

## DISASTER MANAGEMENT POLICY OF INDIA AN ANALYSIS

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### Abstract

According to the UNO "the occurrence of sudden or major misfortune which disrupts the basic fabric and normal functioning of the society or community".

India is vulnerable, in varying degrees, to a large number of natural as well as man-made disasters. 58.6 per cent of the landmass is prone to earthquakes of moderate to very high intensity; over 40 million hectares (12 per cent of land) is prone to floods and river erosion; of the 7,516 km long coastline, close to 5,700 km is prone to cyclones and tsunamis; 68 per cent of the cultivable area is vulnerable to drought and hilly areas are at risk from landslides and avalanches. Vulnerability to disasters/emergencies of Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) origin also exists. Heightened vulnerabilities to disaster risks can be related to expanding population, urbanisation and industrialisation, development within high-risk zones, environmental degradation and climate. Mainstreaming disaster management into the developmental planning process.

#### **Disaster Management Act, 2005,**

which envisaged the creation of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), headed by the Prime Minister, State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs) headed by the Chief Ministers, and District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs) headed by the District Collector or District Magistrate or Deputy Commissioner as the case may be, to spearhead and adopt a holistic and integrated approach to DM.

#### **Disaster Prevention and Mitigation**

Unlike man-made disasters, natural hazards like floods, earthquakes, and cyclones cannot be avoided. However, with mitigation measures along with proper planning of developmental work in the risk prone area, these hazards can be prevented from turning into disasters.

A multi-pronged approach needs to be adopted to undertake mitigation measures:

- Building mitigation measures into all development projects.
- Initiating of National level mitigation projects by the NDMA, in high priority areas, with the help of the Central Ministries and Departments concerned and the States.
- Encouraging and assisting State level mitigation projects in accordance with the guidelines.
- Indigenous knowledge on disaster and coping mechanisms adopted by various States will be given due weightage with special focus on protection of heritage structures. The research on cross-cutting themes including technological and man-made disasters will be promoted in addition to natural disasters. Research and Development in areas such as micro-zonation and scenario development based on simulation studies will also be encouraged to assess the short-term and long-term consequences of these disasters

### Introduction

Disaster is an event or series of events, which gives rise to casualties and damage or loss of properties, infrastructures, environment, essential services or means of livelihood on such a scale which is beyond the normal capacity of the affected community to cope with

Disaster management Act.2005 "A catastrophe, mishap, calamity or grave occurrence in any area, arising from natural or man made causes, or by accident or negligence which results in substantial loss of life or human surprising or damage to and destruction of property or damage to or degradation of environment and is of such a nature or magnitude as to be beyond the coping capacity of the community of the affected area"



A disaster, natural or man-made, can be defined as “any occurrence that causes damage, economic destruction, loss of human life, deterioration in human life, and deterioration in health and health services on a scale sufficient to warrant an extraordinary response from outside the affected community or area”. Natural disasters have always been there since the beginning of human civilizations, but their impact on human beings has been on the rise the world over. Enormous expansion of population, industrialisation and urbanisation across the globe has, on the one hand, forced people towards habitats that are hazardous and vulnerable to natural disasters, and on the other, they have led to unsustainable pressures on resources causing the erosion of natural ecological balance, both of which have intensified the frequency of occurrence as well as damage caused by natural disasters. Hence, in this context of natural disasters, there is a pressing need to situate public policy towards threats of such magnitude.

Natural disasters of similar nature and intensity, however, affect the developed and developing countries differently in terms of the damage of property and loss of lives caused. While the developed countries are well-equipped to open with natural disasters through well functioning disaster mitigation, preparedness and response mechanisms; the developing countries, ill-equipped in terms of each of the above three parameters, suffer most because of natural disasters.

### **Natural Disasters in India**

India is the seventh largest country in the world by geographical area with an extent of 32, 62,263 sq.km and is the second largest populated country in the world. India stands unique in its rich cultural heritage, diversified geographical and climatic conditions, with the snow covered mountains (Himalayas) in the northern side and rain forests in the south, the Indo-Gangetic Plains, the Deccan Plateau, the major life-giving Rivers which make the areas fertile, deserts on the western side, drought prone areas and long stretches of coastal areas. India, due to its physio- geographic conditions, land characteristics and climatic conditions, is one of the most disaster prone countries in the world, exposed to different kinds of natural hazards.

