

Power in the field of disaster preparedness and response and chances of inclusion for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees

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Civil protection in diverse societies: migrants, asylums seekers and refugees
in the context of major risk prevention and management



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The engagement of migrants in organised disaster preparedness and response [I]

In Germany often the question arises why the engagement of people with migration background in relief organisations and fire departments is so low in number. There are a lot of reasons as:

- In countries like Turkey voluntary engagement in relief organisations or fire departments is unknown,
- migrants have their own informal networks based on mutual help and support,
- minor knowledge about the work of relief organisations and fire departments,

The engagement of migrants in organised disaster preparedness and response [II]

- established culturally homogenous structures of organisations in which newcomers, especially migrants, feel as outsiders,
- low or missing intercultural opening, missing intercultural sensitization of members of established organisations,
- advertising and public relations of relief organisations and fire departments are not suitable to attract migrants.
- The best way to attract persons to engage in relief organisations is recruitment of volunteers from own families and circles of friends.

All of these and other reasons are true. But there is another reason which I would like to discuss now.

The meaning of inclusion

First we should have a look on the meaning of inclusion:

- Inclusion means to be able to participate actively and that everyone participating has the same chance that his or her considerations are recognized and taken into account.
- But inclusion means more. It means to have the same promotion chances in organisations and the same chances to perform a leading position as people without migration background.

Theoretical approach – Inclusion and exclusion in system theory of Niklas Luhmann (German sociologist)

According to Luhmann's system theory someone is included into a system if he or she is part of the system.

In organised disaster preparedness and management the authorities, relief organisations and experts of a country (or Europe) develop the rules of communication, commitment and action and share appropriate knowledge.

Until today migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are almost always standing outside the system of organised disaster preparedness, management and relief (in the environment). They are mainly regarded as objects of support and not as subjects who could get the chance to take substantial influence on structure and development of organisations engaged in disaster preparedness, management and relief.

Theoretical approach – Field, power and margins. The theory of Pierre Bourdieu (French sociologist) [I]

Only using the knowledge of minority groups to enhance the quality of disaster preparedness and management does not mean that the exclusion comes to an end. Luhmann would call this process *exclusion by inclusion* (a so called paradox).

The field theory of Pierre Bourdieu is a theory of power. In the middle of a field, for example of a relief organisation, are persons who have the power to define the field or take considerable influence on activities in the field. Near the margins are all those situated who have to comprehend the decisions taken in the centre. As long as the culture of the field is homogenous, intercultural opening takes place only rudimentary and most decisions in fire departments or relief organisations are taken by persons who are neither migrants nor female. Most volunteers of the mentioned groups will belong to the margins or stay outside the field.

Theoretical approach (Pierre Bourdieu) – Field, power and capital and the chance of inclusion [II]

For example in Germany migrants are seldom engaged in relief organisations or fire departments. Their chance to perform a leading function is low as long as their knowledge of German is not very well and they are not adapted to the dominating culture and habitus in these organisations. People with migration background as volunteers are usually in subordinated functions on the edges of the field. The situation for asylum seekers and refugees would be even worse.

The habitus of individuals indicates their belonging to a social class and this is decisive for the chance of real inclusion. Another important factor of inclusion is capital. Possessing capital makes it easier to gain central positions in the field and additionally enables people to reduce their vulnerability.

Bourdieu distinguishes four kinds of capital: *Economic, cultural, social* and *symbolic* capital. **Symbolic capital** is the expression of the other three kinds of capital and something more. To have symbolic capital means that somebody has credit, he or she has reputation. This reputation is not only the result of own activities but as the other kinds of capital it can be transmitted from one generation to the next.

Remarks concerning the vulnerability of asylum seekers and refugees

Now we come to the decisive point:

Especially asylum seekers and refugees and often migrants have none of the mentioned kinds of capital when they arrive and stay an unpredictable time in the so called host country.

May be they have *internalised cultural capital*. Only other asylum seekers may know about it. Anyway during the first month of stay the demand of society for this capital is frozen and is reduced when time goes by.

In fact migrants and asylum seekers are totally vulnerable and additionally made powerless and helpless by a lot of rules (in Germany for example limitation of regional movement, prohibiting of legal employment, in the first months medical care covers only very urgent medical treatments). There are dozens of other examples illustrating the highly vulnerable situation of these groups and individuals.

