

# **DISASTER MANAGEMENT INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA**

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In the Central Government there are existing institutions and mechanisms for disaster management while new dedicated institutions have been created under the Disaster Management Act of 2005. Thus, the 2 structures co-exist at present.

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has been established at the centre, and the State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) at state and district authorities at district level are gradually being formalized. In addition to this, the National Crisis Management Committee, part of the earlier setup, also functions at the Centre. This makes the stakeholders interact at different levels within the disaster management framework.

Two distinct features of the institutional structure for disaster management may be noticed. Firstly, the structure is hierarchical and functions at 4 levels - centre, state, district and local. In both the setups - one that existed prior to the implementation of the Act, and other that is being formalized post-implementation of the Act, there have existed institutionalized structures at the centre, state, district and local levels. Each preceding level guides the activities and decision making at the next level in hierarchy. Secondly, it is a multi-stakeholder setup, i.e., the structure draws involvement of various relevant ministries, government departments and administrative bodies.

## **Administrative framework**

In India, there is integrated administrative machinery for management of disasters at the National, State, District and sub-District levels.

The primary responsibility of undertaking rescue, relief and rehabilitation measures is that of the State governments. The Central government supplements the efforts of the state governments by way of physical and financial resources, if need arises.

The extent/necessity of Central response/assistance depends on the severity and scale of the calamity and the requirements of Central assistance for augmenting the financial resources at the disposal of the State Government.

### **A. Union Government Response**

The effort is more in the nature of support to the state governments. Drawing from the Ministry of Home Affairs', official document, "National Policy", Union government's response could be in two ways:

#### **1. Policy Response**

- a. Provided by the Prime Minister, Cabinet Committees, and the Home Affairs and/or Agriculture Minister
- b. Keeping in view the short and long term policy objectives of the government

#### **2. Administrative Response**

- a. Operational requirements
- b. Provision of Central assistance as per existing policy.

**The operational aspects of the administrative response could, further, be classified into:**

- Primary relief functions, and
- Secondary relief functions.

**The primary relief functions of the Central Government relate to:**

1. Forecasting and operation of warning system
2. Maintenance of uninterrupted communication
3. Wide publicity to warnings of impending calamity, disaster preparedness and relief measures through TV, AIR and Newspapers
4. Transport with particular reference to evacuation and movement of essential commodities and petroleum products
5. Ensuring availability of essential commodities at reasonable prices particularly the commodities through the Public Distribution System
6. Ensuring availability of medicines, vaccine and drugs
7. Preservation and restoration of physical communication links
8. Investments in infrastructure; and
9. Mobilisation of financial resources.

**The secondary functions of the Central Government which supplement the States' relief efforts, would relate to:**

1. Flood/inflow forecasts from the Central Water Commission
2. Relief, rehabilitation and restoration through military aid to civil authorities
3. Contingency plans for crops, cattle preservation nutrition and health measures
4. Technical and technological inputs for provision of drinking water
5. Technical assistance in the water budgeting and water management for various uses; and Coordination of the activities of the State agencies and voluntary agencies.

**The response from the Central Government is based keeping in view the following factors:**

1. The gravity of the disaster
2. The scale of the relief operations

The requirements of the Central assistance for augmenting financial resources and logistics support at the disposal of the State Government.

The Ministry of Home Affairs is the Nodal Ministry at the centre for coordinating disaster management activities for all natural hazards except drought which is taken care by Ministry of Agriculture under the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation. Other Ministries are assigned the responsibility of providing emergency support in case of disasters that fall within their preview.

<b>Sl.No</b>	<b>Disasters</b>	<b>Nodal Ministry</b>
1	Natural Disasters (other than drought)	Ministry of Home Affairs
2	Drought	Ministry of Agriculture
3	Air Accidents	Ministry of Civil Aviation
4	Railway Accidents	Ministry of Railways
5	Chemical Disasters	Ministry of Home Affairs
6	Biological Disasters	Ministry of Home Affairs
7	Nuclear	Ministry of Home Affairs
8	Epidemics	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

### Other Institutions

1. National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)
2. State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs)
3. District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs)
4. National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)
5. National Institute for Disaster Management (NIDM)

### B. State Response

The responsibility to cope up with natural disasters is essentially that of the State Government. The role of the Central Government is to support in terms of physical and financial resources. The Chief Minister or the Chief Secretary of the State heads a state level committee which is in overall charge of the relief operations at the State and the Relief Commissioner who is in charge of the relief and rehabilitation measures in the wake of natural disasters. In many of the states, Secretary, Department of Revenue is also in charge of relief operations. The states have the relief manual called as the 'State Relief Code' and the State Contingency Plan which guides them to manage disaster scenarios.

