UNIT 15   RECOVERY

Structure

15.0 Learning Outcome

Upon studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the nature of recovery process
- Understand recovery as distinct from response and relief
- Outline some of the challenges associated with the recovery process
- Examine the implications of human factors involved

15.1   INTRODUCTION

Events that cause disruption and damage to communities may occur at any time and without warning. It is not difficult to recall instances where people have been seriously injured or killed in accidents or where communities have been destabilized by tragic events.

In all these circumstances, individuals and communities are affected in ways which interfere with their normal functioning and their physical environment. It is important that emergency services personnel, recovery workers and administrators are adequately prepared to deal with such events as they arise, so that all appropriate actions are taken to enable individuals and their communities to return to normal as soon as possible. It is also important to ensure that all people affected are able to access recovery and restoration services. In this unit we will be discussing nature of recovery process, understand recovery as a distinct from response and relief, outline the some of the challenges associated with the recovery process and also examine the implications of human factors involved.

15.2 Definition and Scope

The term recovery refers to a process by which communities and the nation are assisted in returning to their proper level of functioning following a disaster. The process of recovery can be very protracted, at times, continuing for 5-10 years or even more. The length of the recovery phase is determined by the extent of the disaster impact, community's pace of adapting to the change and the resources deployed for the purpose.
Recovery is usually taken as including other aspects such as restoration and reconstruction.

In the recovery phase emphasis is laid on the restoration of the damaged physical infrastructure comprising the buildings and permanent installations that provide the facilities required for community living. These include:

a) energy supply, b) water supply, c) food supply, d) waste disposal, e) accommodation,
f) transport, g) communications, h) manufacturing and commerce, I) primary production,
j) health, k) law and order, l) local government, m) recreation and culture; and
n) education.

The purpose of providing disaster recovery services is to assist the disaster-affected community towards management of its own recovery. It is now widely recognized that whenever a community experiences a significant disaster there is a need to supplement the personal, family and community structures which have been disrupted by the disaster.

A typical Recovery Manager usually needs to address following key questions:

- What is the purpose of the recovery process?
- What services are required?
- How should those services be provided?
- Who is best equipped to provide the necessary services?
- How and when should recovery services be withdrawn?
- What do the affected people think of restoration, reconstruction and recovery?
- What local resources could be utilized?

In order to gain a detailed overview of various tasks that need to be taken up by the Recovery Managers let us look at an illustrative checklist provided by the Australian Emergency Management Authority. The list is by no means exhaustive and depending upon the nature and location of the disaster and the affected community a range of other tasks may also emerge:

- Liaise with relevant response agencies regarding location, size, type and potential impact of event.
- Contact and alert key staff and other relevant response and recovery agencies
- Determine likely human effects.
- Activate and brief relevant agency staff.
- Activate appropriate inter-agency liaison mechanisms.
- Locate liaison officer at emergency operations center (if appropriate).

- Determine immediate short-term needs (ie. accommodation, financial assistance and personal support).
- Manage offers of assistance, including volunteers, material aid and donated money.
- Assess impact of the disaster through information/data from local government, geographic data and relevant response agencies.
- Meet with other recovery agencies to determine strategies.
- Report to organizational hierarchy on likely costs/impact of involvement in recovery activities.
- Organize briefing and debriefing process for staff.
- Activate outreach program to meet immediate needs and determine ongoing needs. Issues to be considered should include the need for specialist counseling, material aid, accommodation, financial assistance and social, recreational and domestic facilities.
- Establish 'One Stop Shop' recovery center to provide affected community with access to all recovery services.
- Manage restoration of essential infrastructure/utilities.
- Brief media on recovery program.
- Assess reports gathered through outreach program to assess community needs.
- Identify special needs groups or individuals.
- Meet with other recovery agencies to consider full assessment of impact of the disaster, determining the best means of involving the affected community and determine action required from specific agencies.
- Activate community recovery committees, ensuring active participation of members of the affected community.
- Develop community information process, including consideration of public meetings and newsletters.
- Monitor staffing arrangements.
- Review resources and services on an ongoing basis.
- Determine longer-term recovery measures.
- Provide newsletters to the affected community and information to the media as required.
- Provide interpreters, multilingual information and bilingual staff, as necessary.
- Continue to monitor agency activities and reduce/withdraw services when appropriate.
- Debrief recovery agencies.
- Recognize agency/staff input.