Disaster preparedness and response for and of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants [I]

If we think about disaster preparedness and response for and of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants: What can be done in view of this situation?

There are two possibilities:

The *first* is to improve the situation in disaster management, the fire departments and relief organisations: improving intercultural sensitivity and knowledge to behave respectful and adequate and to learn something about prejudice, stereotypes, labelling, misunderstandings and how to communicate with these persons or groups in a diverse society in disaster preparedness and relief. In this respect societal attentiveness has improved.

It is really important to develop, to strengthen and to continue efforts in this direction. It has to be very much welcomed that this workshop advances such efforts theoretically and practically.

Disaster preparedness and response for and of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants [II]

However, the engagement related to these vulnerable groups must reach further:

As explained asylums seekers and refugees are extremely vulnerable, made helpless by a lot of rules and are near the margins of all societal fields and outside of the disaster management system.

One strategy is trying *to involve them as active volunteers in disaster relief organisations and fire departments*. If this shall be successful, the following should be developed: Concepts and programs of empowerment of these persons. Ways of empowerment are chances to develop qualifications which are useful in everyday (for example driving license, language courses or other useful qualifications), a supporting and mentoring system to understand their needs and problems and chances of real inclusion in the field of the organisations and their inclusion in networks. This kind of involvement would afford some continuous engagement of members of the relief organisations or fire departments.

Disaster preparedness and response for and of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants [III]

The next proposal does not exclude the just mentioned strategy.

Another possibility is to develop and strengthen the *personal emergency preparedness* of asylum seekers and refugees and of migrants in general.

Having this competence at one's disposal is useful everywhere, even if asylum seekers are sent back to their countries of origin.

Personal emergency preparedness

Personal emergency preparedness covers self-protection and self-help.

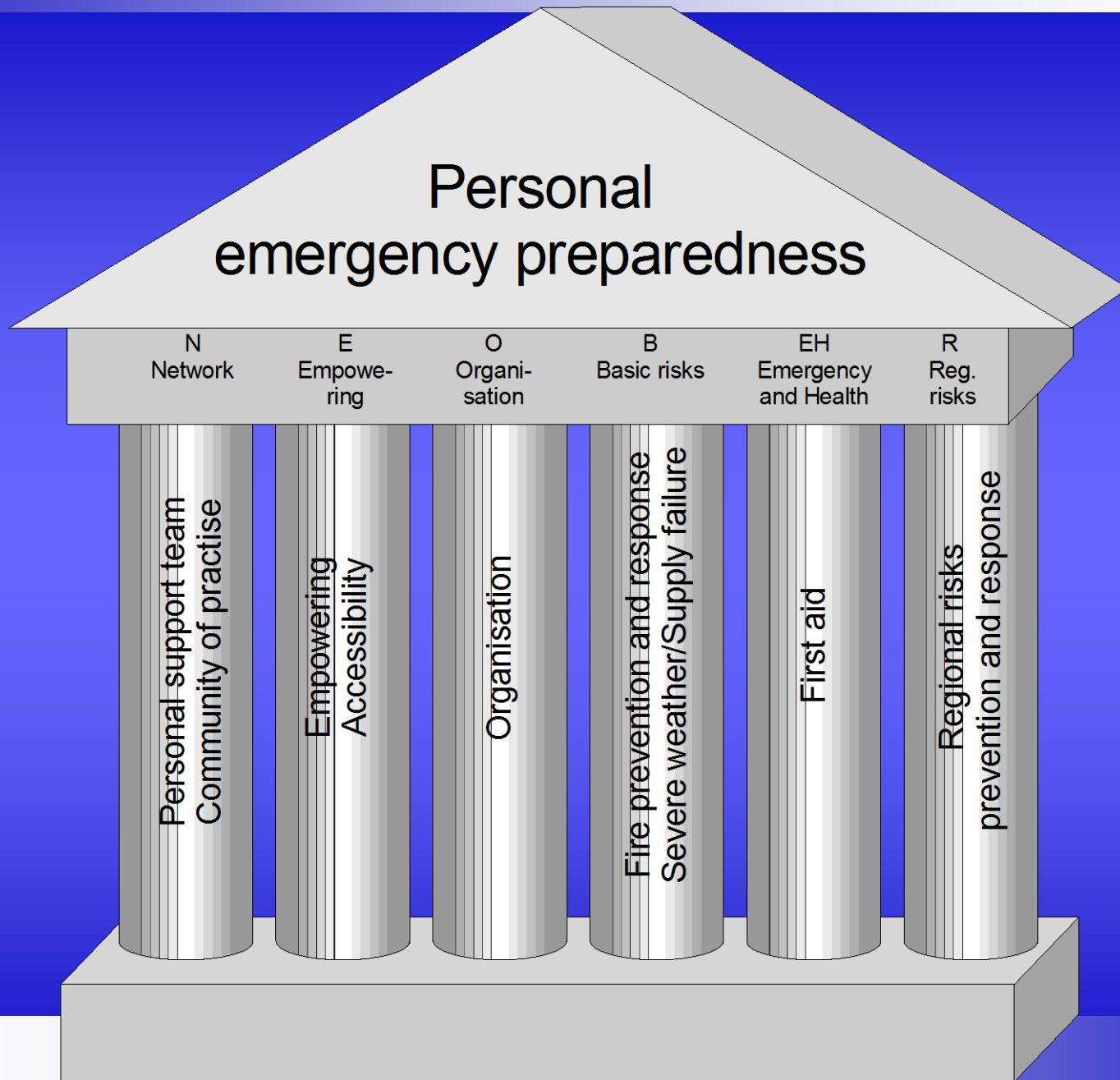
- *Self-protection* is the sum of individual measures to avoid, provide for and master events. Self-protection covers particularly measures to protect the close living and working area and to avoid or decrease damages to lives and health. The protective capacity corresponds to the *resilience* of persons (mastering and reaction potential, retention of ability to act on one's own after damaging events). Self-protection requires the acquisition of *abilities and knowledge*.
- *Self-help (as part of self-protection)* is the sum of individual measures for mastering of events. Self-help covers all measures from the beginning of damaging events especially until the arrival of relief units (isolation phase). Learning of abilities is required before the event (e.g. first aid, dealing with fire extinguishers, interpretation of warnings).

