

UTILISING THE WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE

Elderly inclusive DRR Programmes

MD. ABDUL QAYYUM

THE participation of local community is considered as the strength of disaster management in Bangladesh. Over the decades local communities have accumulated indigenous knowledge on how to utilise their natural resources and variety of innovations to deal with natural disasters. In this accumulation process the contribution of elderly people is incomparable.

Natural disasters impact the coping behaviour of the individual, household and community level in different ways. Constant dealing with disasters makes people develop this copying strategy. Indigenous knowledge of community people about disaster preparedness and response is sometimes undervalued.

When the disaster management community is exploring feasible disaster risk reduction (DRR) options for disadvantaged people, it should utilise the people's experience, knowledge base and response practices. On this year's International Day for Disaster Reduction (IDDR), UNISDR has focused on the older people, including their needs and what they contribute to better planning and understanding of disaster risk in their own communities. This has created an opportunity to advocate this critical inclusive issue at national policy level and discussion for the post-2015 framework for disaster risk reduction.

According to UNFPA, Bangladesh will experience one of the fastest increases of ageing population in the region, where the elderly will multiply from 6.6% of the population in 2010 to 22.5% in 2050. The elderly are the most vulnerable to disasters and need access to emergency shelter, fuel, food, nutrition, and transportation after any disaster. At the same time they can contribute to build resilient community with their enduring experience, as focused by IDDR-2014.

Evidence suggests that some older people with real life experiences may be more resilient than younger people in emergencies and disaster situation. When people do not get safe drinking

water during floods due to submerged tube wells, different coping strategies like raising tube well plinths or saving pond water are utilised to supplement the supply of water. Sometimes local people can predict rainfall through observing clouds, density of stars and even apparent behaviour of insects. To cope with water-logging, people carry out agricultural activities on bamboo beds built above water level. This method has been found effective for cultivating vegetables. Salinity intrusion in coastal areas has damaged soil fertility; that's why local people have changed their livelihood pattern and started shrimp cultivation. Experienced community people apply their indigenous knowledge indicators such as wind speed and direction, and temperature changes for cyclone forecasting. Scorching heat signals local

2015) has emphasised on social protection of community-at-risk, including elderly people. So, there is a policy to include elderly people in DRR programmes.

We still have a long way to go. As NPDM mentions, disaster risk management approaches need to include indigenous coping mechanism guidelines to assist ministries, NGOs, disaster management committees and civil society in implementing DRR programmes. Plans for active participation of older people should assess needs and develop alternative care arrangement and emergency evacuation plan convenient for elderly people. We need to invest in DRR programmes that recognise knowledge of elderly people for building resilience and strengthening their capacity to prepare for, cope with, and respond to the effects

Scarcity of resources, poverty, insufficient health facilities and absence of strong social security exacerbate vulnerability of ageing population. We need to have policy support to reach older people who are vulnerable, and provide required assistance and protection to them. When a disaster arises, older people are particularly vulnerable to injury, death, neglect and disease. Home support and care arrangements are often interrupted due to disaster. So we need to consider how they can afford health care facility in disaster situation.

For developing inclusive disaster management system, change of mindset towards elderly people is the most important thing. They should never be labeled as liability in disaster management; rather it is for disaster management to decide how the long experience and indigenous knowledge of elderly people can be accumulated or stored and where these enduring experience or knowledge can be utilised. This wealth of knowledge and experiences is no less important than modern science based knowledge. We have to agree that both are complementary. This urgency was echoed in the 6th Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Bangkok on 22-26 June 2014, which the writer attended.

Significantly, the Bangkok declaration included enhancing resilience issues at local levels and called for taking community resilience approaches into local development planning; giving attention to meaningful participation and positive contribution of at-risk groups such as children and youth, the older persons, persons with disabilities, as well as other disadvantaged groups. It also calls for taking advantage of traditional knowledge and communicating scientific information in simple, accessible and understandable manner. There is an opportunity to place the agenda in the 3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction which will be held in 2015 in Japan.

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people to be prepared for rainfall. Such indigenous knowledge has immense potential to complement modern early warning systems and DRR.

Adaptation is a continuous process where long experience and knowledge are prerequisite. Elderly people can act as a bridge between knowledge and change agents in DRR advocacy. Because they learnt from tragedies, they can provide valuable leadership in relief and rehabilitation activities where they often take the lead in mobilisation of disaster management resources as well as transmission of knowledge.

In a disaster prone country like Bangladesh, it is important to learn about local coping practices, indigenous knowledge, and livelihood diversification so that these can be incorporated in local DRR activities. Our National Plan for Disaster Management (NPDM, 2010-

of emergencies and disasters. Local disaster management committees should be strengthened to take into account the needs and contributions of different age groups including elderly people.

