

“Divided”

Ethnicity matters in disaster response as it does in daily lives¹. Family is important, especially so for some people than others². The PAR model explains complexity of vulnerability³. The access model leads to display of variety of coping strategies⁴. All of the four readings points at the diversity among victims---“Victims” of disasters is not a single entity.

In a single event of disaster, different individuals or group of people react in a different way. Among different events in different situations, people react in different way. In a conflict setting, then, how people react to the disaster? I would like to ponder on one of the relationship between disaster and social environment, which was not the focus of the articles.

While I was reviewing over 800 grant proposals in Kabul, I heard more about 1999-2001 drought than civil war or Taliban as a cause of devastation. Of course, it was my personal and brief impression and I by no means present my impression as a basis of analysis. However, it was surprising to me that how the Japanese Government’s emphasis only on reconstruction from civil war was skewed. 1999-2001 drought was the worst drought and the same level of drought might not occur in near future, but for the people living in Afghanistan, war has ended, but the fear of natural hazard remains.

The Afghanistan Government has already started to develop preparedness and hazard response. However, before constructing the model, it seems to me that reviewing how the social structure divided Afghan people in the time of drought. How severe natural disaster could alter Muslim culture of helping each other, giving money with no interest, and extending assistance for vulnerable women headed family is striking. And in the case of Afghanistan, war was definitely the one to create more division in the society.

For example, the 1999-2001 drought killed many Kuchi (nomad) and their livestock in Afghanistan. The drought hit each level of people in Afghanistan, but not equally. What Kuchi lost was significant. They lost everything – including lives, livestock, and identity as a Kuchi, “the one who moves.” The construction of preparedness and hazard response system in Afghanistan is an urgent task. In order to make this effort functional and useful, the impact of social division, how the disaster hits different social group in a different way has to be included.

¹ Tierney, Lindell and Perry. *Facing the Unexpected: Disaster Preparedness and Response in the United States*. Chapter 5. P.197

² Morrow, Betty Hearn. “Stretching the Bonds: The Families of Andrew” In *Hurricane Andrew*.

³ Blaikie, Cannon, Davis, and Wisner. Chapter 2 in *At Risk*.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Chapter 3.