

Media Coverage of Post-disaster Recovery and Reconstruction: The Case of the 2012 East Azerbaijan Earthquake

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Abstract

The media's role in disaster and emergency management has been very much limited to the disaster response phase, and post-disaster recovery is rarely covered in a planned and systematic manner. Furthermore, the actual and potential role of the media in post-disaster reconstruction has not been adequately studied. This paper examines the roles that media can play in post-disaster recovery and reconstruction in the context of social capital, social constructs and social changes. A quantitative content analysis of media coverage regarding recovery and reconstruction following the East Azerbaijan (Iran) earthquakes in August 2012 was conducted. Our results show that the media's coverage of the recovery and reconstruction has been very basic, limited, and occasionally contradictory.

Keywords: Post-disaster Recovery and Reconstruction, East Azerbaijan Earthquake, Media Coverage, Disaster Reporting.

Introduction

The media can play a significant role in all four phases of comprehensive and modern disaster and emergency management; however, the media tends to focus on the response phase more than mitigation, preparedness and recovery (Berry et al., 1999; Myer, 2001; Lowrey et al., 2007). To some extent, the media, especially television and radio, are involved in the preparedness phase by disseminating early warnings, evacuation instructions and official bulletins for natural hazards such as hurricanes, volcanic eruptions and pandemics (Berry et al., 1999). During the response phase, the media disseminates information, distributes official information about the disaster impacts, and provides a holistic picture of it, disseminates information about response problems, provides information on how citizens can respond to hazard advice regarding volunteer activities, and facilitates fundraising and donation management. Although the response phase is usually short (hours to weeks), the media covers it the most, and in some instances, reaches disaster and emergency areas before the emergency response teams.

The media also covers short-term recovery activities by focusing on human-interest stories such as the restoration of basic services and utilities. In this period, reporters provide information about relief operations, and editorials and columnists assess the impacts of the disaster and effectiveness of response and relief operations. Although recovery and reconstruction normally continues for months and years, media coverage fades rapidly following a disaster. Figure 1 depicts the media coverage at different disaster and emergency phases.

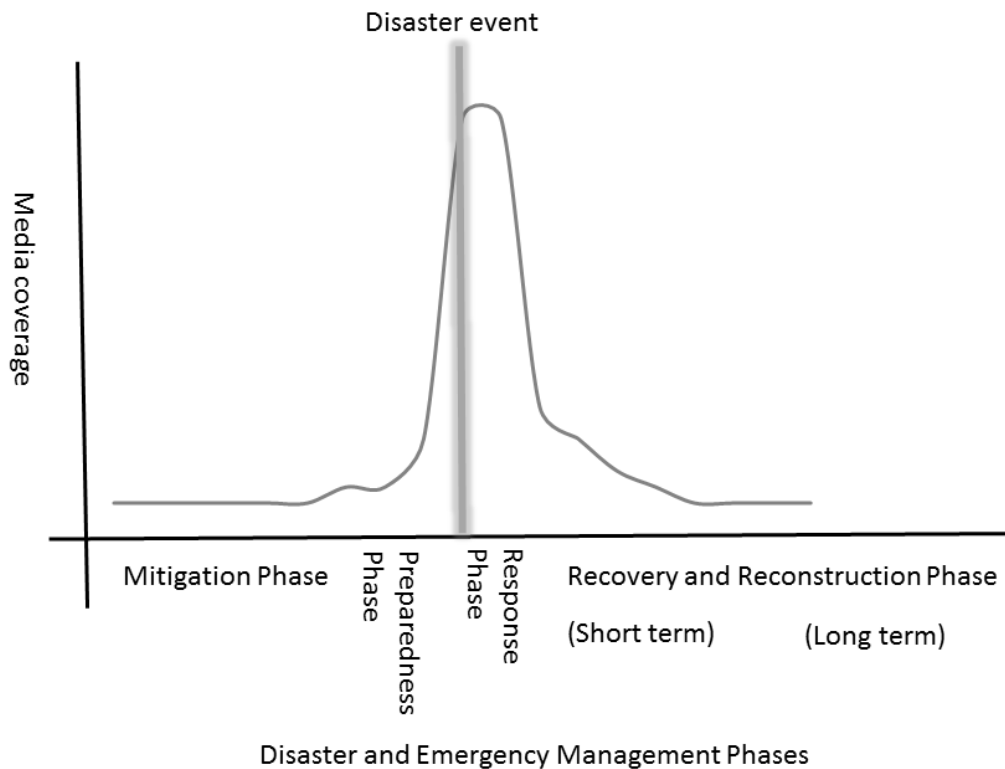


Figure 1: Media coverage of disaster and emergency management phases.