### C. District:

The district administration is the focal point for implementation of all governmental plans and activities. The actual day-to-day function of administering relief is the responsibility of the District Magistrate/ District Collector/ Deputy Commissioner who exercises coordinating and supervising powers over all the departments at the district level. The 73rd and the 74th constitutional amendments recognise Panchayati Raj Institutions as 'Institutions of self- government'. These local bodies can be effective instruments in tackling disasters through early warning system, relief distribution, providing shelter to the victims, medical assistance etc.

A Disaster Management Committee has been set up at the district level headed by the District Magistrate and officials from the health department, Irrigation Department, Veterinary Department, Department of Water and Sanitation, Police, Fire Services, representatives from National and International NGOs, etc.

The Disaster Management Committee which is basically the decision making body takes the help of the Disaster Management Teams, like the Fire Services, Police, Health practitioners etc.

### D. Block Level Response

The Block Development Officer/ Taluka Development Officer is the nodal officer at the Block level for all the disaster management activities. The Disaster Management Committee at the Block/ Taluka level is headed by this Nodal Officer. The other members of the committee are officers from the Social Welfare department, Health department, Rural water supply and Sanitation Department, Police, Fire Services, representatives from youth organizations, Community Based Organizations, Non Governmental Organizations, eminent senior citizens, elected representatives etc.

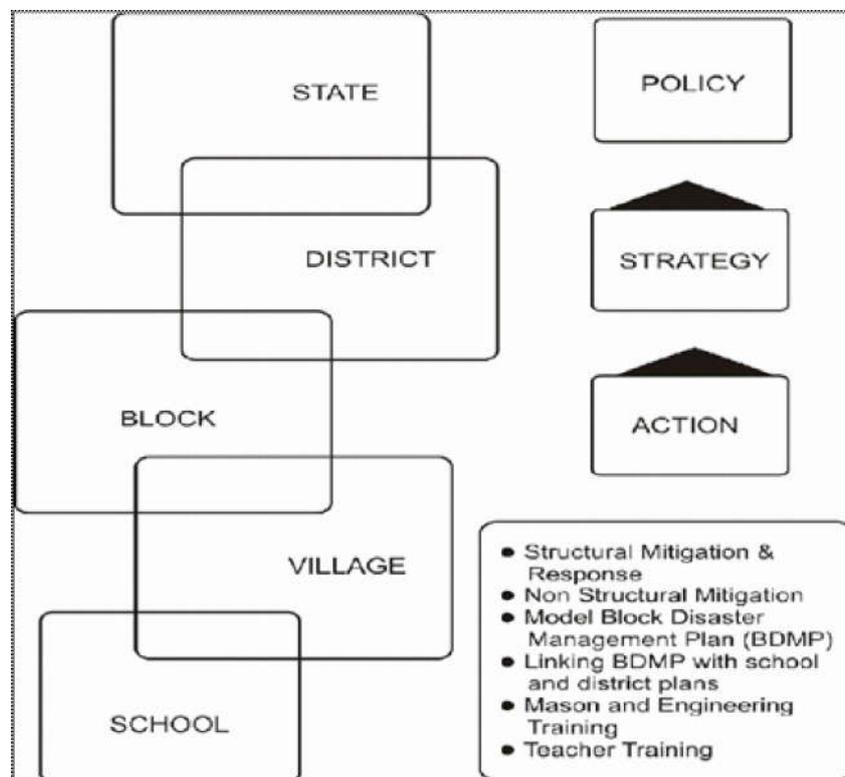
#### The main functions of Block Disaster Management Committee are:

- Helping the Block administration in preparation of the Block Disaster Management Plan
- Coordinating training for the members of the Disaster Management Teams
- Carry out mock drills

### E. Village Level Response

At the village level, the Village Disaster Management Committee headed by the Sarpanch/ Village Headman is responsible for preparing the Village Disaster Management Plans and also co-ordinating with various agencies for providing training to the Disaster Management Teams. The members should see to it that mock drills are carried out by the villagers at regular intervals by the villagers for various hazards. It is accepted that the Government alone cannot take on the entire responsibility of Disaster Management.

