the rainy season, we had to find comfort sleeping inside the tent (also for safety reasons), cooking with firewood and sustaining with the available or in many cases unavailable local toilet facilities.

Respondent A also extended his gratitude to the team members who helped creating mutual support system within the team in order to comfort the situation and work with confidence.

The commitment and dedication of the team members worked a lot to help us overcome these hindrances.

9 FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

The results of this research are reflected as the volunteers' experiences of working as members of disaster response team for relief distribution. The research aim was to explore upon the challenges in the run of volunteering in disaster situation, hence outlining the guidelines for the better preparation as a volunteer or a group in future days. Answering the two main research questions, the researchers categorized the findings into two: challenges during volunteering in disaster situations and preparations prior to volunteering in disaster situations. The former includes group forming, work planning, risk calculation, group security and minimizing the comfort whereas the latter comprises preparations both in Finland and Nepal. Preparations in Finland include group forming, work place selection, resource allocation and work planning and distribution whereas legal proceedings, coordination, self-sustenance, arrangement of relief supplies and delivery arrangements constitute preparations in Nepal.

9.1 Challenges during Volunteering in Disaster Situations

Difficulties started right from the very early phase of our journey. In the immigration, we were asked many questions about our volunteering journey. Since the whole system of Nepal was affected because of the major shock and the back-to-back tremors, things we had planned could not go that smooth. The major infrastructures of development like roadways, communication, banking services and other institutes were interrupted for days that affected our work plan.

Above expression was shared by one of the respondents while asked about the challenges he had to undergo as a part of his volunteering journey. Challenges are vivid when it comes to volunteer during the disaster situations. Relief distribution is the early phase of disaster response where victims are looking for help in terms of basic needs like food, water, clothes and temporary shelters. These needs have to be addressed in a very short interval of time to prevent the situation of victims from getting worse.

9.1.1 Group Formation

Traveling from Finland to Nepal in a group in order to distribute the relief materials to the disaster victims needs a lot of exercise from the very early stages. The foundation should be made by forming the group of individuals who possess similar motivations to work.

We had a big time finding people willing to travel and work together in a group. People have their own life settings; they have to fix all those life routines in such a small time interval in order to make a decision to travel.

Some respondents had to take unpaid leaves from their works for weeks to join the group. Similarly, one of the respondents had to convince his teacher to get leave from the school. People might be interested to volunteer but their personal life settings could be the hindrances.

As it comes to spontaneous volunteering, members of the group are not necessarily affiliated to any agencies or organizations and group members may or may not be familiar to each other while forming the group. In many cases, people are unknown to each other's backgrounds and ways of working. This diversity and newness could create a communication gap between the members which is also a factor of demotivation to join the group.

9.1.2 Work Planning

The group has to undergo adequate research regarding the place and situation. Information might come from various sources but identifying the right one is a big challenge. Planning should be made based on the valid research. Availability of the resources is another base for planning the work.

Check how big is your pocket before you plan the work.

The above quotation from one of the respondents makes it clear that the work plan should benefit the budget. Planning should involve proper work division

among the group members, building coordination, routes to travel and amount of relief materials to be distributed. Also, the group should be ready with back up plans for the uncertainties.

9.1.3 Risk Calculation

Various uncertainties may overrule the work plan because of disruption in overall system led by the earthquake.

Before traveling to Nepal, we had the allocation of our budget in different heads like food, tents, medical supplies, transportation, etc. We also had made contacts to various dealers in advance so that we could get these necessary supplies in adequate amount but with the ongoing shortages, things took the different turn.

Shortages of relief materials hindered their work in time, shared by this respondent. He also shared his experience of waiting for days till the tents arrived from the border district, Raxaul. Another respondent shared the story of relief materials being looted in the midway that again crashed their work plan. So calculation of risk and staying prepared with plan B is the other challenge during disaster relief volunteering for relief distribution.

9.1.4 Group Security

Confrontation by the general public is highly possible when it comes to disaster response volunteering because one is new to the place and people certainly have higher expectations. In that case, the work plan may or may not go smooth depending upon the co-operation of general public too. One of the respondents had his experience of witnessing the brawl among the villagers and relief distribution team. So, considering the group safety and working under security scrutiny is among the big challenges when it comes to volunteering for relief distribution.