The media's role in post-disaster recovery and reconstruction remains largely unexplored. It is argued in this paper that recovery and reconstruction is a complex long-term process that would benefit from greater and better quality media exposure. However, studies show that many media organisations do not have clear and comprehensive policies regarding the coverage of various aspects of the disaster management cycle (Carey, 2003). Moreover, reporters often lack expertise in and background knowledge of the different phases of disaster management. More research is needed to examine: 1) the role of media in facilitating and enhancing post-disaster recovery and reconstruction; 2) the extent of media coverage of post-disaster reconstruction and factors that contribute to it; 3) how the media coverage of post-disaster recovery and reconstruction influences public opinion and perceptions of the reconstruction process; and 4) what are the legitimate sources for media reports.

This paper aims to examine the role that media play during disaster recovery and reconstruction. We review the role of media in facilitating, informing and influencing the recovery and reconstruction process. This paper shows how media coverage changes recovery policies and practices and mobilises people and stakeholders.

Media and Post-Disaster Recovery and Reconstruction

In this paper, the media is defined as print media, television, radio, and network organisations. Although social media has become a powerful media outlet in recent years and is playing an increasing role in response and recovery to disasters (Bunce et al., 2012; Tyshchuk et al., 2012; Hughes and Palen, 2013), an analysis of social media is beyond the

scope of this paper. Recovery and reconstruction are defined as "returning victims' lives back to a normal state following the impact of disaster consequences" (Coppola, 2011 p 29). The media plays various roles in modern societies under normal conditions. In disaster and emergency situations, media's potential roles become more important and crucial for the success of disaster and emergency management efforts as it can become a key player in the process. Prior coordination and close collaboration with the media can facilitate information sharing during the crisis and help social learning after disasters. Therefore, the media's role in disaster and emergency ranges from being a source for building social capital to fostering social constructs and social change. In this section, these roles are discussed within the recovery and reconstruction context.

Media and Social Capital

Social capital, the ties that bind people together (Coleman, 1990; Putnam, 1995), plays a major role in post-disaster recovery. "Stronger social capital results in building new norms about compliance and participation among network member; providing information and knowledge to individuals in the group; and creating trustworthiness" (Aldrich, 2012; p.13). Higher levels of social capital in disaster-impacted areas could favour faster and better recovery and reconstruction outcomes. Media can help in developing social capital. As noted by Miles and Morse (2007), one of the basic roles of the media in society is to disseminate information to the public and as such improve social capital. The media can provide a variety of information to stakeholders who are directly or indirectly involved in recovery and reconstruction. In this context, reporters follow the process as objective observers, generating media content for those involved or interested in the recovery and reconstruction and more significantly for society at-large (Anderson, 1997). In the recovery and reconstruction phase, the media can help build social cohesion and public participation where public engagement is essential for a successful outcome. Thus, the media can contribute to bringing people together, bridging social differences, nurturing solidarity and communicating essential reconstruction information. By making recovery and reconstruction information available to all, the media can become a useful recovery and reconstruction resource or an important form of social capital. In fulfilling this role, the media functions as an educator, supporter, program promoter, and supplement to recovery management (Flora et al., 1989).

The media can educate people about the various steps and reconstruction challenges and how people can find solutions to their problems in a collaborative and participatory manner. The media can also support reconstruction activities by highlighting past experiences, supporting effective efforts, encouraging people and stakeholders in what they are doing and by keeping reconstruction issues on the public agenda. The support function of media can be very helpful while people try to cope with post-disaster difficulties, stresses, and social-political issues. The media can cover successful reconstruction and give hope to people who are struggling to get back to normal. The media can also promote reconstruction policies and campaigns using its huge public reach (Moreira, 2007).

For media to be effective in promoting social capital, reporters and organisations should: 1) have a good understanding of disaster recovery and reconstruction; 2) analyse, filter and question different sources of news about recovery and reconstruction; 3) work closely with local, regional and national disaster management and recovery and reconstruction organisations and build relationships with them; and 4) identify gaps, shortcomings, mismanagement, ethical issues, and potential corruptions, and help to reduce them.

Media, Social Construct and Social Change

Social construction is a dynamic process that is produced by people's interpretations and knowledge of issues. The media influences this process and the ways in which people

participate in the construction of their perceived social reality. The media often do this by 'framing' the news. According to framing theory, different types of frames provide the public with a different outlook on the same topic and also introduce and blame different people or organisations as for failures (Carey, 2003). As well, media framing can shape and influence how individuals interpret and understand the news (Lyengar and Kinder, 1987; Pan and Kosicki, 1993; Hallahan, 1999). By consequence, the media can influence public beliefs regarding who is responsible for causing or solving problems within a society (Lyengar and Kinder, 1987).

