



COMMUNITY RESILIENCE FRAMEWORKS FOR BUILDING DISASTER RESILIENT COMMUNITY IN MALAYSIA

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Abstract

Disasters cannot be prevented fully but their impacts and severity can be lessened through the application of certain frameworks. However, there is currently a lack of a robust framework in building disaster resilient and sustainable communities in Malaysia. Malaysians are increasingly finding themselves not being spared from disasters especially flood. In order to keep pace with these occurring disasters in Malaysia, Community Resilience Frameworks are the backbone strategies among various stakeholders and can assure non-futile efforts for building safer and more resilient communities. Community Resilience Framework sets out the drivers, existing good practices, scopes, aims and work streams respectively for a long-term programme designed to increase the disaster resilience of communities. This paper reviews the existence of disaster resilient communities in detail. Some Community Resilience Frameworks in the context of natural disasters in Malaysia are also discussed. In this paper, literature is used as a foundation for a new insight. Document analysis method on relevant policies and literatures was adopted. It is envisaged that the findings of this study could be useful for building disaster resilient community and also closing the gaps in disaster risk reduction in Malaysia.

Keywords: resilient community, community resilience frameworks

INTRODUCTION

The incidence of natural disasters has risen very sharply worldwide, making the risk of disasters a global concern. According to the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, or IFRC, (2016), disasters killed a total of 390,054 Asians during the years 2006 to 2015. In Malaysia, present efforts to mitigate impacts of disaster by national and local governments are only focused on the 'loss reduction model'. This merely attempts to prevent damage while still allowing communities to remain vulnerable to natural disaster (Bhandari, Norio, Yokomatsu, & Ikeo, 2010). It is widely observed that we are still centered on 'loss reduction' attempts to simply prevent damage rather than focusing on forming more strategic resilience frameworks to build stronger communities. Faced with such problems, forming a strategic community resilience framework in Malaysia to examine the issue of disaster management in a new perspective needs to be understood and identified with the aim to achieve common community resilience. A solid Community Resilience Framework can serve as a basis for guiding the assessment of community resilience on the ground. Therefore, this paper attempts to analyse and review the existing frameworks on community resilience which have been used to build the resilience of communities prone to disaster in Malaysia. The findings of this study also provide valuable information on the way forward in building a disaster resilient community in Malaysia by developing a comprehensive Community Resilience Framework that covers all aspects of disaster risk reduction (DRR).

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY?

From the start, the government is the primary and most important facilitator of resilience. However, community also comprises parts of greater wholes (states, regions and nations) as well as a suitable level for building resilience (Longstaff, Armstrong, Perrin, Parker, & Hidek, 2010). According to IFRC (2014), community refers to a group of people who may or may not live within the same area but share a similar physical environment, services and resources. One of the significant reasons to focus on resilience at the community level is because communities are at the centre of everything we do. Community itself plays an outstanding role in increasing resilience and is also the actual first responder to any disaster.

Community involvement is crucial in order to understand the needs of others, ensuring their safety and strengthening their resilience. According to Becker et al. (2011), a number of community attributes can be used as indicators of resilience where they are grouped into three areas including: (1) Making a Difference, where people need to know that the small things they do can make a big difference for themselves, their families and neighbours; (2) Participation and Empowerment, where direct involvement of communities can help in identifying the disaster risks and figuring out the resolutions for themselves; and (3)

Leadership and Trust, where communities are supported by organizations who encourage community-led initiatives and where mutual trust and respect exist.

Moreover, most disasters are local in nature and affect different communities in differently. Thus, we can say that each community is unique as they have their own local ideas about prevention, protection, response, and recovery gained from different types of disasters (Emergency Management Victoria, 2017).

RESILIENT COMMUNITY IN THE CONTEXT OF DISASTERS

Community Resilience has been linked with disaster in many studies conducted earlier. However, it may not be associated with disasters in Malaysia as severe natural disaster does not regularly occur in Malaysia. In the 1980's, Timmerman (as cited by Gonsalves & Mohan, 2012) was probably the first researcher to use the concept of resilience in relation to disasters. Most authors use the term 'ability' to define the concept of disaster resilience and linked the concept to people, a group of people or a community's ability to absorb stress and recover from the disaster. This generally means that, the concept of disaster resilience should be associated with that of community.