9.1.5 Minimizing the Comfort

A group traveling to disaster-inflicted region should be well-prepared to live minimally. It is more difficult when one traveling from abroad starts to work in different climate setting.

Food was dry food, fuel was timber, toilet was open space, torch-light was night-light and so forth.

Volunteers should often compromise living life out of comfort while it comes to disaster response volunteering. These harsh living situations could result in degradation of volunteer's own health too. Coping with these kinds of risk situations could be challenging to anyone traveling as a volunteer in disaster response situation.

9.2 Challenge based Preparations

Volunteering being in Nepal and traveling to Nepal for volunteering from outside countries are two different phenomena. Both of the cases require preparations though. But it demands extra preparation when an individual or a group decides to travel as a volunteer to disaster-inflicted zone from abroad. Since the respondents involved in this research flew from Finland to Nepal for relief distribution after the major earthquake hit Nepal on 25th April, 2015, the researchers have categorized their preparations into two phases:

9.2.1 Preparations in Finland

Respondents had to undergo various preparations here in Finland while preparing for traveling with a disaster response team for relief distribution. Respondent A shared her experience of settling her personal life arrangements while preparing to travel:

I had to settle down with so many things in a very short period of time. Since I am in my working life, I had to get my two weeks' un-

paid holiday approved from my work in order to travel. Then, I had to consider my financial situation too. Things were unexpected and I had to settle down with so many things in a very short period of time.

She also shared that all other members traveling in the group had had similar experiences. Other preparations involved:

- i) Group formation: Preparation for traveling to help disaster victims by distributing relief supplies involves a group formation at a very early stage. The group involves individuals; may it be from similar fields or different but the guiding motivation to work for should be the same.
- ii) Work place selection: The selection of workplace should be made with adequate researches on what the real time situation of that particular place is. The research involves accessing data regarding the situation and need analysis of the place. Respondent C shared the experiences:

I started with the research about how the situation is in Nepal. Many people died, many of them remained homeless, suffered injuries, experienced food shortages and lost their clothing inside the rubble and so on. The research about the ongoing situation in Nepal would lead me plan the journey. The second phase of research included the team formation, resource allocation, management of logistics, coordinating bodies and dealing the legal abides. Based on the research, we had to plan our action about how we were going to work with the available resources such as budget, logistics and manpower.

- iii) Resource allocation: Allocation of the resource involves raising fund to distribute relief supplies to the victims. The funds can be raised by doing various events and also by making an appeal for help with the use of social media. Respondent B shared the approaches used in order to allocate resources:

I organized a gathering among the Nepalese here in Finland. Hundreds of people signed up for the support. Everybody showed their willingness to help. Since disaster was in such a large scale, I was also aware of the fact that Nepal, being in need of continuous help;

I was targeting for a big budget. Then I did different events like sports for charity, food vendoring etc. to collect funds. Co-operation from all the coordinators, sponsors and participants helped to make it successful. I also used my contacts and donated personally to reach the target.

The logistics for the safety of the group like tents and other working gears are also the important resources that have to be taken into consideration before traveling.

- iv) Work planning and distribution: The group should have clear planning already in Finland regarding in what way they are going to work in Nepal in order to distribute the relief supplies. Planning involves making coordination, group safety and sustenance, expenses and risk calculation etc. The group should also have the backup plans in case the plan fails. Proper distribution of work among the team members should be made based on their expertise.

9.2.2 Preparations in Nepal

As the disaster relief team for relief distribution landed in Nepal, there were certain procedures the respondents and the group had to follow. They also had to suffer the consequences of system disruptions led by the earthquake, which pushed their work backwards for days. The preparations that had to be made in Nepal are outlined as follows:

- i) Legal proceedings: The group should follow several legal proceedings and receive permission from the District Administrative Office before heading to volunteer towards the field. The laws and policies affecting volunteers are different in almost every country, and even in different regions of the same country. Laws and policies can remove barriers to volunteering and simultaneously create a more protective environment (IFRC).

- ii) Coordination: The group should find a partner to coordinate, may it be locally running NGOs/ INGOs, government authorities or local people themselves. Respondent C shared:

I had in contact the media personnel with whom I could get reliable information about the situation of the place where I was planning to work. I also had in contact, the Nepal Police, the Nepal Army personnel and the District Government officials from whom I could extract the necessary information about the real time situation of the disaster inflicted place.

