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THE ROLE OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS AND CITIZENS IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT WITHIN THE FINNISH COMMUNITIESTarkkanen, L.¹, Tyni, J.¹¹Laurea University of Applied Sciences

Abstract: The paper discusses the roles of the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and citizens in crisis management within the Finnish communities in a globalized world. As the Government Programme (2015) outlines, Finland will be the safest country in the world for living, working and entrepreneurship. The paper discusses the impact of NGOs and other voluntary organisations as a twofold. Firstly, the voluntary organisations play an important role in the promotion of safety culture and in the activation of citizens in the improvement of their own security and safety in the local communities. It covers the independent preparedness of a citizen within a municipality. Secondly, the paper discusses the role of the NGOs and voluntary organisations during the disasters in local community such as snow and water crisis. In addition, the role of the NGOs is to support the authorities for securing the local communities. The paper examines two regions and their municipalities in Finland; Lapland and Satakunta. The study has been conducted by interviews and surveys. The interviews and surveys considered the voluntary actors from various non-governmental and voluntary organisations within the regions. To conclude, the non-governmental and voluntary organisations play a key role in the development and support of independent preparedness within a municipality. Furthermore, it strengthens the psychological resilience within the municipality. Consequently, in a crisis the role and importance of the non-governmental organisations is unquestionable.

Keywords: non-governmental organisations, crisis management, preparedness, impact assessment, activation of citizens

1. Introduction

According to Finnish Government Programme (2017), Finland will be the safest country in the world for living, working and entrepreneurship. The matters go under to the topic of Finnish internal security. In Finland, internal security refers to those aspects of society that ensure that everyone can enjoy the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the rule of law without fear or insecurity caused by crime, disorder, accidents or national or international events. Furthermore, Finland's internal security strategy says that sufficient internal security is consisted of several factors such as safe home and living environment, functional daily services and equality between citizens. Secondly, internal security strategy is defined that it focus on certain phenomenon where the risks are related to everyday safety have been increased or either cause issues to the safety and security of society. Currently, according to internal security strategy, the risks in Finland are criminality, safety and security of elderly and youth people caused by social exclusion. In addition, preparing for accidents and problem situations in everyday life is a crucial part of internal security. Therefore, the paper discusses the roles of the non-governmental organisations and citizens in crisis management within Finnish communities. The paper focuses on the importance of voluntary organisations in the promotion of safety culture and activation of citizens in order to prevent the internal security problems such as social exclusion. The paper has been written on a basis of study

which conducted interviews and surveys within two municipalities; Lapland and Satakunta to the actors from various non-governmental and voluntary organisations within the regions.

2. Crisis management in Finland – the role of third and fourth sectors in Finland and their relation to the authorities

Oxford Dictionary defines “crisis” as the time of intense difficulty or danger, or as the turning point of a disease when an important change takes place, indicating either recovery or death. “Crisis management” is defined as the process by which an organization deals with a sudden emergency situation. According to Kamei (2019), Koichi Oizumi has defined crisis management as “Predict and prevent dangers that can break out anytime and at anyplace in unexpected forms and if they take place, quickly counter them with ‘initial actions’ to minimize the damages”.

In Finland, the sectors from first to fourth are divided between different sectors of society. First sector presents the market and businesses, the second sector presents the state and public sector. Third sector includes the non-governmental and voluntary organisations and voluntary civic engagement. Fourth sector includes families and households. The deviation between the sectors is based on that the sectors present relatively independent areas of social reality and each of them operates based on a special logic.

The third sector is defined as non-governmental and voluntary organisations and voluntary civic engagement. In Finland, the organisations from third sector support the actions of Finnish security related law enforcement authorities in remarkable way. For example, the third sector participates in the preparedness of society for catastrophes, crises and disturbance. The role of third sector is written in several governmental programmes and strategies. Currently, the role is constantly evolving as the Finnish law enforcement authorities have limited resources to answer to the global challenges that keep challenging Finnish community.

The fourth sector is defined to include for example families and households. In this context, the fourth sector should be involved more in participating to the preparedness of society. What should be noted is that the second sector has no capability to influence over the fourth sector. It should be understood that in the case of crisis management, the third sector is the only sector who has the possibility to influence on this matter.