Bangladesh has successfully implemented community level disaster risk assessment, determining levels of individual and community needs, and development of community-based disaster management. Now it is time to build supportive environments for older people's involvement and contribution before, during, and after emergencies and disasters. The government, with local and international organisations, should be more innovative in promoting and implementing policies and programmes to address the challenges elderly population are facing and make the best of the opportunities that population ageing brings.

How creative are our teachers?

SAAD ADNAN KHAN

"DIALOGUE cannot exist without humility. The naming of the world, through which people constantly re-create that world, cannot be an act of arrogance" -- *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paulo Friere.

With so much talk about *srijonshil* (creative) questions and examinations and how really *srijonshil* is *srijonshil*, can we also ask how creative are our teachers (of both Bengali and English medium schools), or what scope do teachers have to "be" creative? Being creative means being generative, producing and disrupting knowledge and letting others produce knowledge. To seek creativity among students, it is important first to explore scope for creativity in pedagogy (the art and science of teaching). We need creativity in pedagogy to create anti-oppressive and non-hierarchical learning spaces, and this can happen when teachers are self-reflexive and willing to engage in dialogue with students.

A teacher cannot and should not solely determine what the classroom should be. Twenty different students bring in twenty different realities the moment they walk into the classroom, and through engaged pedagogy, these realities can be acknowledged to figure out what the classroom could be. It is a political reaching out when the teacher engages in dialogue with students and lets personal narratives surface in the classroom space. Being engaged in dialogue does not simply mean allowing students to talk and participate. Engaging in dialogue means the teacher is actually willing to learn from students too. It means not letting standards define one way of looking at things and creating a homogenous bunch of students.

When co-teaching English grammar to students of grade six at a Bengali medium school, I felt frustrated as I tried explaining grammar (sentence construction). The students were "weak" in English; hence the initiative to teach grammar in an interactive way was taken through pedagogically experimental English workshop classes. We discussed each other's mistakes openly and in a constructive way. One girl felt very ashamed of her mistakes until I explained that there was no shame in making mistakes.

Being a teacher, it was possible for me to demonstrate that learning should not be a shameful process. However, our education system thrives upon the idea of shaming and creating binaries between "strong/good" and "weak/bad" students. There is no such thing as the good or bad student, but only exclusions and power hierarchies. Grades, golden GPA, prefectship and honour rolls create standards and exclusions in classroom, when some students are allowed to occupy the learning space as winners, while others are not. At one point the shame gets internalised, which further limits students from performing well in class.

A four-year-old, who studies in playgroup, had to sit for an exam few weeks back. She had to memorise a series of answers (exact wording, exact sequence). What happened next is baffling. She ended up getting a B plus in her exam, which upset her mother. It was unnerving to see how memorising and grading had taken over the imagination of a four-year-old. Why have exams and grading in playgroup to begin with?

Thérèse Blanchet wrote about the education system in Bangladesh in the book titled *Lost Innocence, Stolen Childhood*. She commented: "Children have much to say about the fear, the

tension, and the possible sense of failure which such examinations entail. The school system streamlines children early. The successful ones are highly praised and develop a sense of their superior ability. Children who do not succeed for whatever reason are penalised, both at schools and at home, and in all kinds of ways. The education dispensed to children is syllabus-based and examination-driven. The school system sanctions the memorisation of a finite knowledge contained in book. A good memory is very important to obtain good results. Memory is intelligence." This book was published in 1998. Seems like very little has changed in our pedagogical approach to knowledge production inside classrooms even today.

Shohag, an eighth grader who had mild autism, went to an all boys' school with his brother. They studied in the same class, except Shohag was a "little slow" in learning compared to his brother. He got bullied by his classmates and teachers, and at home, often hit by parents for being a slow learner. Few weeks back, due to study pressure and mistreatment by the people around him, Shohag had a mental break down and was admitted to Manoshik Shashtho Kendro, where he had to stay for three weeks. The way Shohag experienced exclusion and oppression, made me think about the saying "Education is the backbone of a nation." The hollowness of the sentence makes me want to laugh out loud.

Engaged pedagogy will allow us to address issues of psychology, power relations and socio-cultural aspects in the classroom. For example, how can a teacher improvise teaching methods if students feel bored, and make the learning process fun? How does a teacher's bad mood or demotivation influence a class, or how can we relate classroom

bullying to socio-cultural categories of gender, class, sexuality, religion, ethnicity and age, which create a flux of power hierarchies not only among students, but also students and teachers? Engaged pedagogy is creative pedagogy, where the classroom becomes a risky, yet generative space. Engaged pedagogy will make exclusions visible in the class, and thus entail a discussion of how exclusions are created in the class.