Respondent A had the locally running NGO as a working partner:

We had our working area pre-determined. With some personal links, we found a non-profit organization working to deliver the relief supplies in the same region. We talked with them and agreed upon working together.

- iii) Self-sustenance: The group should be prepared for their self-sustenance in disaster situations. The necessary arrangements regarding food and shelter should be considered by the group themselves in order to reduce risks in various forms.
- iv) Arrangement of relief supplies: Anything the group wants to distribute should be gathered timely. The delayed arrangement of these necessary supplies may result in the lack or shortage of materials because of its ever-increasing demand during the disaster. Respondent D shared:

The biggest part of the work was to allocate logistics in Nepal. We had to wait for days until the tents arrived which we were aiming to distribute to 250 households in Sindhupalchowk district.

The group should consider contacting as many links as possible in order to arrange relief materials.

- v) Delivery arrangements: Transportation costs higher than usual during disaster situations. One of the reasons behind this is the challenging road situation for the drivers and the landslides triggered by earthquakes

blocking roads. So the group may face challenges regarding the delivery of supplies; hence, should stay prepared. Respondent D added:

Nobody was willing to drive us to the disaster-inflicted area because of the landslides and challenging road situations. As one accepted to drive but the vehicle got broken in the midway and we had to switch for the next one.

Effective disaster response starts with significant preparation before, strong management during, and actions for recovery and sustainability after the event (IFRC). The findings of this research suggest that challenge based preparations in every level trigger work outcomes at the end of the day.

10 DISCUSSION

Our research is guided and motivated by the two research questions:

1. What kinds of challenges volunteers confront while being a part of disaster response team for relief distribution?
2. What kinds of preparations have to be taken into consideration while traveling to Nepal as a disaster response team for relief distribution?

Challenges are confronted both on and off-the-field while volunteering and preparing for volunteering in disaster situations. Off- the-field challenges moreover include the obstacles and challenges regarding preparations during the planning phase whereas on-the-field challenges encompass the implementation phase. It emphasizes on the know-how and expertise of the volunteers to deliver effectively while volunteering in disaster situations. Therefore, we have discussed on the research questions as well as on the relevant issues such as skills and competencies the volunteers have to possess while serving in disaster and emergency situations. In this chapter, we have also discussed on the role of the local people and communities in the disaster situations esp. in the developing countries like Nepal where the topography can be the major hindrance to immediate relief operation during disasters.

The relief distribution in an emergency situation like earthquake involves availing water, nutrition, shelter and medical care for the victims suffering from injuries, trauma, loss of homes and family members. Various aspects of their life dynamics are shaken with tremors and these first hand victims of the disasters live through the dire need of trauma healing and counselling services. To help them achieve normality to life is a long-run phenomenon that needs support from every sector. Therefore, many people from inside the country and abroad step forward to volunteer during disaster situations. The help is outpoured in different forms such as money (funds), food supplies, clothes, tents, medicines

etc. Some people also bag-pack their stuffs in a hurry to reach the disaster inflicted zone but fail to calculate the implications. The April 2015 Nepal earthquake leaves the country with similar experiences.

There is no question about country needing help in enormous amount after such a major disaster but again the form of help is something which needs a serious consideration. What does Nepal need then? Claire Bennett in the opinion page of The Guardian writes:

More than your plane tickets and the collection of old-t shirts, what is most needed in Nepal right now is money.

Her argument is supported with the facts and experiences she presented from Haiti earthquake of 7.3 Richter scale magnitudes in January 2010, where the brigade of well-intentioned do-gooders flooded but with lack of skills and coordination. Consequently, these outpouring untrained, unskilled and unorganized volunteers slow down the aid process. She puts her view forward that except for the most needed professionals like doctors and engineers to make their way direct to the field, others can simply donate money for the reliable humanitarian organization working on the ground. While Bennett is talking about the need of money, the disastrous situation in Nepal when viewed from the very close range demanded manpower too. The survivors, either professional or non-professional were hesitating to go to the disaster inflicted area because of fear and family pressure. Nepalese society is highly family oriented. So, most of the parents do not want their children leave home for volunteering during disaster situations and children have to listen to their parents. Similar was the case in Japan when an earthquake of magnitude 8.9 Richter scale, a seven meters high tsunami and a nuclear accident all struck Japan in quick succession, there still were not enough volunteers. The reason behind this volunteer crisis is the national regulations of Japan which basically allow the workers two weeks holiday in a year. Even though Japanese legislation has the provision that allows volunteers to take additional leave for disaster response, most of them did not choose considering their economic situation afterwards. In other words, we can

say that Japanese working culture which has also proved to be an exemplary one in the world proved to be a hindrance to promote volunteerism.