Frames allow people to generate inferences and assign meaning to words, pictures and symbols, enabling the cognition of world events or conditions in terms of particular frames (Miles and Morse, 2007). Objectivity (i.e. reflecting the "truth" of a situation), impartiality (i.e. giving equal time to competing points of view), and neutrality (i.e. giving equal terms to competing points of view) are important characteristics of frames (Anderson, 1997; Miles and Morse 2007). There are a number of frames that are used by media to report disaster related issues such as: thematic frames, attribution of responsibility frames, episodic frames, interest frames, and conflict frames (de Vreese, 2005; King-wa et al., 2012). Thematic frames focus on government activities and institutional support for recovery and reconstruction. In the recovery and reconstruction context, the episodic frames cover issues surrounding the impacted population and their conditions, perspectives and responsibilities in the reconstruction process. Attribution of responsibility frames try to attribute responsibility for shortcomings, delays, and issues to one or more parties.

An important example of media framing of disasters concerns Hurricane Katrina. This hurricane was initially framed as a natural disaster and later it was framed as a technological or man-made or even social disaster resulting from inadequate levees, pumps, communication technologies, and social problems (Brooks, 2005). Furthermore, the media selected some aspects of the reconstruction (i.e. housing or debris removal) to make them more salient and to promote a particular interpretation of problems such as delays (Entman, 1993). To illustrate, King-wa et al. (2012) found that the federal government was identified in the media as the major target of responsibility for various issues in relation to recovery and that "the media played a historic role by pushing the US government to take action" (Barnes et al., 2008; p. 605). The media also has the ability to engage in social changes during recovery and reconstruction through agenda setting. "Agenda setting influences public agendas and policies through deliberate coverage of events and issues, with the media prompting policymakers to take action and satisfy the public's interest or demand for answers" (Barnes et al. 2008; p. 604).

East Azerbaijan Earthquakes and Post-disaster Recovery and Reconstruction

On August 21, 2012, two earthquakes struck the Iranian East Azerbaijan Province at 4:53pm and 5:04pm respectively, with a magnitude 6.3 and 6.4 measured on the Richter scale (fig. 2). The towns of Varzaghan, Ahar and Harsin and surrounding villages located northeast of the provincial capital (Tabriz) were among the impacted urban areas. According to the official records, 327 individuals were killed (mainly women and children) and more than 3000 were injured. A total number of 250,000 people were impacted across 313 villages (IEEE, 2012). The majority of the collapsed and damaged houses were adobe and unreinforced masonry buildings (Razzaghi and Ghafory-Ashtiany, 2012). Recovery and reconstruction started with debris removal in the affected areas. It took over a month to remove more than 3 million tons of debris.

Like most post-disaster reconstruction cases in the country, the Housing Foundation of the Islamic Revolution (HFIR) was officially assigned as responsible for the reconstruction

organisation. Using its past experience, the HFIR divided the impacted areas into eleven zones and assigned each of them to one of the neighbouring provincial housing foundations. About 25,000 houses in urban areas experienced some damage, but about 80 percent of them were reparable or had minor damages. Damaged villages were prioritised based on their level of damage.

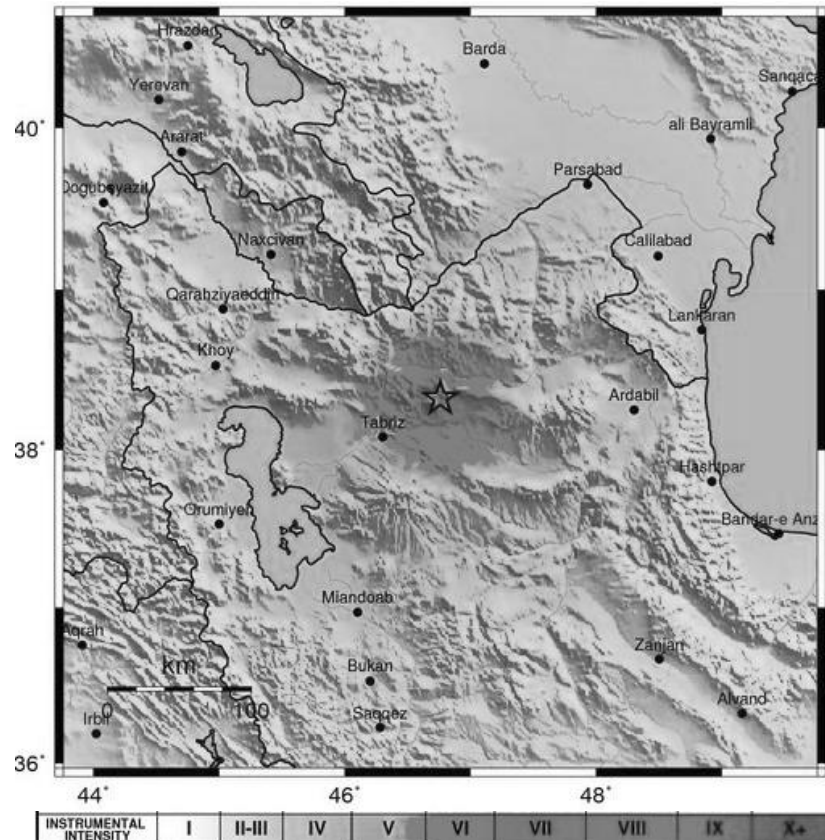


Figure 2: Shaking map based on a Magnitude of 6.2 and a depth of 9.7 km. Source: image courtesy USGS.

