

Wondering Role of a Grocery Shopkeepers on Awareness Building

Md. Nasir Uddin(40) a kindhearted and peace loving son of Jalal Mridha & Anowara Mridha lives with his family in a frequently natural disaster prone area in Vhangra village of Amkhola union under Galachipa Upazila of Patukhali District. He runs family by his only income source of grocery and tea stall. He many times heard about severe destruction of disasters from his forefathers since his early boyhood but never faced any disasters directly. Hearing facts of different disaster he started thinking how he can serve the ill fated people. Meanwhile, The Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP) project implemented by Dhaka Ahsania Mission



& Concern Universal funded by European Commission included this area under its jurisdiction. As part of intervention, CBDP project staffs met the community people and explained the project goals & objectives. Nasir Uddin expressed his kin to be affiliated with this project and on a certain day he was advised to attend the CLC (children learning center) Management Training. He was very attentive and actively participated in the training session. However, the horrible cyclone "SIDR" lashed the area on 15 November 2007 and the locality was turned like a graveyard within couple of moments causing damages of houses, crops, infrastructure and enormous number of lives. He realized the intensity of damages and was mournful seeing untold sufferings of the victims. The people were striving for foods, water, cloths and shelters and leading too miserable life after disaster. Nasir, as a human being was shocked & thought that only awareness raising of the people can reduce the losses and sufferings as well.

He spontaneously started disseminating disaster preparedness messages what he learnt from various activities of CBDP project to the communality people by his own initiative but he was not mentally satisfied as he had to spent maximum time behind shop from 6.00 a.m. to 10.30 p.m. for the sake of his family. Therefore, Nasir Uddin was searching alternative option for disseminating the messages effectively and eventually he decided that his shop would be the best place for this purpose. Because, every day a significant number of customers and villagers are visit his shop and he would be able to reach them every day with the messages what he intend to.

Accordingly, Nasir Uddin started displaying poster on disaster preparedness & flip chart in his shop, arranged VCD shows using a CD that CBDP project provided earlier, he also initiated tea stall session, group discussion and debate in his shop and in this way he covers on an average 200 people every day. He added more debate, people explores and shares their ideas and experience from their own life and some vital points come out through their discussions which are learning point for others.

In replying a question about future plan and techniques on disaster preparedness awareness rising, he informed about another innovative idea that is preparing a rubber stamp with Disaster Preparedness messages will be effective and he will be selling goods to customers. He has a long cherished dream to rename his shop as "Durzog Joyer Store" – Wining Disaster Store.

He recommended that any Bazar could be the foremost catalyst for awareness rising, because people from all wake come to Bazar for purchasing goods and daily essentials. He added more that if TV/VCR/VCD players are provided with a documentary film on disaster management that would be very helpful to aware people. He commented that Bazar committee can play a vital role in creating mass awareness on disaster preparedness.