Community Resilience in the Context of International Level and Publications Found in the Search

Since Community Resilience may not be associated with disaster in Malaysia (as severe natural disasters do not regularly occur in Malaysia), therefore, the definition of "Community Resilience" is defined based on the international context. According to IFRC (2014), Community Resilience means the ability of communities when exposed to disasters to anticipate, prepare for, reduce the impact of coping with, and recovering from the effects of shock and stresses without compromising their long-term prospects. Meanwhile, Community and Regional Resilience Institute, or CARRI, (2013) stated that Community Resilience is more likely means the ability and capability to anticipate risk, limits impact, and 'bounce back' rapidly through survival, adaptability, evolution, and growth in the face of turbulent change. Pfefferbaum, Pfefferbaum and Van Horn (2011) explained that Community Resilience is the ability to transform the environment through deliberate, collective action and requiring that the community as a whole must cope effectively with and learn from adversity. In the meantime, United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, or UNISDR, (2005) defined Community Resilience as the ability of a system, community or society potentially exposed to hazards to adapt, resist, accommodate or recover and change from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficiently manner, in order to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning and structure.

Building Disaster Resilient Community in Malaysia

According to Sobian (2016), ‘community’ can be defined in the Malaysian context as: a *kariah masjid* (a group of people who share or live in the area around a mosque); people living in a village; members of fishermen associations; residents’ associations; and religious-based organisations. Such units of community generally know each other, carry out their own activities and are ready to assist each other in any situation (Sobian, 2016).

The National Progress Report on the Implementation of the HFA (2011-2013) states that limitations in budget, time, human input, capacity and tools reduce the level of participation of community in building disaster resilience. Hence, it is difficult to encourage the public in Malaysia to take action to reduce risks and build disaster resilient community. The government has organized several awareness programmes on disaster risk reduction including the National Disaster Awareness Day (held annually on 26 December), Safe School Programmes, establishing several funds such as Poor Student’s Funds and the National Relief Fund in 2006 in order to help disaster victims. In contrast, most of the information on disasters is often conveyed through television, radio, and the print media to educate the community on disasters; to build a disaster resilient community in Malaysia.

METHODOLOGY

Understanding the disaster resilient community concept and synthesizing community resilience frameworks in Malaysia requires a systematic procedure for reviewing or deriving useful information from the existing documents, both printed and electronic materials. For the purpose of this paper, a document analysis method was used to kindle the meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge.

In order to synthesize community resilience frameworks in Malaysia, the National Security Council (NSC) Directive 20, the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016-2020), downloaded documents from MERCY Malaysia website and other related literatures were studied. The results were then crossed with Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 (HFA) and Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (SFDRR) to identify compliance with international frameworks.

SYNTHESIZING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE FRAMEWORKS IN MALAYSIA

Community Resilience Framework provides a methodology and supporting detail to help communities understand their social community and built environment (National Institute of Standards and Technology, 2015). Framework is about ensuring that everything involved in disaster management in Malaysia helps in turn to build a safer and more resilient Malaysia. Malaysia has been exposed to

disasters ever since Independence Day in 1957. Even after several decades of scientific research advancement, we are still threatened by the rising rate of the devastating impact of natural disasters. Nevertheless, there has never been any specific resilience framework for Malaysia; but only the existing disaster management policies and plans for disaster resilience.

Malaysia is strongly committed to the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) programme to build the resilience of its nation (Badi, 2017). In 2005, the government implemented this Framework through the existing National Security Council (NSC) Directive No. 20 (Mohamad Amin & Hashim, 2014). Therefore, the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for the management of disaster is the NSC Directive 20. Since Malaysia is one of the countries that rectify the International Framework for DRR and it does not have a separate Community Resilience Framework, NSC Directive 20 can be considered as the framework that intends to make our country safe and resilient. In the next section, the legal disaster management policies, frameworks, plans and programmes for disaster resilience are discussed.

Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015

In 2005, Malaysia was among 168 countries which signed The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 (HFA) and has implemented this Framework for Action through the existing National Security Council, Directive No. 20. There are two aims of HFA, which are to reduce vulnerabilities and to reduce risk to hazards. HFA not only focuses on risk reduction but also focuses on community participation in any DRR programmes. According to HFA, community participation can be promoted through the adoption of specific policies, the promotion of networking, the strategic management of volunteer resources, the attribution of roles and responsibilities, and the delegation and provision of the necessary authority and resources (UNISDR, 2005). Accordingly, these are some of the reasons why Malaysia needs to have a comprehensive Community Resilience Framework that can improve multi-agencies and community preparedness towards disasters and contribute to the achievement in building resilient community in these events.

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (SFDRR) was adopted by United Nation Member States on 18 March 2015 at the Third UN World Conference in Sendai, Japan. It attracted a high level of political interest, which can be partly explained by the current converging dynamic between DRR, the Sustainable Development Goals and Climate Change issues (UNISDR, 2015).

SFDRR has clearer objectives to be achieved in the DRR efforts including the engagement of community in DRR. This framework provides feedback to the community, and is focused on attaining DRR and building

disaster resilience in Malaysia. In support of Target (e) of the SFDRR, it is important for Malaysia to develop a Community Resilience Framework as this will foster an integrated approach to community resilience and disaster risk reduction. It will also promote support of DRR governance through enhanced interactions between communities, local and national levels.

National Security Council Directive 20

In Malaysia, the National Security Council (NSC) Directive 20: The Policy & Mechanism for National Disaster Management Policy is the main policy guideline and overall disaster risk governance mechanism. The NSC Directive 20 is the key 'framework' for disaster management in Malaysia. It contains directives related to relief and management of natural and technological disasters. The policy statement for disaster relief operations in Directive 20 is aimed at, specifically: mitigation (to mitigate the effects of various hazards); preparation (prepare for measures that will reduce loss of life and damage to the environment); response (ability to respond and provide assistance during disasters) and recovery (establish a recovery system to ensure the affected community's return to the pre-disaster situation). Until now, all the efforts to deal with disaster in Malaysia have proceeded as usual in accordance with NSC Directive 20.

NSC Directive No. 20 (1997) prescribed the mechanism on management of disasters whereby the roles and responsibilities of the various agencies involved in handling disasters are identified. In regard this, NSC had established the National Disaster Management and Relief Committee (NDMRC) with the major aim of coordinating disasters according to the three different levels, namely: Federal (disasters are managed by National Disaster Management and Relief Committee (NDMRC)), States (disasters are managed by the State Disaster Management and Relief Committee (SDMRC)) and Districts (disasters are managed by the District Disaster Management and Relief Committee (DDMRC)).

Through NSC Directive 20, the government hopes that the handling and resolution of disasters can be carried out in a more corresponding manner with the integrated involvement and mobilization of multi-agencies in order to minimize the suffering and losses as a result of disasters. However, NSC Directive 20 has been outdated since the development of HFA and SFDRR. Therefore, it should be reviewed in order to create and include a new national policy related to DRR to address the involvement of community in disaster management in Malaysia.

Building Resilience Community Programmes by MERCY Malaysia

In achieving community resilience, MERCY Malaysia has developed and introduced Building Resilient Communities (BRC) to engage various