About 56 villages with 3,264 residential units were recognised as special villages and were provided with a 12 square meter prefabricated shelter per family. Permanent housing consisted of 60 square meter units built with reinforced concrete foundations and structure designed considering the weight and seismic loads and the region's soil characteristics. Reconstruction had to be done in a short period of time to avoid the cold winter. Public participation in the reconstruction process was a key factor to a speedy recovery. People participated by choosing the construction site, preparing the building layout and engaging in the construction process. HFIR distributed the financial support of the government to the affected households to reconstruct their residences. The financial support included emergency grants and low interest loans. The government supported the affected population financially in different ways: it assumed the responsibility to pay back the interests of loans to the banks, played the role of guarantor for all of the loan recipients, and took the responsibility for design, technical supervision, material transportation and other overhead costs of reconstruction operations (IRHF, 2012).

Method and Data

We applied quantitative content analysis in this paper. In particular we examined which reconstruction issues the media and news reports focused on. Keyword analysis of full texts was the primary technique used for analysing the data. We collected 167 news articles

related to the recovery and reconstruction process from ten key national newspapers and news agencies. Our data covers the period of July to December 2012. We selected these sources using two basic criteria: 1) online availability of the news archives, and 2) popularity of the newspapers measured by the number of audiences and publication volumes. All of the selected newspapers are published in hard copies as well as online. We did not include local media or TV or radio, which could be considered a limitation of this study. Collection of TV and radio data was not possible as full archives are not usually available online or accessible to the general public after they are broadcasted. Although studies show that most people receive news and information mainly by television than by other media (Pew, 2002; Kull et al., 2003), it is argued that newspapers have a greater influence over the opinion-forming elite (Benthall, 1993; Putnam, 2000).

Findings

Distribution of News Coverage by Media Outlet

Figure 3 shows the distribution of the 167 news articles on disaster recovery and reconstruction after the Azerbaijan earthquake that have been published by the sample of ten media outlets. The Mardom newspaper provided the majority of news articles (26 percent) followed by Tabnak, an online news website (14 percent), ISNA (13 percent) and Mehr (11 percent). The other news agencies including ILNA, IRNA, and Fars had the lowest coverage at 5 to 6 percent each.

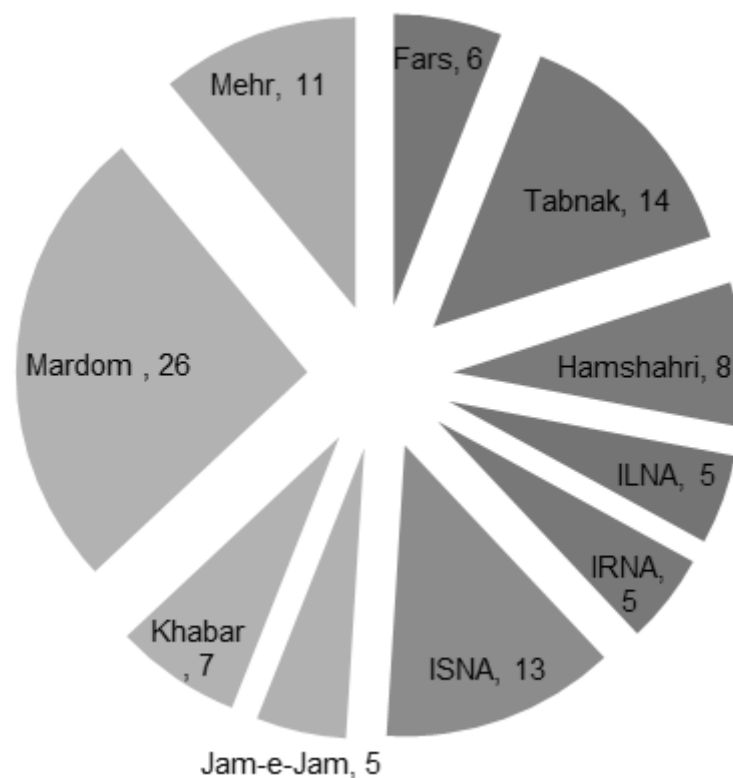


Figure 3: Distribution of news articles on recovery and reconstruction among the sample media outlets.

Distribution of Media Coverage by Month

Figure 4 shows the distribution of disaster recovery and reconstruction news articles during

the study period. During the early days of disaster (response phase), the focus of the media was mainly on emergency response issues such as damages, search and rescue operations, emergency shelters and provision of emergency social services. Despite this, recovery and reconstruction words are frequently used in the news articles; most of them refer to politicians' or the government's official statements about their commitments to help people recover and rebuild their damaged homes and communities. As the emergency period ends and the recovery period begins (September), the media and public start shifting their focus to recovery and reconstruction issues and, therefore, there is a slight increase in news coverage. The news coverage increases in October due to the early arrival of cold weather and snow and unexpected delays in the reconstruction process, besides a fire incident that occurred in one of the tents. Media coverage of the recovery and reconstruction phase sharply diminished in November and December.