3. The methodical decisions

Finnish Red Cross ordered an impact assessment from Laurea University of Applied Sciences regarding their project. The project aimed at to activate the municipal citizens to improve and strengthen their own municipality’s safety, security, wellbeing and health. In addition, the project aimed at to engage and increase the number of volunteers in the voluntary organisations. Hence, the project has mapped out and rounded up the expertise and resources of regional actors from several non-governmental organisations in order to improve the objectives of safety, security, wellbeing and health. The project aimed to increase the everyday safety within each participated municipality and enhance the preparedness level within each municipality in a local level. The project lasted three years in two regional districts in Finland; Satakunta and Lappi.

The starting point of impact assessment was to gather information from the volunteers in both regions how the project has effected on the themes of safety and security and wellbeing. Secondly, the impact assessment analysed what is the effectiveness of the project to the above mentioned themes in the level of municipality citizens. Therefore, the starting point of the research was to gather the experiences of the volunteers within the regions during the project, evaluated the negative and positive changes brought by the project, and compare the changes to the situation before the project started. Hence, the impact assessment evaluated and compared the changes brought by the project to the objectives given in Finnish Red Cross' project proposal. The research questions were following:

1. What kind of impacts the project has given to the actions non-governmental and voluntary organisations within the municipalities in Satakunta and Lapland regions?
2. What kind of experiences the volunteers within these organisations have about the project?
3. What kind of expectations the volunteers within the regions have after the project has ended?

The impact assessment was conducted by a desktop study which included the qualitative research. The base of the research was group theme interviews and the interviews were fulfilled with structured surveys for those who did not have time to participate in the interviews. The target group of study were volunteers of non-governmental organisations in both regions as well as the Finnish Red Cross' head of districts in both regions. In Lapland, there was eight (8) group interviews from three different municipalities. The head of district was interviewed individually. In Satakunta, there was 20 people who participated in the group interviews and the head of district was interviewed individually in this region as well. The size of groups in both regions varied from two people to four people. The interviews were based on structured theme interview which was conducted by discussions in order to enable and encourage each participant to share individual views regarding the project and the questions.

4. The role of voluntary organisations in the promotion of safety culture and activation of citizens to improve their safety and security

In Finland, the non-governmental and voluntary organisations play an important role in the promotion of safety culture. Secondly, the non-governmental and voluntary organisations have an important role in the activation of citizens in their improvement of their own security and safety in the local community. This chapter discusses on the basis of the results of the impact assessment; why and how the non-governmental organisations have an impact on the safety culture and activation of citizens.

According to the impact assessment, the local voluntary organisations within Lapland and Satakunta area got the municipal citizens activated by organising different events and training sessions under the project. The events and training sessions included for example preparedness planning, traffic safety, first-aid skills and so forth. In addition, in order to answer the project's objectives regarding the well-being within the municipality, some of the events also answered to the objective by reducing loneliness and social exclusion. The results show that even the participation in the events activated the municipal citizens and in that way reduced the possibility of loneliness.

What comes to the support given by the Finnish Red Cross' project, it felt safer for the volunteers to participate in organising the events as they had the project coordination as their support and there was no need to organise everything by themselves. According to the impact assessment, the support given by an upper level organisation helps the volunteers and municipal citizens to join in the voluntary activities if someone else coordinates. In addition, as the events and training sessions got the municipal citizens activated, they also achieved or improved several practical skills to improve their safety culture. By participating the events, the citizens were able to train how to improve a person's own safety in our own home or within the municipality.

According to the impact assessment, the project mostly focused on the events that supported the learning of practical skills amongst the citizens as the aim of promotion of safety culture and activation of citizens. Consequently, it also enhanced the wellbeing and safety within the municipality. As mentioned above, the new way of activation of citizens did enhance the citizens' wellbeing. Secondly, through the organised events the citizens gained the increased level of awareness regarding their own living environment and how it could be improved. According to the results, the most important outcome of the project was that the municipal citizens got the knowledge of how each action as an individual and a community member matters. If a person as a municipal citizen gains practical skills regarding the safety within the municipality or has an increased awareness regarding the safety matters, it has a straight connection to the safety and security of that community. According to the impact assessment, this kind of learning curve would not have existed if the project of Finnish Red Cross would have not supported and increased the role of the non-governmental and voluntary organisations in the municipalities.

