

Building Community Resilience based on Organizational Empowerment and Community Action in Two Villages of Tainan City, Taiwan

Chueh Chang

Tsai Chung Chou

Mental Health Association in Taiwan

This research plan was originated from the 6.6 Richter magnitude scale earthquake that occurred in Meinong District, Kaohsiung City on February 6, 2016. The earthquake caused disasters included some building collapse in Yongkang District, Tainan City. As a result, 117 residents died, 551 people were injured, and 5,727 dangerous buildings were found. The plan was entrusted by the Taiwan Foundation for Disaster Relief and the implementation period from June 1, 2016 to December 31, 2017.

This two-year plan was divided into an “Introduction period” and an “Empowerment and action period”. It used “Participatory research method” that combine post-positivism and constructivism as the main axis. The collaborative research and programs on multiple strategies included analyzing social networks, conducting community needs survey, carrying out key informants interviews, providing the services of the empowerment and consultation for community organizations and schools, implementing prevention education, establishing the community and campus disaster prevention manuals, analyzing Geographic Information System (GIS), holding community forums and facilitating community actions, etc.

The focus of the first-year project are as follows: We have (1) attended the “Tainan City Disaster Prevention and Rescue Deepening Plan Tripartite Working Meeting”, (2) visited the Municipal Government Social Affairs Bureau and the Disaster Prevention and Rescue Office, (3) held a teacher seminar on “Building Disaster Prevention Resilience and Mental Health Promotion and Integration Curriculum” at Degao Elementary School in East District, Tainan City, where a total of 25 people attended, (4) held 3 community forums on “Disaster Prevention and Resilience Community Consensus Meeting and Mental Health Promotion”, with a total of 167 participants, (5) held a advanced study session on the "Disaster Prevention Education and Mental Health Promotion Integration Course" at Degao Elementary School, with a total of 43 participants, (6) held a liaison meeting of resource agencies on “Self-Reliance Disaster Prevention Community and Community Resilience”, where a total of 22 people attended, (7) held a presentation meeting on the results of the “Disaster Prevention Education and Mental Health Promotion Integration Course” of Degao Elementary School, with a total of 55 participants. Experimental teaching results including innovative lesson plans, study sheets and final poster presentations, (8) conducted a “Survey on Resource Organizations Related to Disaster Prevention and Mental Health Promotion” in Tainan City's East District and Rende District, and collected 19 valid questionnaires, (9) conducted a “Survey on Disaster Prevention Resilience and Mental Health Promotion Integration Curriculum Needs” for students in grades 3 to 6 of Degao Elementary School and collected 376 valid samples, (10) conducted a “Survey on Disaster Prevention Parenting Education and Mental Health Promotion Related Service Needs” for parents or relatives of all students in Degao Elementary School, and collected 1,571 valid

samples.

The focus of the second-year project are as follows: We have (1) held 13 community forums on the “Disaster Prevention and Community Resilience Manual” in the Eastern District, with a total of 658 participants, (2) compiled the Villager Manual on “Self-Reliance Disaster Prevention Community and Community Resilience”(including youth, women and the elderly, disaster prevention mental health promotion guideline, etc.), (3) Degao Elementary School organized its own calligraphy, painting, cartoon and other competitions, and students drew their own home and community evacuation diagrams, (4) produced 200 “Family Disaster Prevention Kits” for students, the first in Taiwan, (5) compiled 400 copies of the “Universal Manual for Disaster Prevention Parenting”, (6) held a “Family Disaster Prevention Education and Parent-child Experience Day” at Degao Elementary School, with a total of 342 participants, (6) held a disaster prevention drill and results presentation meeting on “Self-Reliance Disaster Prevention Community and Community Resilience” in the East District in Tainan City, where a total of 397 people attended.

The results of this project were the first in the country to initially construct a disaster prevention and resilience model of community and school to provide a reference for future promotion of similar communities in Tainan City or other counties and cities, and to outline the innovative direction of disaster mental health services and policies in Taiwan.

Those advices would give to others considering implementing this program as followed:

Regarding the “proximal stressors” of "disaster events", traditional psychological professionals may mainly focus on post-disaster psychological rehabilitation work (such as providing individual and group psychological counseling or psychotherapy services) in order to avoid disaster victims or disaster relief personnel (e. g. firefighters , national troops, volunteers, etc.) that produce the negative “problem results” of “post-traumatic stress disorder” (PTSD). But there may be another ecological or systemic intervention programs that can promote “positive results” in the target community in the long term, thereby “Transcending trauma and finding resilience” and being fully prepared psychologically to face the next disaster. The concept of “Community Resilience” has four major aspects (Norris et al., 2008). Many results of this project have achieved the initial goals of three of the aspects, such as "Information and Communication" (Skills and Infrastructure/ Trusted sources of information/narratives), “Building community capacity” (Community action/Critical reflection & problem-solving skills/Flexibility and creativity/Collective efficacy & Empowerment/Political partnerships) and “Accumulating social capital” (Place attachment/sense of community/citizen participation leadership & roles/organizational linkages & cooperation/social embeddedness/perceived social support/received social support). The effectiveness of "prevention" work is often invisible or difficult to show in the short term, but it will always play its role at the "most critical moment" in the future.

Key words: Mental Health Promotion, Education for Disaster Preparedness, Self-Reliance Disaster Prevention Community, Community Resilience, Social Support Network, Empowerment