15.3 Distinction Between Response and Recovery

The "response process" depends on urgency and short-term expediency, whereas, the "recovery process" needs to be of a more general, considered and long-term nature.

Unless the stakeholders have a clear understanding about the actual transfer of authority between these two phases, a blurred period (eventually giving rise to confusion and chaos) between Response and Recovery usually looms over indefinitely. Once responsibility is transferred from response to recovery agencies, the latter are not only working within a blurred environment, they may also face carry-over problems from response and further, be forced to cope with such problems with restricted capability. Experience thus has shown that it is imperative to build and strengthen capacities enabling a rapid transition from emergency situations to recovery and reconstruction, reducing and closing the gap between response and recovery leading to development. Following table would help us understand the distinction between these two processes:

Response Phase	Recovery Phase
Action concerned largely with problems of urgent nature which cannot wait. Unless urgent solutions applied, problems aggravate.	No such urgent problems are dealt with.
Action defined by extraordinary powers (e.g., new legislation announcing State or National Calamity, setting up of State Authority). Actions could go beyond normal functioning of authority.	Limited freedom of action compared to authority exercised under extraordinary powers.
At times, response actions required to be taken without consideration of longer-term repercussions, for example, effects on recovery programs	No such urgency
Some response actions may have a direct bearing on recovery programs, for example, large-evacuation movement, the need to accept external assistance upsetting the balance of local economy.	All recovery actions have a direct bearing on sustainable development.
Response actions may have lowered the capability of selected government departments (by using up financial allotments, fuel allocations etc.)	When such units are called upon to participate in recovery programs, this eventually downgrades overall recovery capability.
Emergency response action is usually accepted and supported by stricken communities since it is relieving their immediate problems.	Recovery action may also have to operate within a changed community attitude. When the urgency of problems has waned, communities tend to be more questioning, and perhaps demanding, concerning action taken on their behalf.

15.4 Challenges Associated with Recovery

Being a lengthy process, recovery usually involves a carry-over of problems from the response phase. The objective of recovery program extends well beyond mere restoration of services.

Disaster recovery is probably the most important facet of managing an emergency event. It has important implications for the community's long term viability. Disaster recovery programs can provide great benefits to the community when managed well. Managed badly or inefficiently, they adversely affect the community's ability to function in a post-disaster environment. With these aspects in view, let us look at some of the challenges confronted during recovery period:

Delays: Inadequate consideration of overall counter-disaster planning and organization hampers the formulation of recovery programs as the definition and management of recovery programs is left undetermined.

At times, where the damage and destruction inflicted by the disaster is severe, it takes considerable time to assess and formulate recovery programs.

More Informational Requirements: Where the available information is inadequate, fresh information collection is necessitated for gauging post-disaster impact precisely.

Overburdened Bureaucracy: The recovery process may become unsatisfactory due to the slow functioning and results delivery of the government departments that are loaded with additional responsibilities.

Further Aggravation of Recovery Programs: This may be caused due to occurrence of another major disaster (which could be of different kind in different area) which inter alia diverts funds and resources.

Role Overlap: As recovery requirements overlap from one to another department, inter-departmental/inter-ministerial relations may hamper the formulation of recovery programs and strategies.

Availability of Funds: Limitations on the availability of finance or uncertainties surrounding its access may hinder the recovery programs.

Political Issues: Usually, in a multi-ethnic, multi-party political system, political problems may arise when some areas or communities seem to be receiving more attention during recovery programs.

Image Projection: False impressions and perceptions about recovery programs may emerge where the government fails to give adequate attention to public information campaigns and public relations generally.