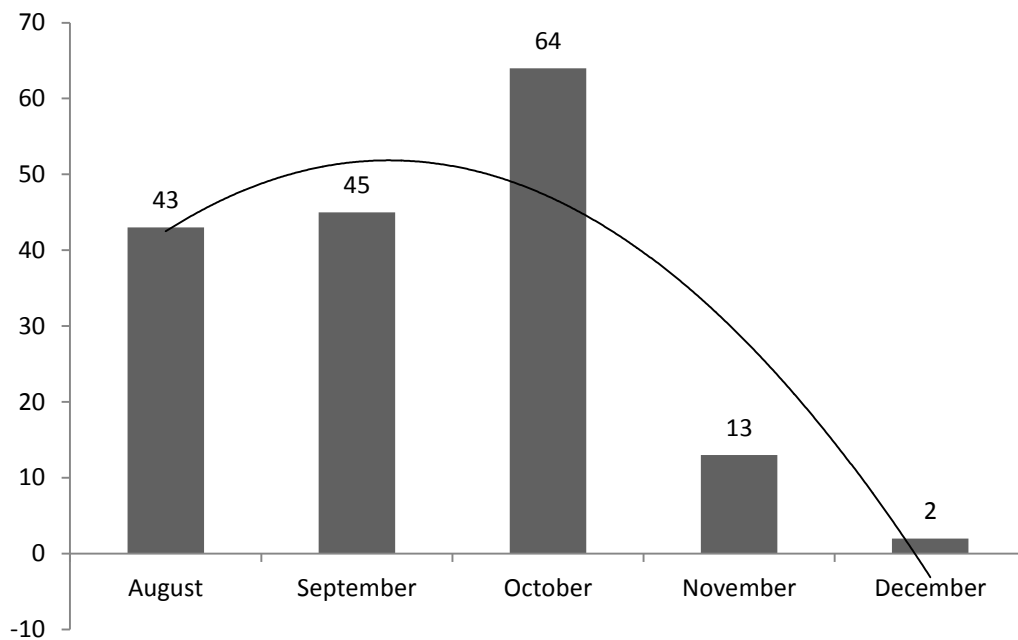


Figure 4: Monthly distribution of news articles on disaster recovery and reconstruction and its trend.

Distribution of Media Coverage by Topic

In order to extrapolate the different topics related to recovery and reconstruction covered by the media, we classified them into eight major categories, using the post-disaster reconstruction functions as a base (Coppola, 2011). Figure 5 shows the media coverage for each of the recovery topics. The findings show that the majority of the media coverage focused on housing (58%), followed by economic and financial issues (11%). Within the articles regarding housing, a variety of issues were covered such as the length of housing reconstruction, government's commitment to housing reconstruction, temporary shelters, debris removal, detailed damage assessment, housing reconstruction progress, building permits, construction materials, public participation, housing reconstruction strategies and plans. Among these, much of the news focused on temporary housing. This was mainly due to the government's failure to meet the goal of building permanent houses within 45 days and removing the debris.

Economic and financial news items covered reconstruction issues such as provision of loans and emergency grants, reconstruction of damaged agricultural infrastructure and facilities, sheltering and recovery of livestock, and labour and human resources. Table 1 shows some

sample articles related to each of the identified recovery and reconstruction topics. Individual and family-related issues such as single mothers caused by the earthquake, or health and family issues were covered in some articles. Most reconstruction planning and policy news articles talk about the government’s plans for damaged villages, relocation options, reconstruction strategies, etc..