India has witnessed a number of disasters which claimed several thousands of human lives, rendering millions of people homeless and causing immense loss to properties of the people. the country is losing around 2 % of its GDP every year due to the costs Associated with relief and rehabilitation packages necessitated by disasters India is highly prone to natural disasters, and the country has experienced very severe natural disasters at regular intervals. The devastation caused by the Latur earthquake of 1993-94, the Orissa super cyclone of 1999, the Bhuj earthquake of 2001, and the widespread drought of 2002-03 are still etched in public memory.

More recently, while the Tsunami of December 2004 shocked the nation with its massive destruction and added to the list of serious natural hazards faced by the country, the financial capital of the country, Mumbai, became a mute spectator to unprecedented misery of its people for days together in the floods of July 2005 which also exposed the acute vulnerability of the big Indian cities to the wrath of nature.

**Natural Disasters from 1980 – 2010 - An Overview**

No of events	431
No of people killed:	143,039
Average killed per year:	4,614
No of people affected:	1,521,726,127
Average affected per year:	49,087,940
Economic Damage (US\$ X 1,000):	48,063,830
Economic Damage per year (US\$ X 1,000):	1,550,446

**Major Disasters of India in the recent decades**

1. Uttarkashi Earthquake in 1991
2. Killani Earthquake in 1993
3. Latur Earthquake in Maharashtra in 1993
4. Koyama Earthquake in 1997
5. Chamoli Earthquake in Uttarakhand in 1999
6. Super Cyclone in Orissa in 1999
7. Bhuj Earthquake in 2001
8. Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004
9. Kashmir Earthquake in 2005
10. Barmer Floods in Rajasthan in 2006
11. Kosi Floods in Bihar in 2008
12. Cyclone Aila in West Bengal in 2009
13. Cyclone Laila in Andhra Pradesh in 2009
11. Cloudburst in Leh in 2010
12. Thane Cyclone in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry 2011.

**Floods:** Floods in the Indo-Gangetic Brahmaputra plains are an annual feature. Several thousands of lives have been lost, millions have been rendered homeless and 8 million hectares of crops are damaged every year. India receives 75% of rains during the monsoon season (June – September). As a result almost all the rivers carry heavy waters during this time resulting in sediment deposition, drainage congestion, invading into the main land. 40 million hectares of land is vulnerable to floods with about 30 million people affected by flood every year. Floods brought severe drought in arid and semi arid areas. About 12% of the total land mass is flood prone.

**Cyclones:** India has a long coastline running 7,516 km long and the entire coastal stretch is exposed to Tsunami, cyclone, Tidal waves and storm surges. On an average, five to six

tropical cyclones strike every year, of which two or three are very severe. More cyclones occur in the Bay of Bengal than in the Arabian Sea and the ratio is approximately 4:1. Every year the eastern coast is affected by cyclones and Tsunami. The Orissa Super Cyclone (1999) and the India Tsunami 2004 claimed thousands and thousands of human lives devastating agricultural crops and rendering lakhs and lakhs of people homeless.

**Earthquakes:** During the last 20 years, India has experienced 10 major earthquakes that have claimed more than 35,000 lives. Almost 58% of our total land mass is prone to earthquakes of moderate to very high intensity. The Himalayan mountain range is undergoing constant geological changes (crustal movements) resulting in frequent earthquakes and landslides.

**Drought:** The Desert which is located in the western region of the country and the Deccan Plateau face recurring droughts due to acute shortage of rainfall. About 50 million people are affected annually by drought and 40 million hectares of land are prone to scanty or no rain.

#### **Objectives of the study**

1. To understanding the historical background of the disasters in Indian
2. To study the natural disaster of India.
3. To study the disaster management policy of India
4. To study the measure to mitigate the natural disaster in India

#### **Disaster Management Policy of India:**

The subject of disaster management does not find any specific mention in any of the three lists Union, State and Concurrent Lists in the 7 the Schedule of Indian Constitution, where subjects under the Central and State Governments as also subjects that come under both are specified. However, the Ministry of Home Affairs of the Central Government, which is the nodal Ministry for disaster management, seems to endorse the opinion that “disaster management is deemed to be a State subject” The country has had an integrated administrative machinery for management of disasters at the national, State, district levels. The basic responsibility for undertaking rescue, relief and rehabilitation measures in the event of natural disasters has been that of the State Government concerned.

