



Inter-sector cooperation in emergency preparedness: The Israeli case.

Alex Altshuler

Abstract

Emergency preparedness process involves a wide range of stakeholders. Clearly, efficient coordination is necessary between them (Peek & Sutton, 2003), and the quality and extent of inter-organizational and inter-sector partnerships highly influence the level of emergency preparedness (Drabek, 2007). Enhancement of the inter-sector and inter-organizational cooperation throughout the emergency preparedness process on the local level was one of the main conclusions drawn after hurricanes Rita and Katrina (Simo & Bies, 2007). Importance of the cooperation between local authorities' emergency managers and various governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in the framework of preparedness for a war-caused disaster was highlighted also in the nationwide study in Israel (Altshuler, 2008).

In Israel, periodic warfare is, unfortunately, a common source of disaster, which injures the civilian population, Jewish and Arab alike (Laor, Wiener, Spirman & Wolmer, 2005). A fairly recent reminder of this type of disaster is the Israel-Lebanon war in summer 2006 (Ben-Harush, 2007; Sharkansky, 2007); in addition are the successive flare-ups since 2000 in the southern regions of Israel on the Gaza border, indicating the possibility of full-scale warfare between Israel and Gaza, as indeed happened in the winter of 2008-2009 (Altshuler, 2011b). In such situations emergency preparedness for becomes extremely important.

The current article will present a coherent, up-to-date and integrated picture regarding the inter-organizational and inter-sector cooperation in emergency preparedness for a war-caused disaster in Israel. It will be based on the recent scientific empirical findings that are first-of-its-kind in the country and a thorough analysis of the public policy trends.

Introduction

Emergency preparedness involves multiple organizations and groups (Peek & Sutton, 2003). These stakeholders include representatives of governmental sector and the two non-governmental sectors (the private sector and the third sector, which includes non-profit organizations). There is a fundamental difference between the governmental sector and the two non-governmental sectors. While the relevant public agencies and authorities (such as, emergency management authority, fire department, relevant military representatives and more) have formal and legal obligations to deal with emergency preparedness, the non-governmental sectors deal with that issue usually on a voluntary basis. This principle difference creates a substantial challenge of finding the ways to encourage the non-governmental sectors' involvement in emergency preparedness and create effective inter-sector cooperation. Additional differences between the governmental and non-governmental sectors in organizational culture, values, regulation and more may also affect the establishment of partnerships between them. In order to achieve a continuous interaction and mutually benefitting cooperation between the sectors all the above differences should be discussed between the interacting parties and mechanisms to overcome barriers should be established (Altshuler, 2011a).

The quality and extent of cooperation and coordination between the various stakeholders are highly influential factors among those concerned with the level of emergency preparedness (Drabek, 2007). Systematic improvement and expansion of inter-sector and inter-organizational cooperation in emergency preparedness on the local level was one of the main conclusions drawn after hurricanes Rita and Katrina in USA (Simo & Bies, 2007). Similar lessons regarding the local and the national level, in both the Jewish and the Arab sector, were learned in Israel following the war between Israel and Lebanon in 2006 (Katz, Raviv, Yogeve, Yaacobi, Levinson, Alon & Gidron, 2006). The positive statistical relationship between the extent of inter-sector cooperation and the level of emergency preparedness of local authorities was also found in scientific empirical study in Israel (Altshuler, 2008).

In Israel, periodic warfare is one of the most frequent sources of disaster in the country's history, which injures civilian population, Jewish and Arab alike (Laor et al., 2005; Sharkansky, 2007). The two recent major reminders of this type of disaster were the Israel-Lebanon war in summer 2006 (Ben-Harush, 2007; Sharkansky, 2007) and full-scale warfare between Israel and Gaza in the winter of 2008-2009 (Altshuler, 2011b). In addition, it should be mentioned that there are successive flare-ups since 2000 in the southern regions of Israel on the Gaza border, while the last escalation occurred in August 2011. In such unstable reality emergency preparedness for war-caused disaster and its increase through inter-sector cooperation becomes extremely important issue.

Recent empirical research findings regarding inter-sector cooperation in emergency preparedness on the local level in Israel.