Why is personal emergency preparedness important for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees? [I]

- Migrants, asylums seekers and refugees are often ignored in organised emergency preparedness and response (perception and inclusion deficit).
- Personal emergency preparedness is of particular importance in this heterogeneous group of population because of chances of empowering and of getting familiar with elements of emergency preparedness and self-help.
- Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees should be recognized as subjects as people with the potential to act and not predominantly as objects of support, aid and relief.

Why is personal emergency preparedness important for migrants, asylums seekers and refugees? [II]

- They can take part in planning and implementation of own preparedness and preparedness of people in the network. Thereby they win self-confidence and knowledge about risks in the nation and the environment they are living in (Empowering).
- Their vulnerability will be reduced to some degree and resilience increases.
- They win especial competencies (for example by learning fire prevention and response and first aid).
- By developing a personal emergency plan in a participatory way (in a support network or in a Community of Practice (CoP)) their different needs, perceptions and positions become socially visible.



NEOBEHR – a model to develop personal disaster preparedness

The model (Geenen & Strangmeier 2014) consists of six columns:

N – Network

E – Empowering

O – Organization

B – Basic risks

EH – Emergency and Health

R – Regional risks

Column 1 – Network [I]

Three modes of developing personal emergency preparedness:

- Individual mode
- Personal support-team
- Community of Practice (CoP)

A combination of the tree modes.

Column 1 – Network [II]

1. The individual mode: Everybody is planning and learning on his own; only supported by one-way-communication (e. g. mass media, training material). Only migrants with durable residence permission may proceed according to this mode.
2. Personal support-team: it is organised around one or several migrants or asylums seekers. The team supports these persons during the process of developing personal emergency preparedness (the support team may include mentors).