The research illuminates that sound coordination and communication skills can increase the efficiency of volunteering in disaster situations. Further, the volunteers from certain backgrounds such as mass communication, medical care etc. can be very useful as were some of the participant respondents in our research. The work plan prior to volunteering in disasters is required for effective implementation of the plan. The reliable information accessed through effective coordination and social networks can be vital according to Zhao Yandong from the CASTD who addresses social networks as the most dependable resource in the aftermath of disasters.

It was observed from the research that people volunteering in disaster situations have to possess self-sustainability and adaptability skills and have to be physically and mentally prepared to work under highly stressful conditions. Also, people opting to volunteer in emergencies have to be psychologically prepared to witness the horrendous experiences; otherwise the volunteers may fall victims to psychological disorder, trauma or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder etc. and harm themselves. International Federation of Red Cross have also outlined the importance of psychological support and counseling for its volunteers during volunteering in emergencies.

The legal liability was diagnosed as one of the major obstacles while volunteering abroad, as it demands the fulfillment of all the required legal formalities. The legal procedure doesn't merely include the visas and documents for travelling to the destined country but also encompasses different legalities depending upon the country's legislation and one has to register or go through these proceedings in order to gain recognition of their work. The Government of Nepal may accept or reject incoming Search and Rescue members and humanitarian agencies support with the associated materials and equipment depending upon the need situation of the country. Reception and departure centers will be established at the Tribhuvan International Airport and other strategic locations to

facilitate the arrival and departure of humanitarian and military teams and assets during a disaster (National Disaster Management Handbook, 2015.)

On the other hand, the cultural liability is one of the most significant elements while volunteering abroad with diverse socio-cultural and religious values and beliefs. The ignorance and unawareness of the cultural liabilities of the inflicted people and community and failure to act abiding by those may risk the volunteers of severe confrontations with the people and community embracing certain cultural and religious values.

The pluralist and conservative ideologies of volunteering (See chapters 4.4.1 & 4.4.2) were basically seen reflected on the practice of the spontaneous volunteers in the disaster situations. The local organizations are in close acquaintanceships with the local people and communities and understand their needs properly which suggests that working in affiliation with the local bodies and organizations can help to carry out the tasks efficiently and therefore can be more beneficial than working alone or as an unaffiliated individuals or groups.

The incapability of developing countries like Nepal to sufficiently invest in disaster mitigation measures multiplies the vulnerability of the people and community towards natural disasters. In such condition, the involvement and participation of local people and communities in the preparedness plans have to be encouraged. Social change volunteerism (See 4.4.3) can play a vital role in the formulation and implementation of preparedness plans for the well-being of the most vulnerable groups of people and communities that are highly prone to disasters. An effective preparedness plan is deeply rooted to the disaster prone remote areas, individuals and families that resemble the lowest level of community.

Local people and communities have to be highly prioritized, as they are the first to respond to disasters and remain long after the official services have ceased. The number of volunteers from outside the affected communities declines sharply after the immediate response phase is over. Local people are best placed to identify their immediate emergency response needs and contribute to

local decision making for the future. They can also provide valuable insights into community needs bringing trust and a human touch to affected families as part of the healing process. National volunteers from outside the affected communities provide a direct trustworthy connection between the people directly hit and other stakeholders. This suggests that the local and national volunteers can be more effective comparatively to the international volunteers and therefore preparedness plans and strategies have to be designed targeting the local people and communities.

The devastation caused by the April 2015 Nepal earthquake exposes the vulnerability of the country to the disasters. It further suggests that preparedness strategies have to be formulated involving the local people and communities, as community involvement is essential in the preparedness process. Especially, when the country's topography is such that it can hinder the emergency relief and rescue operations during catastrophic situations, inducing awareness and resilience amongst the communities and community people can help to minimize the damage. Well aware, informed and prepared community is better able to avert, prevent and react to disasters than otherwise. Putting communities at the center of disaster preparedness and response supports disaster risk reduction. The development of community awareness against the disasters can be done through the processes of understanding community aspirations, capacities, locality (social, cultural, and environmental condition) followed by building the capacity of the community. Cooperation at local, national and international levels with the recognition of available resources enhances capacity building of the communities that strengthens disaster preparedness.

