

Storytelling in Disaster Affected Communities in Building Resiliency

Dr. Roshan Khatri MPH, MBBS

INTRODUCTION

Story telling is a socio-cultural tool, which can assist children in eliciting their thoughts, recognizing distortions and help them make sense of their world.

STRATEGY

When Strong Winds Blow, Nepal Quake and The Savage Wind, three books along with their caregiver guides, were written to help the children of Philippines, Nepal and Puerto Rico understand and cope with natural disasters they experienced. These books are designed to be used individually or in a group teaching format and distributed free of costs to schools, families and communities.

Diligent research on people, animals, vegetation, artwork as well as culture, allowed crafting of close representations for the story written in their native language.

Oversight was provided by individuals with similar cultural background and the books were reviewed by experts in psychology, culture and trauma response.

DISCUSSION

Children are one of the most vulnerable groups in disasters. They can play a pivotal role in developing resiliency but this is yet to be fully recognized.

Stories initiate a process of learning and empowerment allowing children to reinterpret a situation of adversity and positively redefine their experiences. These stories also engage their families, teachers, caregivers and their communities in discussion. The positive feedback and demand for additional books has been overwhelming.

CONCLUSION

Resilience while complex, can be fostered and developed through active engagement and strategies. Story telling and story books are important tools to help communities recover post disaster. They can also foster the development of supportive techniques to grow and learn from unexpected traumatic events in the future.

Storytelling and story books can serve as important tool in the development of resiliency for children and communities after disasters.



“El Viento Salvaje” (The Savage Wind)



My name is Valeria. My parrot's name is Maya. I live on the beautiful sunny island of Puerto Rico with my brother Carlos. We were very happy.



One day a terrible storm came. Rain fell and the wind even blew frogs from the trees. We all were very frightened, even the animals.



After the storm we came out of our shelter. Houses were blown over and roof tops were torn off. Palm trees fell and were stripped of their leaves. We did not know what to do



Sometimes I do not want to go to bed. I think of the storm even though I don't want to. I am afraid I will have bad dreams. I can't sleep well and feel tired all the time.



It felt good talking about my feelings with Ms. Acosta. My brother said he felt better too. Talking to adults can help. I also found a frog and named him Sebastian.



We need to work together to fix what was broken by the storm. We need to talk about our feelings and help each other. One day my island will be beautiful again.