Until recently, there was no scientific empirical research regarding the various aspects of emergency preparedness of local authorities in Israel and the factors that influence them. This lacuna was filled by the first-of-its-kind nationwide research on emergency preparedness for war-caused disaster of local authorities in Israel that was conducted by the author in 2008 (Altshuler, 2008). This examination is currently the only empirical scientific source for thorough analysis of emergency preparedness issues in Israel. Among the central issues that were examined in this study was inter-sector cooperation in emergency preparedness. This cooperation was measured through the level of joint activities of local emergency managers with various non-governmental stakeholders. Regarding each of the private stakeholders, the chief local emergency managers related to the extent of the joint activities with them according to the five-point Likert scale (1- not at all, 5 – very high extent). The level of cooperation was examined in most of the local authorities in Israel (141) in the Jewish and the Arab sector. This research found empirically that the extent of joint activities of local emergency managers with non-governmental stakeholders was among the most significant predictors of the level of preparedness of local authorities for a war-caused disaster. This fact highlights the theoretical foundations and practical implications regarding the importance of inter-sector cooperation as one of the important measures to promote the actual level of emergency preparedness. On the basis of the above study (Altshuler, 2008), it is possible to present the data regarding the specific levels of cooperation between the local emergency managers and the 12 non-governmental stakeholders. These findings appear in the following table:

Table 1: Means of joint activities of local emergency managers with non-governmental stakeholders according to the five- point Likert scale (1- not at all, 5 – very high extent).

<i>Description of the non-governmental stakeholders</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Community centers	3.28
Local assistance and volunteer organizations	3.27
Health funds	2.79
Lay residents in the local authority	2.70
Neighborhood committees	2.38
External professional experts	2.14
National assistance and volunteer organizations	2.05
Local businesses	1.92
Professional unions	1.76
Local philanthropies	1.63
National philanthropies	1.54
National businesses	1.36

The data in the above table is presented in descending order. In general, it may be said that with most of the stakeholders the partnerships are not so strong. Only with two of them – community centers and local assistance and volunteer organizations – the appraisal of partnership was higher than 3. These two stakeholders are central "players" on the local social arena and the cooperation with them is very important, but additional partnerships should also be strengthened. Given the significant relationship, found in the research, between inter-sector cooperation and the actual level of emergency preparedness, the current not high levels of cooperation reveal the fact that the level of preparedness could be substantially increased through greater public-private cooperation. In the above research (Altshuler, 2008) the average level of preparedness for a war-caused disaster was found as medium-high (3.52), but could be even higher if inter-sector cooperation were more widespread.

It is interesting to mention that the cooperation with lay residents (2.70) was found to be higher than with most of the formal stakeholders. It may reflect a non-trivial desire of a substantial portion of citizens to be involved in emergency preparedness. Another prominent finding is that businesses and philanthropies are less involved in cooperation with local emergency managers than other non-governmental stakeholders. Since the war between Israel and Lebanon in 2006, the involvement of businesses and philanthropies in emergency management was increased, although it is more "natural" for them to be involved in disaster relief (when the consequences of the disaster are already evident) than in emergency preparedness (when disaster cannot be actually "seen"). There is no doubt that if philanthropies and businesses will be interested and able to provide additional financial and other resources, it will substantially increase the preparedness and will enable to save more human lives in the case of emergency.

Analysis of the public policy trends regarding inter-sector cooperation

The war between Israel and Lebanon in 2006 was kind of a turning point in development of inter-sector cooperation and coordination in the field of emergency preparedness in Israel. In this war, the civilian population of a country – Jewish and Arab alike – was exposed to massive missile attacks that lasted 33 days and affected most of the northern region in Israel. The public structures aimed to deal with civic aspects of emergencies were unable to address the whole

range of multiple needs of the population in that situation (Elran, 2011). However, various private stakeholders, that do not have any formal responsibilities in that field, were highly involved in assistance to the civilians in northern Israel during the war. Their activities started spontaneously in most of the cases and the cooperation between them and the relevant governmental bodies was not substantial. However, some of those stakeholders continued their assistance to the population during the recovery phase and usually coordination with the governmental authorities at this period was much higher than throughout the war.

The expansion of activities of non-governmental stakeholders in emergency-related issues was related also to major socio-economic long-term processes that characterize the Israeli society: 1) continuous expansion of the third sector (Gidron & Alon, 2007; Gidron, Bar & Katz, 2003; Yishai, 1998), which increases the involvement of non-governmental associations in multiple social spheres, 2) privatization and outsourcing (Azriel, 2007; Dekel, 2006), which transfer the actual operative responsibility from the governmental organizations to private businesses or social organizations. The above policy trends served as additional catalysts for change of the governmental "monopoly" in emergency management.

