ABSTRACT

Disasters have increased in number and severity around the world. Funds, ear-marked for long term developmental work, is being diverted to disaster response and relief efforts. Timor-Leste has not been spared. After a disaster, the impact needs to be known as early as possible so as to effect a timely targeted response. This entails the collection and analysis of data. This can be time consuming if not anticipated or planned properly. Knowledge of the data required after a disaster and putting systems in place that will enable its collection and analysis will save on time and hence concentrate efforts on the response and alleviation of suffering. To get to this stage, an assessment of the existing systems and data needs to be done, only then can corrective measures be put in place to ensure that a country is data ready.

The aim of the research was to determine Timor-Leste's emergency data readiness status - what data is available versus the data that is required after a disaster? To find out whether available data can be easily accessed and used after a disaster and not compromise the effectiveness and timeliness of the response and if mechanisms are in place to quickly gather and analyse data after a disaster.

Firstly disaster assessment tools, used by leading humanitarian organizations internationally and government ministries mandated to respond to disasters in Timor-Leste, were analyzed. The data was broken down into sectors and for each sector critical base data required for an effective response was listed. The list was further broken down into data that can be collected before a disaster and that which can only be collected after the disaster. Secondly, through a combination of semi-structured interviews and questionnaire administration, an assessment of available critical data in Timor-Leste and information systems and coordination mechanisms used to respond to a disaster was done. The list of data that can be collected before an emergency based on the first assessment was matched against the available data in Timor-Leste and existing mechanisms to collect data after a disaster were also analysed and a final rating of whether Timor-Leste is data ready done.

Timor-Leste is data ready. 71% percent of the critical data that is required after an emergency which can be collected before an emergency is readily available. Coordination systems are in places that enable the successful assessment and response to an emergency, led by the government and supported by national and international humanitarian organizations.

There is room, however, for improvement in Timor-Lestes' data readiness. Gaps in the data can be filled through simple collection from the organizations mandated to keep the data or in some cases national assessments. In cases where data exists, but difficult to access, systems need to be put in place that will enable the easy access to the data. If the data is deemed sensitive and not for a wide audience, procedures need to be put in place to enable those who are allowed to access it to do so in a timely manner.