11 CHALLENGES TO THE RESEARCH

We faced many challenges and limitations while conducting our research. Choosing the right and suitable topic that justifies our research work to collecting the data and analyzing them were some of the many challenges we had to go throughout the whole research process. The challenges and limitations during our research are described in chapters 11.1, 11.2 and 11.3.

11.1 Working Together as a Group

Working together as a group with diverse ideas and perspectives colliding with and against each other at times was a major positive challenge that helped to cement our research. The independence to implementation of one's ideas was properly checked while working in a combined research and had to go through the procedure of mutual agreement in case if any contradiction arose. The discussions, arguments, interventions etc. at times affected the research proceedings. Acknowledging and realizing the disposition of a group work, we endeavored to complement each other wisely and technically sharing the responsibilities at the recommended level. Mutual understanding and flexibility supplant the core components of our group work. Knowing the essence of regular communication and co-ordination throughout the research work, both of us stimulated one another at times which would otherwise halt the consistency of the proceedings and the momentum. Admittance, appreciation, acknowledgement and criticism have been the core values of our group work. We were conscious of the significance of these values which if failed to address would have resulted our motives of working in collaboration in complete chaos and disorder. We both complemented each other either by appreciation or by criticism at times during the research which we assume helped to enhance our research. Two people contributing to a thesis especially in terms of scripting could easily result in the differences from the perspectives of the readers and therefore working on the scripture of the thesis to induce uniformity and oneness in the structure and

texture of the research was one of the challenges we had to go through.

11.2 Challenges While Conducting the Research

The retrieval of the information through findings was carried out in two ways; interviewing and reviewing the relevant literatures and academic sources. The selection of the interviewees was done by purposive sampling and therefore was difficult to recognize the most suitable interviewees that complemented our research objectives. It was for the credibility of the interviewees that they agreed to be a part of our research activity. Setting interview questions that reflected the research objectives had to be done with serious contemplation mainly revolving around our research questions. We dealt with sufficient flexibility and ethically while discussing the interviewees' availability for the interviews. The successful execution of the interviews had almost laid the foundation for our research. The relevant academic sources and findings were approached in order to establish the grounds for the theoretical frameworks. Gathering information wasn't that much of a challenge as filtering those that addressed and reflected the core issues of our research and surrounding it. It's always difficult not to get distracted away from the main research while conducting a research but checking the contents of the literature and findings of our research on a regular basis helped us to become more precise and relevant to our objectives.

11.3 Research Limitations

The research is the mere reflection of a group of the Nepalese volunteers that flew from Finland to Nepal for relief distribution during the aftermath of the April 2015 Nepal earthquake. The patriotic motives of the volunteers may have overshadowed the universal values of volunteerism. The research work is the measure of reflection through the eyes of volunteers helping their country and country people in terms of sheer need. Their familiarity about the socio-cultural, geographical and other relevant aspects heavily influenced their volunteering

experiences. The volunteering experiences would have otherwise been different from the perspectives of the volunteers unfamiliar and unaware of any aspects and circumstances at the given time of volunteering which could have affected the productivity of the research.

One of the researchers was a member of the disaster response team and had known the other members i.e. respondents during relief distribution process. This made the research work convenient to some extent in the sense that the purposive sampling method for the interviews was conducted more efficiently. The volunteering experience of the researcher also contributed in allocating our research agenda. Had the researcher had no connection with the volunteering group, the implementation of purposive sampling method could have been more difficult that could have needed a lot of exercise.

Modern disaster management consists of four distinct phases which are mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery (Coppola, 2011). Our research findings are mainly focused on response phase specifically on relief works such as distribution of food, shelter and providing emergency health services to the victims. Volunteer activities performed after the relief phases are not explicitly considered in the research.

This study reflects on volunteering for relief distribution in Sindhupalchowk, Gorkha and Dolakha districts which lie basically in the Hilly region of Nepal. Therefore, the findings of our research may or may not be applicable if someone wants to volunteer in other regions of Nepal. For example, the Terai region is well sophisticated in terms of infrastructures and development compared to the Hilly and Himalayan regions of the country making it convenient for the supply of relief packages.