Creativity in education does not simply mean implicit questions in examinations but ensuring an actual creative space. Before making exams more *srijonshil*, we need to ensure that creative space and assess creativity in teachers. However, teachers are evaluated based on how well they "manage" a class through discipline (more discipline=less disruptions=less dialogue=less risk) and through what grades their students get, both very problematic ways of evaluating performance of a teacher. Engaged pedagogy does not only help students, but also teachers, when we acknowledge that teachers and students can transcend their fixed roles in the class.

It really should not be about what kind of questions come in the exam paper and losing our head over whether students can answer correctly or not, but creating a classroom where thinking is valued, where teachers and students can challenge each other, where education will not mean memorising, but liberating oneself, where knowledge is created not only by the teacher, but by everyone in class. It has to do with a new kind of philosophy and addressing the bigger and more dangerous questions of unlearning, transforming and transcending through pedagogy.

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Earthquake disaster reduction

FUMIO KANEKO

BANGLADESH is a disaster prone country like my country Japan. Bangladesh suffers frequently from various natural calamities such as cyclone, flood, storm surge, tornado etc. International Day for Disaster Reduction is a day to evaluate how people and communities are reducing their risk to disasters and raising awareness about the importance of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR).

This country is situated in an earthquake prone region. Any time a medium to high magnitude earthquake in this region may bring tremendous property loss and sufferings. As per the Comprehensive Disaster Management Program (CDMP), if an earthquake of Magnitude 7.5 occurs 20-30 km away from Dhaka, half of the buildings in Dhaka will be affected, a quarter of them will be destroyed and 90,000 people will be killed.

The government has taken various steps to adopt measures against natural disaster related matters through formulation of national policy/plan, such as National Plan for Disaster Management (NPDM) and Standing Order on Disasters (SOD), and framing of Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC) in 1993. Bangladesh government has requested the government of Japan for technical assistance to develop capacity of engineers toward disaster resistant construction and retrofitting. In response, Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) carried out detailed preparatory survey in July 2010 and concluded a project scheme by signing the Record of Discussions (R/D) in December 2010. The project titled "Capacity Development on Natural Disaster-Resistant Technique of Construction and Retrofitting for Public Buildings" (CNCRP) between Jica and Public Works Department (PWD), one of the main organisations to promote seismic-resistant buildings, had thus started. Total project period is 4 years from March 2011 to February 2015. The public buildings of Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet will be considered under the project. The immediate purpose is capacity development of PWD for design and construction of retrofitting works of the public buildings against earthquake, and the long term goal is to enhance the safety of the public buildings. Through the CNCRP, in last three and half years, around 20 PWD engineers received training on Japanese anti-seismic design and retrofitting by a team of Japanese experts.

In Bangladesh, DRR laws and regulations are not properly followed. Though more than 20 years have passed since the BNBC was enacted, very few buildings were constructed according to it. Even building owners still don't know about BNBC. Supervision to get everyone in the field to follow the BNBC is insufficient. In order to reduce the risk of vulnerable buildings collapsing, we have to follow the BNBC. The number of buildings that need to be reviewed is very high, and it will cost a lot.

Another option we can take is to retrofit the existing important buildings. In recent years, the word "retrofit" has become familiar to Bangladeshi people. There is a feeling that retrofitting is very expensive, and is not viable in Bangladesh. But this is totally wrong. Usually, it only costs 10-30% of a new construction. We may not want to retrofit a very old building unless it is very important. Generally, those buildings about to collapse are not worth retrofitting, and should be demolished. On the other hand, hospitals and fire stations cannot be rebuilt or relocated, so retrofitting will be have to be considered. Retrofitting is not always an expensive choice. We need to consider the return on investment.

Many buildings do not have blueprints, or are built differently from the blue prints. In many cases concrete strength of the actual buildings is weaker than in the plan. CNCRP evaluated some of the buildings. At the end of our project, we are hoping to share the facts on strength of concrete columns, management of reinforcement rods and how we can overcome overall buildings vulnerability. In order to decide whether a building should be rebuilt, retrofitted or left as it is, we need to collect sufficient information. For this purpose, we are preparing a vulnerability manual under the CNCRP. Such a manual is available in Japan and used on the field. However, we cannot use the same manual as the building structures of the two countries are different. We are analysing some buildings to compose a Bangladeshi manual. Japanese experts and PWD engineers have decided to retrofit the Tejgaon fire station as pilot basis to make an example.