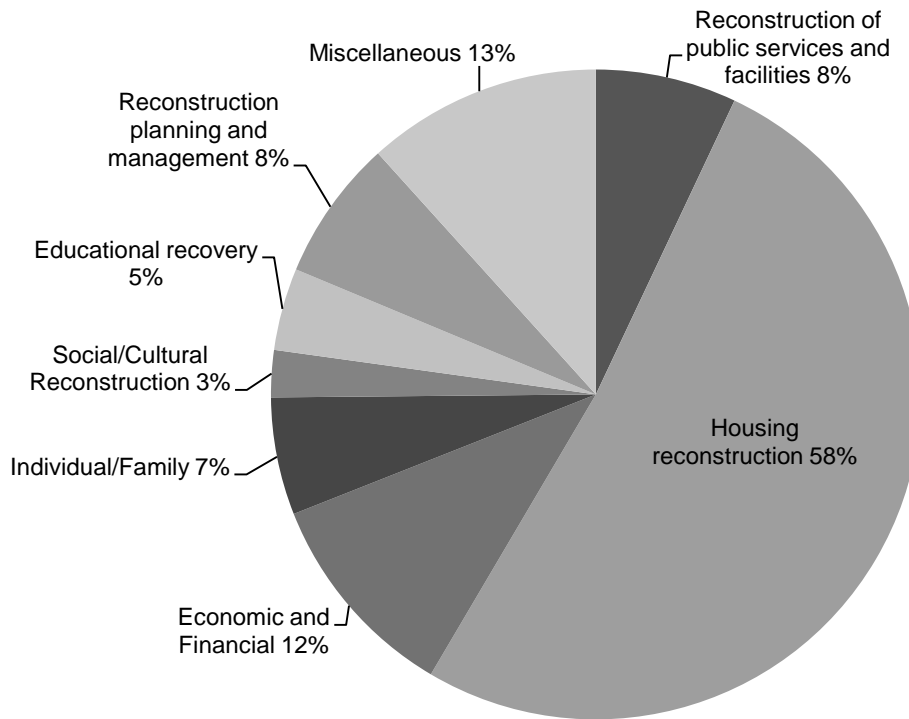


Figure 5: Distribution of new articles in the sample media by topics.

Media Sources

Media reporters utilised different sources (Table 2). Local government officials (i.e. the governor of the county) were the most frequent source cited (22.8 %). The governor is the head of disaster management at the county level. Following this, 19.2 percent of the news articles were basically opinion pieces written by columnists or guest reporters. Member of parliaments (MPs) were the source of about 17.4 percent of the reconstruction news articles. In most cases, MPs were critical of the reconstruction policies and progress. MPs frequently visit their constituencies and talk to the people and the media. MPs feel responsible for highlighting the shortcomings of the reconstruction process and ask government officials to resolve the issues. Members of the cabinet (i.e. the agriculture minister, the interior minister, the minister of housing and urbanism, the president and the vice president) were also interviewed and participated in news conferences with the media regarding different aspects of the reconstruction process. Interestingly, there were no academics or researchers as news sources in these articles.

Table 1: Sample recovery and reconstruction related news articles published in the sample media.

Topic/ Source	Sample news article
Housing	“It has been more than a month since the earthquake has passed, but many people have not re-settled in their homes and many do not have access to proper shelter.

	<p>Mahmoud Mozaffar said in an interview with Mehr: I do not know why the Housing Foundation, which is in charge of providing temporary shelter, is not providing shelter to people. However, the First Vice President Rahimi said in an interview on August 27th: the people's housing problems within the earthquake affected area will be resolved before winter. The Varzaghan representative said the cold season is getting closer, and the Housing Foundation has not taken appropriate measures in order to develop infrastructure in these areas.”</p> <p>Khabar Online/ 2012-09-13:http://www.khabaronline.ir/detail/242758/society/urban</p>
Economic	<p>“Fars News: Minister of Roads and Urban Development said that the Government had approved the payment of a loan of 125 million Rials. Furthermore, the province is in charge of distributing the loan. However, if the province management determines, then the province can increase the amount up to 140 million Rials. Nikzad also said the land for those villages should be relocated, and will be provided at no cost to the villages. Nikzad also emphasises on rehabilitation and construction of rural roads that have been damaged from the earthquake, and providing for the needs of livestock. The President of the Housing Foundation also said that people will decide how to manage the construction of their houses. Moreover, the Housing Foundation will support and provide the facilities, materials and technical services.”</p> <p>FARS/ 2012-08-19 :http://www.farsnews.com/newstext.php?nn=13910529000058</p>
Social/ Cultural	<p>“After several visits to these damaged sites, the Tourism Organisation of East Azerbaijan estimated about 20 billion Rials worth of damage to historic sites following the earthquake. Mohammadi said: The Restoration and Reconstruction of the historical Task Force was established in order to accurately assess the damage and repair to these sites in the first few days after the onset of the earthquake.”</p> <p>Mardom/2012-08-21: http://www.mardomsalari.com/Template1/News.aspx?NID=143701</p>
Education	<p>“In an interview with IRNA, the Special House Committee on Education and Research visited the earthquake affected areas of East Azerbaijan including elementary schools and high schools in the area. The Secretary of Education and Research said the main objective of the visit was to assess the damage to the education infrastructure in the earthquake-affected areas. Referring to his visit, it was noted: Fortunately, students in schools in the affected areas will resume classes on the first of October. He went on to declare that there has been no problem for schools in the stricken East Azerbaijan province.”</p> <p>Tabnak/ 2012-09-19:http://www.tabnak.ir/fa/news/273348/</p>
Individual/ Family	<p>“The meeting was called to investigate the situation of women and children in earthquake-Azerbaijan: The Northwest Women's and Children's Committee said 66 percent of the earthquake victims are women and children. On the scale of these statistics, women and children need special help and attention. For this purpose, several task forces and committees are in charge of providing help for these two groups. Reza Rezaei said that helping women and children affected by the recent earthquake is crucial. He also asked for cooperation of private organisations in the field. In particular, the issue of feeding children in the earthquake zone needs to be addressed. Akbarzadeh also said appropriate health services are should be made available for the disabled, including rehabilitation equipment and the provision of specialist rehabilitation in the earthquake zone.”</p> <p>ILNA/ 2012-10-08: http://www.ilna.ir/news/news.cfm?id=10442</p>
Public Facilities and services	<p>“The head of the Centre for Communicable Diseases of Public Health Department, warned that there is an increased risk of respiratory and communicable diseases in the affected earthquake area because of the cold weather and living in tents for a long time. According to Mehr, Dr. Gouya has told reporters that it is fortunate that after the occurrence of the earthquakes, there have been no outbreaks of communicable diseases reported so far within the affected region. Dr. Gouya continued to explain that due to cold weather, it is difficult to live together in tents as it increases the risk of respiratory diseases. Therefore, it is crucial to change the living conditions of the</p>