The role of the Central Government has only been supportive, in terms of physical and financial resources and complementary measures in sectors such as transport, warning and inter-State movement While rescue, relief and rehabilitation in the event of a natural disaster have been considered to be the direct responsibility of the State Government 1999, the High Powered Committee (HPC) had been constituted to formulate the policy framework on disaster management in India. The HPC had recommended measures for strengthening the organizational structure and for formulating a comprehensive model plan for Natural and Manmade Disaster Management at the national, State and district levels.

Thereafter, following the Gujarat earthquake, an all-party National Committee on Disaster Management (NCDM) was constituted in 2001, under the Chairmanship of the then Prime Minister, to deliberate on the necessary institutional and legislative measures needed for an effective and long-term strategy to deal with natural disasters in future. On the recommendation of the NCDM, the Government of India Rules, 1961 were amended to

transfer the work relating to management of disasters, except droughts, from the Ministry of Agriculture to the Ministry of Home Affairs in June 2002.

### **India became a signatory to Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-15**

India has become a signatory to the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-15, which was adopted at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction at Kobe. All participating members pledged to strengthen disaster preparedness systems in their countries.

A comprehensive legal and institutional framework for Disaster Management was established through the Disaster Management Act that was passed by the Indian Parliament in 2005 and the National policy on Disaster Management was approved in 2009.

### **Disaster Management policy of India:**

The increasing frequency and ferocity, the extent of the damage (human & economic) the resources required for reconstruction work, all compelled the policy makers and administrators to do a reappraisal of Institutional and policy frameworks and to develop new frameworks for holistic disaster management in India.

A comprehensive legal and institutional framework for Disaster Management was established through the Disaster Management Act that was passed by the Indian Parliament in 2005 and the National policy on Disaster Management was approved in 2009.

The highlights of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 were:

1. Creation of new institutions at National level, State level and District level as follows:

- i) National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)
- ii) State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA)
- iii) District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA)

2. Constitution of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)

3. Setting up of National Disaster Reserve funds and State Disaster Reserve Fund for immediate response work

4. Formation of National Institute of Disaster Mitigation (NIDM) for building the capacities of various stakeholders involved in Disaster Mitigation and Response programs

6. A National Executive Committee (NEC) was constituted under the NDMA with Union Home Secretary as the Chairperson to monitor, co-ordinate and oversee the functions of the Departments concerned with respect to Disaster Mitigation

7. The State level Relief and Rehabilitation Departments were renamed as Department of Disaster Management and held responsible for Disaster Mitigation, Risk Reduction, and Preparedness and early.

### **Planning process and Disaster management**

The subject of disaster management was addressed specifically for the first time in the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07) document. The need for giving specific attention to disaster management was overlooked in all previous Five Year Plans.

Whatever long-term measures for mitigation of disasters have been incorporated in the Five Year Plans, relate to droughts and floods only. These measures fell largely under the Plan schemes for provision of drinking water in the drought-prone areas, generation of



employment in the drought-prone areas, providing inputs to agriculture and flood control measures.

### **Governmental Programmes for disaster management**

The Drought Prone Areas Programme (DPAP) has been implemented since 1973 in 149 districts in 14 States, and the Desert Development Programme (DDP) has been implementing in 36 districts across 7 States.

A programme titled National Watershed Development Project for Rainfed Areas (NWDPA) has been under implementation in drought-prone areas. The objectives of this programme are to achieve conservation of rainwater, control of soil erosion, regeneration of green cover and promotion of dry land farming systems including horticulture, agro-forestry, pasture development and livestock management etc.

Natural disasters, in particular droughts, result in huge unemployment problems in the rural areas. In view of the problem of unemployment in the drought-prone areas, rural development efforts have been envisaged for the purpose of providing wage employment to the rural poor.

The Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) has been the largest such programme in the country. Employment Assurance Schemes (EAS) have also been pursued to provide employment opportunities mostly in drought-prone areas.

To monitor the possibility of floods, the Central Water Commission (CWC) has a flood forecasting system covering 62 major rivers in India. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) is responsible for cyclone tracking and warning to the concerned user agencies. There is a special Disaster Warning System (DWS) for the dissemination of cyclone warning in local languages through INSAT to designated addresses in isolated places in coastal areas.