Engineering knowledge and legislation are both important, but it is more important that each one of us is aware of the risks and works to change the current situation. In Japan, every one of us feel that our own home should be according to the safety guidelines. We cannot fully achieve nationwide DRR in Bangladesh without improvement of the people's awareness level. Thus, under CNCRP, we are also conducting awareness campaigns on earthquake risk reduction in schools and colonies. CNCRP is merely a small step for retrofitting buildings in Bangladesh. This is not sufficient to make all the buildings stronger. During these efforts, we want projects like CNCRP to be developed and expanded further. There still are more things to be done, more areas to be considered, as well as identifying whom to train. We, the Japanese team here, are committed to be part of these efforts.

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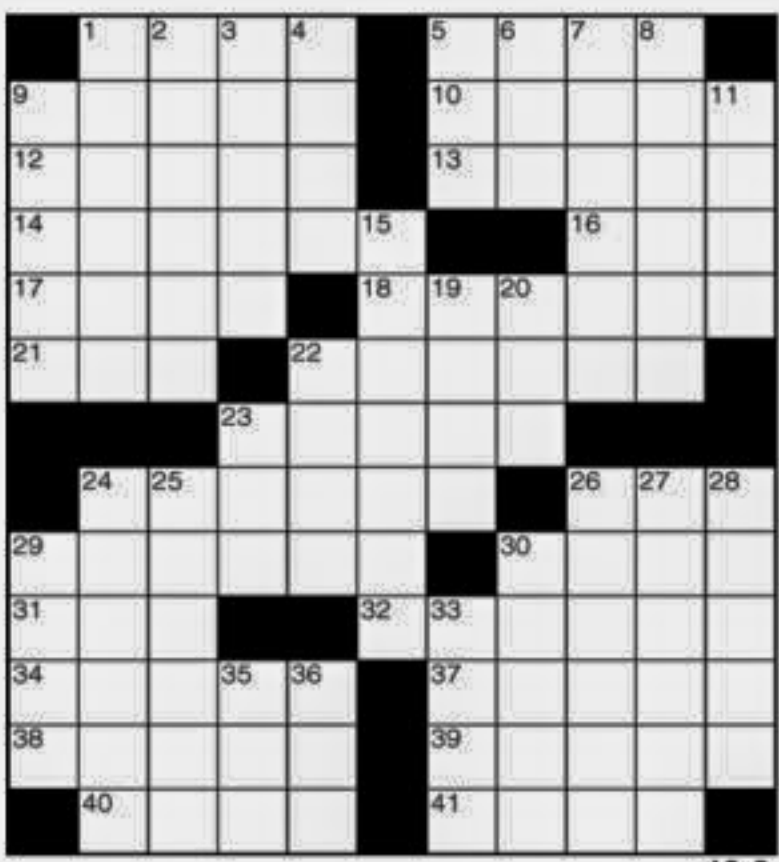
CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

ACROSS

- "The Grapes of Wrath"
- family name
- Yale students
- Large-scale dismissal
- Like some note cards
- Tatum of "Paper Moon"
- Arabian city
- Hip locale
- Louvre fill
- Convenience
- Eye part
- Take to court
- Most rational
- Stood stunned
- 17-syllable poems
- Restful resort
- Throat mass
- Wild guess
- Noah's boat
- Blood line
- Auto mishap
- Roof overhangs
- Seoul setting
- Makes smooth
- Riusque
- Auto ding

DOWN

- Alaska's capital
- Threat ending
- Spiny plant
- Sandwich shop
- Shade tree
- Whopper
- Cuzco
- Classified
- Vatican leaders
- Raw numbers
- Shoulder blade
- Folding money
- Warning color
- Fermented rice drink
- USO audience
- Scary genre
- Turkey's capital
- Director Spielberg
- Mom or dad
- Deep chasm
- Bulletin board item
- Barrel piece
- Clarinet part
- Min part
- Cow chow



Yesterday's answer

BLOT MAIDS
LIMIT OCTET
ONENO PESTO
GEL LAS YEN
SNEAKS NOSE
STRIKEOUT
REESE
GRANDSLAM
TROY TESTED
ROT TON EAU
AWARE CRANE
PUTON EASEL
SPENT HERS

CRYPTOQUOTE

FQP HRZL MVL HC AKUSHDEPKRB FQP
ZKTKFU HC FQP NHUUKJZP KU FH
DPRFWE V ZKFEZP MVL NVUF FQPT KRFB
FQP KTNHUUKJZP. -VEFQWES.SZVEYP

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: "PRETENDING TO KNOW EVERYTHING CLOSES THE DOOR TO FINDING OUT WHAT'S REALLY THERE."
- NEIL DEGRASSE TYSON

A XYDLBAAXR is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



HENRY

by Don Trachte



QUOTABLE Quote

There are so many things that we wish we had done yesterday, so few that we feel like doing today.

Mignon McLaughlin