NATURAL DISASTER LITERACY AMONG PEOPLE IN DISASTER PRONE AREA, SITTWE TOWNSHIP, RAKHINE STATE

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ABSTRACT

Myanmar is located at the high-risk region of natural disaster, some of which have caused devastating damage in the recent past. Coastal region, particularly Rakhine State and Ayeyarwady Delta region are high risk for cyclone, storm surges, and tsunamis. Therefore, disaster literacy is essential for the people living in disaster prone areas. The purpose of this study was to assess the natural disaster literacy among people in Sittwe Township. A community based, cross-sectional study was conducted among population in Sittwe Township. A total of 199 respondents were assessed by face to face interview using pretested structured questionnaire and pamphlets for prevention of natural disaster.

It was found that 34.7% of respondents were male and 65.3% were females. Most of respondents were living in wooden or bamboo houses. About 70% of respondents had low education level. About 57.8% of respondents had high level of knowledge, 24.6% had good attitude on natural disasters and 45.2 % of respondents had enough natural disaster literacy. There were some religious misbelief that disaster was caused by God (2%) and poverty (7%).

There were significant higher knowledge among respondents who are male (p=0.018), higher education level (p=0.002), history of previous experience to natural disasters (p=0.003) and resided in urban area (p=0.043). Previous history of training about natural disasters and attitude level of respondents were associated with higher literacy (p=0.018). Significant associations were also found between literacy level and residence (p<0.001), knowledge (p<0.001) and attitude (p<0.001) of the respondents. Due to limitation of timeframe, this study was based only on the Sittwe region, so the findings cannot be generalized to all Myanmar population. However, this study provided the baseline information concerning with disaster literacy and findings might be useful for future planning in Myanmar.