Column 1 – Network [III]

3. Community of Practice (CoP): It is a mode of *situated participatory learning in a horizontal organised community* (Sarmiento & Olsen 2012) originally developed by Lave and Wenger (1991). Aim of Community of Practice is to improve personal emergency preparedness of all persons involved in the community, including migrants, asylum seekers or refugees. All persons involved bring in their point of view, their knowledge and abilities and learn from perspectives, knowledge and cultural meaning and priorities of the others taking part in this process and change themselves in the meantime.

Column 1 – Network [IV]

Who can play a part in a *Community of Practice* (CoP)?

- People living in a community/region including migrants, asylums seekers and refugees.

In addition the following persons can take part:

- Members of disaster preparedness and relief organisations and fire departments (volunteers and professional members).
- Persons representing the interests of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.
- Staff of community and municipality.
- Attendants of refugees and asylum seekers.

Column 2 – Empowering / Accessibility

- *Empowering* is the process of self authorization, leading to a condition of empowerment.
- To reach this goal various kinds of support are necessary as well as an environment which does not disrupt but encourages this process.
- Support to reduce or to lift the language barrier if possible.

Column 3 – Organisation [I]

- The development of personal disaster preparedness affords some knowledge about organisation structures in the nation of temporary or permanent stay.
- Important telephone numbers (e. g. fire department, medical emergency and rescue service, pharmacy after hours service, poisoning emergencies)
- How to release an emergency or fire report (Where did it happen? Where is the fire? ...)
- Where and when fire protection information and first aid training are offered?
- Stockpiling of drinking water, food, medicaments and other important things.

Column 3 – Organization [II]

- Energy stockpiling – in the case of an emergency with lasting power failure (e. g. flashlight, batteries, lighters, battery-powered radio).
- Emergency pack (with ID card/passport, important documents, addresses of relatives, friends, organisations, persons to be contacted during an emergency or disaster, clothing and hygienic articles ...).
- Developing of a personal checklist for emergencies.

Column 4 – Basic risks

Personal emergency preparedness means to be informed about basic risks. Some kinds of catastrophes may occur everywhere. To these risks belong

- fire,
- severe weather,
- supply failure (power failure, disrupted or reduced water supply).

Column 5 – Emergency and health

Personal emergency preparedness includes knowledge and equipment.

- First aid training or refreshment.
- Storage of necessary medicines (first aid box, medicaments to be taken on a regular basis).
- Other items (as pain relievers, fever thermometer, skin disinfectants).
- In the case of disability necessary additional equipment.
- Addresses of attending doctors, physiotherapists.
- Description of health situation of family members, including allergies, medicaments to be taken on a regular basis and so on.

Column 6 – Regional risks

For personal emergency and disaster preparedness it is necessary to learn something about regional risks. Migrants, asylum seekers and refugees may be unfamiliar with disaster risks in the new environment. Especially for them it is important to be informed about them and to be prepared for a regional event. Regional risks cover a large spectrum of catastrophe triggers.

Therefore only a few examples are given to illustrate this column.

- Flooding.
- Earthquake, volcanic eruption, landslide, mudflow.
- Chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear (CBRN) hazards.

Elements to initiate and encourage the development of personal emergency and disaster preparedness

1. Informative material.
2. Concept and procedure for developing of personal emergency preparedness.
3. Support-team and Community of Practice (CoP).
4. First-aid training or refreshment.
5. Fire protection information.
6. Contact person on local level of community or municipality with experience in disaster preparedness and response.
7.

Conclusion

- 1. *Disaster preparedness and response*** is of particular importance for migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. To be unfamiliar with regional risks, processes of warning, warning messages and disaster preparedness makes these anyway vulnerable persons even more vulnerable.
- 2. *Inclusion of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in organised disaster preparedness and relief*** is difficult because of the distribution of power in established organisations. A lot has to be done to change organisational culture and to initiate intercultural opening towards these persons and social groups. Some organisations started with this opening process meanwhile.
- 3. *Development of personal disaster preparedness*** is in any case an appropriate and vulnerability lowering procedure for these minorities and the population in general. Once developed it is always of benefit. The model NEOBEHR supports orientation during the development of personal disaster preparedness. If personal disaster preparedness is developed within a Community of Practice (CoP) or a support team, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees become part of a horizontal oriented network with intercultural exchange and rising understand of each other.

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**Thank you very much for your attention
and your interest!**

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