Empowerment definitions according to scientific authors

The essence of the concept of empowerment is the idea of power. According to Lukes (1994) power may occur at several levels and this clarifies the understanding of the term and its relationship to a community organization. At the level of individual, power refers to the ability to make decisions; at the organization level power involves the shared leadership and common decision-making. The possibility of empowerment depends on two things – empowerment requires that power can change and expand (Czuba, C. E. 1999). Empowerment is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people, for use in their lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important. Power is often related to the ability to make others do what we want, regardless of their wishes or interests (Weber, M. 1946). Traditional social science emphasizes sometimes power as influence and control, often treating it as a commodity or structure "divorced" (i.e., placed in another sphere) from human action (Lips, H. 1991). The second requirement – concept of the empowerment also depends upon the power that can expand. Understanding power as zero-sum, as something that some get at others expense, cuts most of the people off from power. A zero-sum conception of power means that power will remain in the hands of the powerful unless they give it up. Although this is certainly one way that power is experienced, it neglects the way power is experienced in most interactions. Grounded on the understanding that power will be seen and understood differently by people who inhabit various positions in power structures (Lukes, S. 1994), contemporary research on power has opened new perspectives that reflect aspects of power that are not zero-sum but are shared. Feminists (Miller, J. B. 1976), members of grassroots organizations (Bookman, A. and Morgen, S. 1984), racial and ethnic groups (Nicola-McLaughlin, A. and Chandler, Z. 1984), and even individuals in families bring into focus another aspect of power, one that is characterized by collaboration, sharing and mutuality (Kreisberg, S. 1992) (see §2). Researchers and practitioners call this aspect of power "relational power" (Lappe, F. M. and Dubois, P. M. 1994), "generative power" (Korten, D. E. 1987), "integrative power, " and "power with" (Kreisberg, S. 1992). This aspect means that gaining power strengthens the power of others rather than diminishes it such as with domination-power. Kreisberg (1992) has suggested that power, defined as "the capacity to implement", is broad enough to allow power to mean domination, authority, influence, and shared power or "power with". It is this definition of power, as a process that occurs in relationships, that gives us the possibility of empowerment.

Note: See source document for full reference.

Applicable to:

Stakeholders: Power relations

Disaster Phases: Prevention, Preparedness, Response, Recovery, All disaster phases

Types of Actors Concerned: All types of actors, Local authorities, Active citizens, Entrepreneurs, Media, Government, National research bodies, Red Cross, NGOs, Military, Law enforcement agencies, European Civil Protection Mechanism, National civil protection body, UN and other international organisations, Healthcare and emergency services, Non-active citizens

Hazards: Natural hazards, Man-made non-intentional hazards or emergency situations, Man-made intentional hazards

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Recommendations:

- Foster the adoption of a culture of disaster prevention and resilience by informing and motivating citizens to take action

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