Emergency preparedness became a much more prominent issue on the public agenda in Israel as a result of the war consequences, in both the Jewish and the Arab sector. The change in the Arab sector was even more substantial since prior to the war, most the local leaders in this sector preferred not to deal with emergency preparedness, since they believed that other Arab countries surrounding Israel will not attack Arab towns and villages inside Israel. In this war, for the first time, it was not the case and Arab civilian population also suffered from massive missile attacks. The functioning of the governmental bodies was revealed as insufficient and the need for the involvement of private stakeholders in emergency preparedness became more and more evident. There are two main categories of private stakeholders: 1) business corporations and philanthropies which donate money for specific activities in the field of emergency management, 2) non-governmental social organizations that are involved in practical activities aimed to increase the level of emergency preparedness. In most of the cases, the main financial resources of these social organizations come from donations of philanthropies and business corporations. Since 2006 private money was invested in the fields such as renovation and building of public shelters in the neighborhoods with severe socio-economic problems, education programs for volunteers in the field of emergency management, enhancement of inter-organizational cooperation on a local and regional level, and more. Following the war of 2006, the involvement of social organizations in emergency management in the Jewish and the Arab sector was substantially increased. Some of those organizations deal mainly with emergency management, while others are active in parallel in additional social and educational fields. Among the organizations, there are different scopes of activities in geographical terms: local, regional and national. Most of the organizations deal either in the Arab or in the Jewish sector, although there are some important exceptions to that general tendency: 1) The Israel Trauma Coalition for Preparedness and Response operates regional resilience center in both the Jewish and the Arab sector, 2) The Association for Children at Risk and its Resilience Center actively deal with educational programs in emergency management for the local municipalities' employees in both the Jewish and the Arab sector. In parallel to the substantial increase of activities of the non-governmental stakeholders in the field of emergency preparedness since 2006, fundamental changes took place also in the public sector. In organizational terms, there were created two new structures that were mainly aimed to improve cooperation and coordination among the public and the private stakeholders. In 2007 the National Emergency Authority (NEA) was established and in 2011 the Ministry for Home Front Protection was created. NEA was established in the framework of the Ministry of

Defense, to coordinate the activities of all agencies dealing with emergency preparedness, on the national as well as the regional and the local level. Gradually, this organization increased cooperation with both public and private stakeholders. One of the central tools it used to facilitate collaborative processes and increase inter-sector cooperation was active participation of multiple stakeholders from the private and public sector in annual National Home Front Drills, which examined various aspects of civilian emergency preparedness. The learning process prior, during and after those annual drills increased partnerships and working connections between public and private stakeholders on the local, regional and national levels. In continuation to the process of higher prioritization of emergency management in public policy in the recent years, the Ministry for Home Front Protection was created in 2011. Its exact structure was not finalized yet, but what is already clear is that NEA will be its main operational body. The new ministry is aimed cooperate with both the relevant public structures (such as, the Home Front Command of the Israeli Defense Forces, emergency departments of the governmental ministries and local authorities) and the private stakeholders, that are involved in emergency management. The establishment of this new ministry embodies the potential of further improvement and expansion of inter-sector cooperation, although at this stage it is not possible to determine to what extent this potential for a substantial positive change will be actually exploited.

Conclusion and summary

This chapter presented the important potential that inter-sector cooperation have to increase the level of emergency preparedness for a war-caused disaster. However, it also showed that in the Israeli case of preparedness on a local level, the exploitation of this potential is still rather limited. The combination of the above two facts poses challenge for emergency managers and for all the relevant public and private stakeholders to find more effective and efficient ways to expand and improve the inter-sector cooperation.

The analysis of public policy trends regarding the emergency preparedness in Israel in the recent years reveals that the system gradually becomes more integrated, new important national bodies are established and more efforts are taken to increase inter-sector cooperation. The direction seems positive in terms of greater cooperation between the sectors, although the current stage is still initial and the potential for cooperation is still exploited only in part. In the Arab sector in Israel emergency preparedness activities were very limited prior to 2006 and in the recent years were substantially expanded. It is hoped that this direction will continue in the future.