earthquake victims and to replace tents with temporary housing.”
Mardom/2012-08-27:
<http://www.mardomsalari.com/Template1/News.aspx?NID=144551>

Table 2: Recovery and reconstruction news sources in the selected media.

Origin of the News	Number of News	Percent
Cabinet Members (president and ministers)	23	13.8
Utility Companies (Gas and Power)	3	1.8
NGOs	6	3.6
Non-Local City Official (mayors and councilors)	3	1.8
Columnists & Reporters	32	19.2
Local government (County Governor)	38	22.8
Housing Foundation	12	7.2
Judiciary	1	0.6
Members of Parliament (MPs)	29	17.4
Military Officials	4	2.4
Red Crescent	16	9.6
Total	167	100

Content Analysis

In this section, we discuss our findings based on reviewing the content of the news articles using the analytical framework discussed in the second section.

Media as Social Capital

Our sample news coverage shows that government officials used the media mainly as a dissemination tool during the recovery and reconstruction phase. Most of the news articles just reported the actions taken by different government agencies regarding various recovery and reconstruction functions and activities. However, the media accounts provided somewhat conflicting information about the amount of loans and grants provided to the impacted population, the number of temporary shelters installed, or the number of housing units under reconstruction, etc. Although media coverage gives some indication of what is being done, as mentioned earlier, simple news dissemination is the most basic role that media can play in society. It is hard to find news articles that are educational and informative or a news article that helps in bringing people together, or supports organisations and people that are involved in the reconstruction process, or that promotes a particular recovery and reconstruction program. It does not seem that any of the sample media had clear goals for covering the recovery and reconstruction process in a consistent and comprehensive manner. The main problem with this coverage was that the media disseminated information from different sources, especially in the early days of the recovery process, without questioning their feasibility or benefiting from the past experiences that the country had had in previous disaster recovery cases. For example, the media became the voice for recovery and reconstruction promises that could not be met, such as the government’s announcement that the reconstruction would finish in 45 days.

Social Construction and Change

A small fraction of the news articles were socially constructive by trying to provide people with different views of the reconstruction process. In some of the news articles are observed signs of framing efforts that tried to shape and influence peoples' understanding of the recovery and reconstruction process. There are also news articles that tried to form public belief regarding who was responsible for delays in the reconstruction of housing or delivery of pre-fabricated shelter (attribution of responsibility).

As mentioned earlier, it was obvious that even in perfect conditions, housing construction would have required longer time than initially targeted for by the government. Since the impacted areas were in a cold climate region, delays in the reconstruction of permanent housing and a lack of adequate temporary shelter caused a public outcry in October. The media criticised the reconstruction officials for not providing temporary shelter to impacted families despite the cold weather. The media portrayed rural families with young children living in tents under severe cold and snowy conditions (fig. 6). A fire that occurred in one of the temporary housing camps amplified the situation. It can be speculated that the media coverage of the early winter and the fire incident influenced a shift in the housing reconstruction strategy, because the reconstruction officials were compelled by public opinion to provide prefabricated shelters.