Supply-side Constraints: At times, materials, equipment, specialist and skilled personnel could be in short supply. This may affect the implementation of the recovery program.

15. 5 Inter-Play of Human Factors

As recovery efforts in the long run lead to development, a number of human factors become important. Such factors include the community attitude, expectations and perception; the ability to adapt to change; and willingness to volunteer. The recovery managers need to understand these factors in order to address them carefully and make the recovery effective and successful. The rest of this section therefore, is devoted to outlining such factors and the concerns thereof.

Psychological Impact:
The disaster may leave the victims in a state of shock and certain numbness wherein they fail to comprehend the complete implications of the situation. At times, victims may appear hard of hearing or mentally incapable of comprehending what one is saying.

The realization period appears to develop with particular emphasis when the person returns to the site of their now destroyed dwelling. They search amidst the rubble for specific items. Gradually, an overwhelming depression comes with a realization of whatever is lost.

The Pace of Getting Out of Shock:
With passage of time, the victim begins to assess his/her past, present and future. Questions like "why did this happen to me?" begin haunting the individual. Many people develop the idea that probably "god is punishing them". The rationalization of the present takes most people in a constructive way and they start immediately cleaning up the area and rebuilding and restoring. Following the January 2001 earthquake, Village Sukhpar-Bhujwala in Kachch district of Gujarat demonstrated overwhelmingly that communities are capable of being self-sufficient in such trying times. The villagers of Sukhpar-Bhujwala bear a testimony to the promptness required for getting out of the shock and pooling together individual resources for meeting their needs.

Role Played by Media:
After the victims have composed themselves, they then seek through mass media or other ways to accuse those whom they think to be responsible for their sufferings. Often, officials of the local administration and local leaders become the subjects of their wrath. Media plays an important role in projecting the victims expectations and creating public opinion waves which could aid or affect the recovery efforts.

Relocation of Communities:
People in general are attached to their soil and the land they occupy. Following a major disaster devastating key infrastructure and residential buildings, it becomes very difficult to convince them to leave where once they lived and ask them to relocate to another site. Many issues crop up regarding preferences for site, distance to work place, availability of alternative means of livelihood, the quality and type of land allocated and so on.

Delayed Return of Evacuees:

This poses problems when evacuees are placed in a situation where their return to home is not certain or quick. Their longer stay in the evacuation zone makes them restless about their own land and property back home and the thought as to what will happen when they get back.

15.6　　　Conclusion

This unit explains the process of recovery with its characteristics. To provide an idea of various tasks involved in the recovery phase, the Australian Checklist is cited.

It is important to note the distinction between Response and Recovery since a number of issues are carried over from one to another phase.

The difficulties encountered by recovery managers world over are presented as challenges. Also outlined are some human factors at play in the recovery process.

15.7　　　Key Concepts

Recovery: A process during which the affected community/country is assisted to restore normalcy on all fronts and move towards development overcoming the gaps created by the disaster.

Recovery Manager: This could be any person(s) in the team engaged in any of the activities of reconstruction, restoration, rehabilitation and overall recovery.

15.8　　　References and Further Reading

Carter, W. Nick, 1991. Disaster Management: A Disaster Manager's Handbook, Asian Development Bank, Manila.

Emergency Management Australia, on-line electronic version: Disaster Recovery Manual, available via Email: ema@ema.gov.au

Gengaje, Rajan, K. 2001. "Reconstruction of Earthquake-Devastated Rural Structures: Lessons from Village Sukhpar-Bhujwala, Kachchh, Gujarat", Construction Journal of India, Vol. IV, Issue 1, March, PP. 63-65.

United Nations Development Programme, 2001. From Relief to Recovery – The Gujarat Experience, New York, October.

15.9　　　Activities

1) Explain briefly what do you understand by the term recovery.

2) Why is it important to differentiate between response and recovery?

3) Explain what specific aspects you will address while designing a strategy for relocating a disaster affected community.