



Community Disaster and Sustainability Teams for Civil Protection

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Many examples of community-based teams for civil protection and disaster risk reduction exist. Turkey has a Community Disaster Volunteer Training Program while the USA has Community Emergency Response Teams which have been extended into secondary schools as Teen School Emergency Response Training. The principles and practices of these teams further apply directly to other development and sustainability endeavours, all of which are intricately linked to disaster risk reduction and civil protection.

An example is keeping local water courses and storm drains clear from rubbish. That improves community health and cleanliness while assisting rainfall drainage to reduce flood risk. The "community teams" concept, as implemented for civil protection and disaster risk reduction, therefore connects with day-to-day living, such as ensuring that all community members have adequate access to water, food, waste management, shelter, health care, education, and energy.

Community teams should be based on the best science and pedagogy available to ensure that concepts, training, skills, and implementation are effective and are maintained over the long-term. That entails going beyond the interest that is commonly generated by highlighting high-profile events, such as hurricanes and earthquakes, or high-profile concerns, such as climate change or terrorism.

When community teams are focused on high-profile challenges, maintaining interest can be difficult without specific manifestations of the perceived "number one threat". Incorporating day-to-day concerns into civil protection can overcome that. For example, the community teams' talents and energy could be used for picking up rubbish, for educating about health and waste disposal, and for conducting vulnerability assessments in order to inspire action for continual vulnerability reduction. In addition to the examples given above, Japan's Jishu-bosai-soshiki community activities and Asia's "Townwatch" initiative adopt wider and deeper perspectives and actions, connecting disaster and civil protection to development and sustainability.