stakeholders in addressing and responding to issues, ideas and actions that will help in enhancing the level of community resiliency (MERCY, 2016). MERCY (2016) revealed that BRC is a holistic approach that includes all levels of stakeholders in a community. It is aimed to increase capacity and capability by identifying and reducing vulnerability with the objective of building the community's resilience in social well-being and equity, environmental stewardship, as well as economic prosperity and continuity respectively. For the DRR project to achieve meaningful goals, MERCY has undertaken training programmes through the BRC modules including, namely: Local Government Units (LGUs) (educate, train and strengthen relevant LGU stakeholders on DRR and disaster risk management (DRM)); Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) (provide a platform for communities to actively participate in DRR activities, gain knowledge, skills and competencies in DRR, as well as enhance and use indigenous early warning systems); School Preparedness Program (SPP) (generate a culture of disaster awareness and response amongst school children, teachers and staff); Resilient Health Infrastructure (RHI) (increase and introduce hospitals and their management to DRR and to improve the hospital's disaster preparedness and early warning systems through the implementation of DRM); and Private Sector (PS) (engage and work collaboratively with private and corporate sectors in the development and implementation of DRR and DRM programmes).

The Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016-2020)

The Eleventh Malaysia Plan (2016-2020) continues to reinforce the resilience of the nation to natural disasters. In relation to the Eleventh Malaysia Plan, four focus areas are proposed which will lead to significant changes in Malaysia's approach to pursuing green growth for resilience. However, our discussion is more related to disaster resilience, hence only Focus Area D: Strengthening Resilience against Climate Change and Natural Disasters will be further explained in this paper. The following strategies will be undertaken to reach these objectives:

(i) Strategy D1:

This aims to strengthen DRM by establishing a policy and institutional framework, as well as by improving disaster detection and response capacity. This will be improved by: upgrading detection technology and forecasting systems; in addition to incorporating DRM into development plans and creating community awareness among the Local communities, civil society organizations and the private sector.

(ii) Strategy D2:

This seeks to improve flood mitigation measures by generating new investments from flood mitigation projects (the Department of Irrigation and Drainage Malaysia (DID) will use another new technology to mitigate floods and encourage investment) in order to enhance long-term planning (DID and other relevant agencies will implement Integrated Water Resource Management, Integrated River Basin Management and Integrated Flood Management) and strengthen flood forecasting and warning systems; and

(iii) Strategy D3:

This aims to enhance climate change adaptation by developing a national adaptation plan and strengthen resilience of infrastructure, natural buffers including the water and agriculture sector as well as creating awareness on health impacts.

Faith-Based Organisations as Pillar of Community Resilience

In Malaysia, it is important to highlight the role of faith in both individual and community life. Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) in the Malaysian context refer to all faith-based non-governmental organisations (NGOs) or any religious communities that base their activities on their beliefs or places of worship (Sobian, 2016). In pursuit of optimal disaster risk prevention, reduction and resilience, FBO which work closely within local communities can use their unique strength to facilitate resilience in responding to concerns arising from disasters.

FBOs are amongst the first to respond to the needs of disaster victims and offering help and support in spiritual and psychological dimensions to disaster survivors. Due to the above reasons, FBOs could be considered as a strong pillar of community resilience in Malaysia. It is essential to keep them focused on disaster management activities and actively engaged them in community resilience building initiatives (Wijesekara, 2017). Therefore, FBOs are important and they have proven to be the focus of community resilience in Malaysia. In order to function effectively, they need adequate support from all stakeholders (including the government and the private sector) in building safer and more resilient communities to with stand disasters in Malaysia (Sobian, 2016).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, increasing disaster resilience involves a focus on the strength and sustainability of a community's lifelines, as well as strengthening the relations between people, services, systems and structures that support the community to function. Bringing this together, the framework provides an integrated approach to resilience. Community Resilient Framework (CRF) is most important as it helps the community to understand their social community and built environment

and assists them to learn to link the community's social institutions with the built environment. All the policies, frameworks, plans and programmes in Malaysia as mentioned above can be used for enhancing community awareness, preparedness and handling during and after the disaster. However, most of these policies, frameworks, plans and programmes designed to measure disaster resilience tend to focus only on some of the aspects and do not adequately take a broader view of the concept. Definitely, it is important to propose a CRF that could add values, role and institutions involved and the linkages between planning system, DRR initiatives and disaster resilient community respectively. Therefore, it is important that the future research not only focus on purely single aspects but also on the broader view of the concept in building a disaster resilient community in Malaysia.

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