12 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The research work on volunteering in the April 2015 Nepal earthquake has been one of the credentials and testimony of our study of social services. This has been the grandeur opportunity for us to best implement our theoretical knowledge into the working life. The knowledge of the social services inculcated the comprehension of the absurdities and social problems and the methodologies and ethical considerations as the tools and techniques to solving the problems. As the students pursuing degree in Bachelors of Social Services, we had to undergo many practical placements in diverse settings comprising the vulnerable, marginalized and socially excluded people. And this research has provided us with a useful opportunity to work on the vulnerable group of people i.e. earthquake victims that enhances the testimony of our social work.

During our research, we always proceeded and functioned embracing the belief that social work values and ethical principles could lead the foundation for our professional development and therefore adhered to those values. We learnt about the ethical considerations throughout the degree and practiced them during the research. We respected the interviewees' autonomy, anonymity and confidentiality during our research. The research increased our expertise in time management, work division, communication and coordination skills. It has enhanced our information acquisition and processing skills as well as interaction skills. Our academic writing skills have been enhanced. On the course of our research on volunteering in the April 2015 Nepal earthquake, going through the relevant literature on volunteering in disaster and emergency situations inculcated useful knowledge and information about volunteering and volunteers, preparedness, challenges and competencies of volunteering work. In other words, the research has broadened our knowledge on disaster relief volunteers and volunteering in disaster situations. We discovered how volunteering activities can contribute to the community development. We realized the importance of mutual cooperation and coordination in group work. Working together as a team with varying ideas and perspectives is always a challenge and we learnt to

cope with such challenges. Criticizing with respect for one another's work is one of the accomplishments of our research work. We learnt to implement research methodologies and analyze data during our research process. We had to approach the volunteers for the interviews and learnt the ways of doing that keeping in mind the theoretical framework of ethical considerations we learnt in our curriculum. We learnt to maintain clear boundaries with the interviewees that enabled them to understand the nature and purpose of the relationship. Otherwise the confusion in the relationships could have significantly affected our therapeutic goals and processes.

13 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study reveals that volunteers have to confront immense challenges while serving in disaster situations that begin from planning to implementation. Apart from motivation to volunteer, people have to undergo a lot of preparations before volunteering in disaster situations. Preparations for volunteering encompass planning, group formation, legal procedures etc. that induce a lot of challenges. Cultural liability is one of the major obstacles for the people volunteering abroad. On the other hand, the people wanting to volunteer have to possess certain skills such as coordination and communication skills, self-sustainability and adaptability skills and have to be psychologically prepared for the worst possible experiences the disasters can offer. The volunteers have to have the abilities to improvise and innovate in order to cope with the unexpected. Working in collaboration with the associated organization in disaster situations can be more beneficial than working without any affiliation. People with relevant training, knowledge, volunteering skills and expertise can be more effective in contributing during disaster situations. It's always better to get prepared before volunteering in disasters and emergencies as unskilled and unprepared volunteers are more likely to harm themselves and halt the relief works.

This research study encompasses the perspectives of the volunteering experiences through the eyes of the Nepalese volunteers that contributed during the aftermath of the disaster. Therefore researchers were unable to encompass the cultural liabilities that could have been the major barrier and the challenge in meeting the volunteering objectives. Had the volunteers been the foreigners, unknown and ignorant about the socio-cultural values and the language of the people and community they were volunteering for, the challenges and experiences would be different than the results that have been derived in this research. So, recommendation is made to further conduct the research involving the foreigners' experiences of volunteering.

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APPENDIX 1. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BSA	British Sociological Association
CASTD	Chinese Academy of Science and Technology for Development
CEDIM	Center for Disaster Management and Risk Reduction Technology
CEU	Council of European Union
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DRV	Disaster Relief Volunteers
EMA	Emergency Management Australia
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross
ILO	International Labor Organization
I/NGO	International/Non-governmental Organizations
NST	Nepal Standard Time
PSTD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
UNESC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNISDR United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction

UNOCHA United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

UNV United Nations Volunteers

USBLS United States Bureau of Labor Statistics

USGS United States Geological Survey