In conclusion, I would like to relate to a more general point. It is clear that emergency preparedness is not limited to war-caused disaster. Another major source of risk in that region is an earthquake. A strong earthquake in that region, at least in the last few centuries, occurred approximately every 80-100 years (Avni, 1999; Begin, 2005; Salamon, 2005). The last such earthquake happened in 1927. A future earthquake will affect both Israelis and the Palestinians, and this fact should urge the two sides to promote the cooperation between them. However, because of the political disagreements this did not happen until now. The scientists may serve as a bridge for cooperation and the author of the chapter participated in one such a meeting with Palestinian colleagues in 2006. It is hoped that future efforts will be more successful and will result with achievement of the ultimate goal for which we all make research, act and hope – to save more human lives when disaster strikes.

References

- Altshuler, A. (2008). *Emergency preparedness of local authorities for war-caused disaster: The Israeli case*. MA dissertation. Haifa: University of Haifa (in Hebrew).
- Altshuler, A. (2011a). Public Private Interactions in Disaster Mitigation. In B. K. Penuel, M. Statler & G. J. Golson (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Disaster Relief*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Altshuler, A. (2011b). Analysis of the inter-organizational cooperation in the Jewish and the Arab sector in Israel. In D. Miller & Rivera, J. (Eds.), *Comparative Emergency Management: Examining Global and Regional Responses to Disasters*. Auerbach/Taylor and Francis Publishers.
- Avni, R. (1999). *Jericho 1927 earthquake: A macroseismic research on the basis of that period's sources*. PhD dissertation. Beer-Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Geography (in Hebrew).
- Azriel, S. (2007). *A local authority – Home front and battlefront!?* Report for the Israel Prime Minister's Local Government Conference (in Hebrew).
- Begin, B. Z. (2005). *Destructive earthquakes in the Jordan Valley and the Dead Sea – the intervals of their recurrence and the possibility for their occurrence*. Geological Survey of Israel, The Ministry of National Infrastructures, The State of Israel (in Hebrew).
- Ben-Harush, E. (2007). *The responsibility of the state with regard to a weakened citizen in the second Lebanon war: The elderly and invalids as a case study*. Graduation paper. College of National Defense, Israel (in Hebrew).
- Dekel, D. (2006). *Lebanon war number 2 – The regional councils' lessons*. Tel Aviv: The Regional Councils' Center Press (in Hebrew).
- Drabek, T. (2007). Community processes: coordination. In H. Rodriguez, E. L. Quarantelli & R. R. Dynes (Eds.). *Handbook of Disaster Research* (pp. 217-234). New York: Springer.
- Elran, M. (2011). The civilian front: the threat and the response. In S. Brom & Kurz, A. (Eds.). *Strategic Survey for Israel 2011* (pp. 133-146). Tel-Aviv: The Institute for National Security Studies Press.
- Gidron, B. & Alon, Y. (2007). *Database Report 2007: Patterns and Changes in the Third Sector in Israel in the Last Twenty Years*. Beer-Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israeli Center for Third-Sector Research (in Hebrew).
- Gidron, B., Bar, M. & Katz, H. (2003). *The third sector in Israel: Between welfare state and civil society*. Hakibbutz Hameuchad Press (in Hebrew).

Katz, H., Raviv, E., Yogev, H., Yaacobi, M., Levinson, A., Alon, Y., & Gidron, B. (2006). *The Israeli civil society in second Lebanon war*. Beer-Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israeli Center for Third-Sector Research (in Hebrew).

Laor, N., Wiener, Z., Spirman, S. & Wolmer, L. (2005). Community mental health in emergencies and mass disasters: The Tel-Aviv model. In Y. Danieli, D. Brom & J. Sills (Eds.), *The trauma of terrorism: Sharing knowledge and shared care* (pp. 681-694). New York: The Haworth Press.

Peek, L. A. & Sutton, J. N. (2003). An explanatory comparison of disasters, riots and terrorist acts. *Disasters*, 27(4), 319-335.

Salamon, A. (2005). Natural seismogenic effects of the 11 February 2004, ML = 5.2, Dead Sea earthquake. *Israel Journal of Earth Sciences*, 54 (3), 145–169.

Sharkansky, I. (2007). Local autonomy, non-governmental service providers and emergency management: An Israeli case. *Journal of Homeland Security and Emergency Management*, 4 (4), 1-8.

Simo, G. & Bies, A. L. (2007). The role of nonprofits in disaster response: An expanded model of cross-sector collaboration. *Public Administration Review*, 67 (special issue), 125–141.

Yishai, Y. (1998). Civil society in transition: Interest politics in Israel. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 555, 147-162.