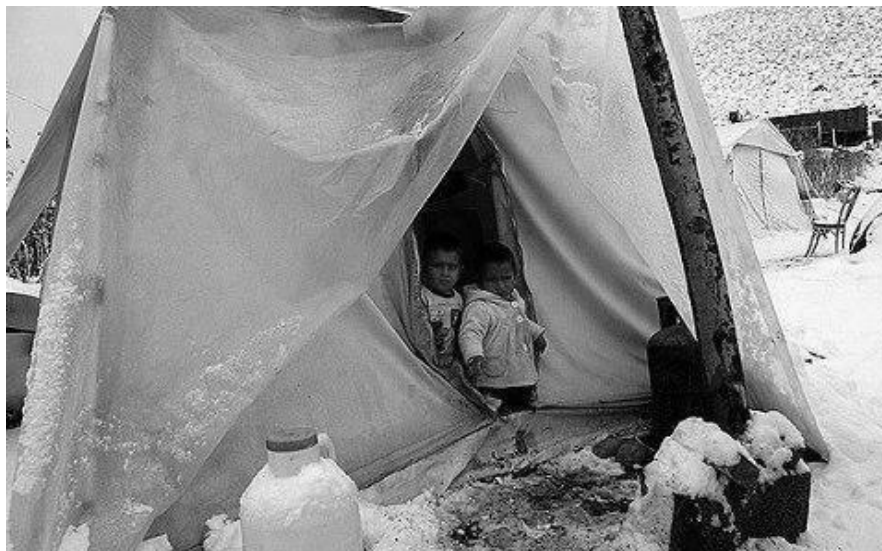


Figure 6: Disaster impacted population living in tents. Source: http://sphotos-a.xx.fbcdn.net/hphotos-prn1/s480x480/63169_140808152736347_408157409_n.jpg.

Although some of the housing reconstruction literature might be in favour of the Iranian government's decision to eliminate the temporary housing phase from the housing reconstruction phase (Omidvar and Binesh, 2012), the lack of proper communication with people and the media, failure to meet deadlines, and early winter compromised the success of this strategy. Had the government communicated and worked with the media as the supporter and promoter of the program, the situation could have been different. Therefore the media's concentration on health and safety issues concerning emergency shelters led the public perceive that the government failed to do its best for the impacted population.

Arguably, it appears that the media coverage (agenda setting) along with other forces influenced the government agencies to re-evaluate their prior decision (removing temporary shelter from the housing reconstruction process) and provide disaster-impacted population

with adequate temporary shelters. This was not a political agenda, but a response to a public outcry fuelled by disturbing media coverage of the families with young children living in tents in cold weather conditions. For example, the ISNA news agency published an article on October 15th 2012 trying to shift the recovery and reconstruction responsibility from the Red Crescent to the government. The title of the news was: “The Director of the Rescue and Relief Organisation of the Iranian Red Crescent: Responsible agencies do not know how to function in disasters” (ISNA, 2013). In this critical review of the role of different organisations in disaster management, the article tried to highlight some of the gaps and coordination and expectation issues that existed in the system. Although the article uses the Director’s remarks, it clearly tries to frame it in a way that shows the realities of the ground operations.

Another example is the news article published by Tabnak (online paper) on September 28th 2012, the title of which was, “Differences between the government’s words and actions for earthquake survivors” (Tabnak). This article frames the news to show that government officials are responsible for reconstruction delays, as they did not hold true to their promises. This news is based on an interview with two MPs whose constituencies have been impacted by the earthquake. In another article published on October 24th 2013, Tabnak used this title: “Management Crisis that has been replaced with crisis management”.

Conclusions

Post-disaster reconstruction is a complex and dynamic process that involves a large number of stakeholders. Media should be looked at as an important stakeholder in this process, just as it is in the emergency phase. Media can play a significant role in post-disaster recovery and reconstruction by bringing people and organisations together, disseminating useful information and educational materials, sharing past experiences, promoting reconstruction policies and plans and supporting the impacted population. However, past research and anecdotal evidences suggest that the media’s attention to disasters fades very rapidly after the emergency phase ends. Even when the media engages with post-disaster related issues, this does not appear to occur in a planned and holistic manner. In this study, we attempted to provide further evidence on the role of media in post-disaster recovery and reconstruction. Some of the key findings and conclusions are as follows:

- The media reported only very basic news items throughout the post Azerbaijan earthquake recovery and reconstruction process. We did not find any reports providing substantial reconstruction information, or critiques about the reconstruction process and policies though it is this phase of disaster and emergency management that demands more media attention.
- Unlike in the emergency preparedness and response phases, the media’s role in the reconstruction process was not properly defined by the media or by either the recovery and reconstruction agencies. Because of this, media agencies did not put this on their agenda and areas that they should have invested in.
- The lack of a proper definition of the media’s role in post-disaster recovery and reconstruction limited the media’s access to the right officials for their news reports. This led to situations where conflicting information about the recovery process spread.
- The media’s political viewpoints influenced the reconstruction and recovery coverage. As such, significant contradictions existed between different media’s coverage of the post-disaster reconstruction process.
- The media coverage of the reconstruction process was not systematic, steady and consistent.

This study highlights that the media reports only very basic information concerning recovery and reconstruction. Our study as well, as previous research, indicates that the majority of reporters covering disasters have very little knowledge of the reconstruction process and its complexity and often report news that is in conflict with reality. While media can be an important source of information about post-disaster recovery and reconstruction, our analysis shows that media reporters need to be more informed about the reconstruction process and what they can and should report to their audience. The lack of knowledge and understanding of the disaster recovery and reconstruction process by media reporters is one of the key shortcomings that exists in media coverage, and that deserves further attention.

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