Community Engagement; Best practice for health emergencies: Sarvodaya Experience in Sri Lanka

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Disasters in Sri Lanka

Natural disasters
1978 cyclone
1986 Kantalai tank bund breach
2004 Tsunami

Armed conflict
1983 Riots
Eelam wars I - IV
2009 Vanni

Emergency Response

Epidemics
Dengue/DHF
AH1N1

Community Engagement (CE)
“processes that result in individuals and groups, often considered disadvantaged and marginalized (the “disempowered”), being able to gain greater control of their lives and resources, and be able represent their interests in decision making.”
Community Engagement (CE)

- Hazardous event
- Warning
- Preparedness
- Recovery
- Response
- Mitigation
- Risk Reduction
CE through Community Empowerment

- Process in health promotion
- Knowledge sharing and capacity building
- People gaining control
- Express their own needs and concerns
- Devise strategies
- Involve in decision-making
- Individual and community empowerment for emergency response
Challenges for CE

• Formal health systems still not prepared for CE.
• Community’s own dependency on the free health care system.
• Externally driven decision making.
• Early warning systems not optimum.
• The culture of “partnership” is weak or non-existent
**Key Messages**

**Economy**
- Disaster resilient livelihoods
- Providing necessary materials

**Consciousness**
- Developing a culture for emergency response
- Information and training
- Developing psychological resilience

**Adopting a Holistic Approach**

**Power**
- Empowering communities for emergency response by giving autonomy to act
- Formal linkages and recognition
Thank You!