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Camp management during disasters: Knowledge and practices of ground level coordinators

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Camp management during disastrous situations need multidisciplinary team approach where multiple stakeholders lead by the government will collaborate to provide humanitarian assistance. In Sri Lanka, Grama Niladhari is the grass root level government official who bears the responsibility of coordination of the stakeholders at ground level. A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted in Kalutara district from April to December 2015, including Grama Niladhari who has working experience of more than six months. There were 418 Grama Niladhari in six divisional secretary areas which were selected randomly from the 14 divisional secretary areas of Kalutara district. Self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection. There were four sections of questions on knowledge on water supply, sanitation, food supply and shelter arrangement, whereas ten practices on camp management were included. The total score was categorized into "Good" and "Poor" taking the 25th percentile value as the cut-off. Chi-square test was performed to compare variables. Response rate was 97.12% [n=406] and the sample consisted of more females [58.6%] than males [41.6%]. Among the participants, 84% had not received any training on camp management. Only 30.5% had been engaged in camp management during their working years and 57.6% were not familiar with the computer based reporting formats. More than 35% of Grama Niladharis had poor overall knowledge in camp management and more than 25% of the Grama Niladharis had poor practices in camp management. Knowledge on camp management had statistically significant positive association with years of working [p=0.001] whereas sex [p=0.002], level of education [p<0.001], grade [p=0.001] and involvement in camp management [p=0.013] had a significant positive relationship with good practices. The level of knowledge on camp management in disaster situations was poor among >35% of Grama Niladharis, whereas >25% had poor practices on camp management. The knowledge on camp management significantly varied positively with the years of working so that inclusion of experienced Grama Niladharis to share their knowledge with the younger generation will be beneficial to reduce pitfalls in camp management during disaster situations.

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