### **Disaster Management Policy Analysis**

There can be no doubt about the fact that activities related to disaster management at the Planning and policy-making level, in the country, have expanded significantly over the last decade. However, very few would argue that the vulnerability of the country and most of its regions to losses from natural disasters have reduced over this period of time. The national level disaster management policies formulated and recommended by the numerous expert committees do not seem to have translated to better management of natural disasters in practice.

However, the practice in the last few years has hardly shown any significant change in the approach of the Government machinery towards disasters. Also, it seems that the important lessons that should have been learnt by the Government apparatus from the severe natural disasters in the past have been ignored, and some of the important realities in the Indian case have not got adequate emphasis from the policy makers. The entire process of disaster management can be thought of as comprising two distinct measures viz.

1. Pre-disaster measures
2. Post-disaster measures.

The Pre-disaster measure consists of relating to disaster preparedness, prevention and mitigation, while the Post-disaster measure involves response, rehabilitation and recovery.



However, in India, the Pre-disaster measures have been found completely missing in many cases.

The post-disaster measures relief and rehabilitation efforts in our country, as have been witnessed in some of the major disasters in the past, are also far from satisfactory. There are numerous serious lacunae both at the level of policies towards relief and rehabilitation as well as in practice on the ground. Take a proactive approach to disaster management and promote a culture of prevention and preparedness among individuals and institutions.

In the aftermath of a disaster, the reach and effectiveness of the extant public healthcare system would be far below the required levels. The private healthcare facilities are of course there, but they are located mostly in the urban areas. The immediate response of the Governments to the natural disasters in terms of rescue measures, provision of relief and prevention of epidemics in the affected regions, was dismal. The relief activities, which followed, have not been up to the satisfaction of all the victims even though the substantial assistance from humanitarian agencies, and individual donors. A major factor that has obstructed proper management of natural disasters in India in the past is that the Government authorities have been treating disaster management only as an emergency responsibility.

This attitude needs to be changed and the authorities must learn to tackle natural disasters as a regular phenomenon. A sizable chunk of the officials, drawn from all the relevant branches of the Government, and serving at different tiers of Government, need to be given adequate training as well as regular practice in handling natural disasters. The most determining factor behind the huge loss of lives and property in the quakes was the fact that buildings in Kachchh were not constructed incorporating quake-resistant elements into them. Even though Kachchh belongs to that seismic zone of India which has one of the highest risks of a strong earthquake, the construction of quake-resistant buildings was not done because both the Government and the public perceived the risk of an earthquake as low. We have been pursuing unhindered urbanisation in different parts of the country and that we have to pay huge costs for such unsustainable development plans at almost regular intervals. Hence, the rhetoric for sustainable development must translate into reality.

### **Conclusion**

The management of natural disasters, at most levels, and focus of the Government machinery in India has been on rescue and relief operations only. The Government machinery lacks proper training in disaster management and it is ill equipped to tackle natural disasters through effective mitigation and preparedness measures. While the crucial aspects of coping with natural disasters, like, disaster mitigation and preparedness, have always been ignored, even the post-disaster response of the state through rescue, relief and rehabilitation measures have been found inadequate most of the time.

In terms of priorities for disaster management, we find that the allocation of financial resources by the Government (especially the Central Government) for long-term measures for mitigation and preparedness has been very little, even during the last decade in which India supposedly has changed its approach towards disaster management; and it reflects a very low priority for long-term measures in the pre-disaster phase. In the recent guidelines of the Central Government to the States, we find a mandate for giving higher priority to those



ongoing Government-funded projects which have a potential for disaster risk reduction, and inclusion of disaster mitigation elements into the ongoing projects where it is feasible to do so, however, there is no provision for channelizing additional Government funds into projects meant for disaster mitigation. Also, there exists a strong case for mobilising financial resources for disaster management from the corporate sector; however, it requires a strong political will and commitment on the part of the government for prevention of and mitigating losses from natural disasters. All aspects of disaster management will be integrated with the normal development planning at all levels. Additionally relevant departments will earmark certain portion of the plan budget to undertake preparedness and prevention measures. Risk reduction indications will be used as one of the monitoring indices for developmental activities in the state.

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