Consequently, can be stated that the role of NGOs in the promotion of safety culture and activation of citizens actually improved the preparedness by improving safety and security. In this context, can be stated that he improved level of practical skills as well as enhanced awareness of safety and security amongst the municipal citizens improved the independent preparedness. In this case, independent preparedness means the preparedness of individuals, housing communities and households for situations where daily life is disrupted. In this context, the role of voluntary organisations have been significant as the organisations play a key role in the development of and support for independent preparedness. Without the active participation of the third sector by the voluntary organisation, the fourth sector, meaning individuals and households, would have not the possibility to prepare for incidents that may effect on the daily life or crises. Can be stated that the voluntary organisations also support the authorities by recruiting new volunteers and organising the training under the guidance of responsible authorities. According to the results of the impact assessment, the project partly succeed to fulfil this objective as in some municipalities the voluntary organisations actively recruited new volunteers through the trainings and events. According to the results, the voluntary organisations in some areas specifically focused on recruiting new members as they were aware of the lack of volunteers which may have an impact on that the activities and existence of a voluntary organisation within the municipality would eventually be abolished.

5. The role of the NGOs and voluntary organisations during the disasters in local communities

In Finland, the role of the NGOs and voluntary organisations during the disasters in local communities has a long history due to the special features of the country. For example, Finland has a harsh and rural nature which creates challenges to the law enforcement authorities during the crises. Secondly, people may live in isolated areas with long distances where people live in small communities or separate houses. Within these areas, it might take some time in order to get the support from the law enforcement authorities and especially during the crises, the law enforcement authorities may have various number of tasks and they have no possibility to focus on the urgent matters. Therefore, the NGOs and voluntary organisations within the rural and distant areas have a major role to activate people from these areas to be organised. Secondly, the ability to have voluntary organisations' support is the key element to help people to survive and cope within these areas.

In addition, the NGOs also are involved in the training of the authorities to practise for the catastrophes in order to participate in the crises. As examples of disasters in Finland where the NGOs have had a significant role during the catastrophes are the snow crisis in Kainuu and water crisis in Nokia.

This chapter shortly presents the both crises and the role of NGOs within. During the winter 2017-2018, heavy snow caused extensive power outages in Kainuu, Finland. The snow caused trees to bend and fall on power lines and roads. Although short term power outages are quite typical in the area, this time the power outage was exceptional both in its scope and length. About 6 600 households were without electricity in the area during the last days of year 2017. During the crisis, the Finnish Red Cross was a crucial actor. The organization was able to mobilize its local branches, the district level, headquarter and logistics centre in short period of time. Local Red Cross branches worked closely with the municipalities and the social and health care services. Volunteers checked houses from door to door and distributed water and power sources.

In November 2007, a large part of water supply in Nokia, Finland was contaminated with treated sewage water causing illness to more than 8,000 people in the city of Nokia and the surrounding area. The distribution of water started soon after the incident, and the need for extra help became evident when the city's main water fell apart on 5th of December. Within two days, the volunteers of Vapepa (The Voluntary Rescue Service) and the Red Cross Nokia Department took care of distribution of water and hand disinfectant in cooperation with the Finnish Defence Forces on fixed distribution points, distribution of bottled water and hand disinfectant from door to door, and the provision of hygiene information in connection with distribution activities. The volunteers who took part in the water supply contributed more than 900 person-hours work in two days. Throughout the water distribution operation, about 5.5 million liters of clean water from tanks and a further 700,000 liters of bottled water were distributed to the residents of the city. The role of non-governmental organizations and their volunteers in this work was significant.

6. Conclusion

According to the impact assessment, the role of voluntary organisations within the municipalities have increased the preparedness of the citizens. Therefore, the individuals can assume the responsibility for strengthening their own safety and security of their local communities. According to the impact assessment, the increased level of practical skills and awareness of safety and security related matters amongst the municipal citizens have improved the citizens' safety. Can be concluded that the organisations play an important role in the promotion of the safety culture and in the activation of citizens in the improvement of their own safety. In addition, the results of the impact assessment may show that the psychological resilience can be strengthened through training which have been supported and promoted by the voluntary organisations within the municipalities. In this context, the improved psychological resilience may help the citizens to control stress factors and maintain the patterns of everyday life during the incidents and crises. Furthermore, it helps the citizens to maintain the sense of security as well as provide the citizens resources to cope with different situations. Therefore, without the existence of NGOs and voluntary organisations within the municipalities and especially without their active role of activation of citizens, can be stated that the preparedness and psychological resilience of municipal citizens would not reach the similar level. Can be summed up that the non-governmental and voluntary organisations play a key role in the development and support of independent preparedness within a municipality. Secondly, it undoubtedly strengthens the psychological resilience amongst the citizens. To conclude, can be stated that in Finland, the role of the non-governmental organisations in crises is unquestionable.

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