Local self-governments, both rural and urban, have emerged as important tiers of governance, after the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution. For the people, they are also the nearest units of administration and are among the first responders to any crisis besides being closely knit with the communities. These units can thus play an important role in crisis management under the overall leadership of the District Administration.



## Legal framework

Earlier there were no comprehensive law on the subject, laws and regulations pertaining to certain specific types of disaster situations did exist. In 2005, Parliament passed the Disaster Management Act in 2005 to deal with all aspects of disaster management throughout the country.

The Disaster Management Act, 2005 concentrates very comprehensive powers and functions at the national level for dealing with disasters. Thus, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has the responsibility for not only laying down policies, plans and guidelines, but also has executive functions for ensuring timely and effective response to disasters

### *The Role and Functions of a National Disaster Management Organisation*

The main scope of a disaster management law is to establish a national agency/ organization for coordination of disaster management.

#### **The role of such an organization is to:**

- Provide a coherent approach to disaster management across all phases from preparedness and mitigation to response and recovery.
- Provide a common framework
- Allocate responsibilities clearly.
- Provide a framework for coordinated response.

#### **There are following weakness in our disaster management efforts:**

- **Inadequate Early Warning System**

Though, the forecasting, monitoring and warning mechanisms are beautifully articulated on paper in practice, the warnings are not early enough and they do not reach all those likely to be affected.

- **Lack of Pre-disaster Preparedness**

With disasters striking India with increased regularity, there should be a plan in place to tackle the disaster and reduce its impact. On the contrary, people are caught unaware time and again. There is not planned information system as to what needs to be done when faced with a calamity.

- **Inadequate and Slow Relief**

Relief is an important aspect of the disaster management to provide help to the affected people. The relief operations are often handled in ad hoc and haphazard manner. How efficiently to provide food, medicine, to reduce the suffering of the affected people etc are addressed and met improperly.

- **Lack of Co-ordination**

Disaster management requires concerted efforts from Central Government, State Government, NGOs, International agencies and private sectors etc. Because of the lack of the co-ordination, relief material is not property distributed among the people. Even worst happens when they are mis-utilized and are not distributed uniformly.

- **Slow Rehabilitation and Reconstruction**

While immediately after a disaster strikes, there is hectic relief and rescue mission, mainly aimed at feeding the people and stalling the outbreak of an epidemic, relief and rescue cannot go on endlessly and rehabilitation

and reconstruction should be given proper attention. However, this is an area which is often ignored and progressed is slow once the initial attention fades away. Restoration of infrastructure, hospitals, schools, houses, and sources of living of the people needs to be given proper attention.

- **Proper Administration**

A quick assessment of the extent of the damage is necessary so that relief and rehabilitation work can be properly planned. Apart from this, poor administration frustrated the best intentions and efforts of private initiatives.

- **Poor Management of Finances for Post-disaster Relief**

Mostly relief and rehabilitation work suffers from the lack of co-ordination, proper management, and supervision at all levels and indicated the absence of adequate planning and preparedness to meet any emergency. Consequently, the funds are mis-utilized and relief measures were tardy and inadequate, providing scope for pilferage of relief and rehabilitation remained unutilized and there is huge shortfall in distribution of emergency relief, shelter material cloths, house building assistance etc. There have also been reports of relief and rehabilitation funds being utilized for paying salary arrears of the state government employees.

- **Symbolism Rather than Relief**

It has been a recurrent experience that rather than making a serious effort at planning and management for tackling frequent disasters, our government adopts symbolic gestures like helicopter survey of disaster affected areas. The politics of relief works in a manner that tall claims are made by the Government other than the affected state to help the affected districts and by sending huge financial help but these claims prove hollow once the calamity recedes.

- **No Instruction for Pre-seismic Period**

There is no instruction for the pre-seismic period. Unfortunately, in the present administrative set up, no official will visit the people during pre-seismic period to tell them about an eminent earthquake. But, during the post-seismic period, a large number of officials will visit the affected people with food, tents, medicine, cloths and compensation funding to the relatives of the dead.

### ***Major Recommendations for amending Disaster Management Act 2005***

**The Disaster Management Act, 2005 (Central Act) needs to be amended to bring in the following features:**

1. Disaster/Crisis Management should continue to be the primary responsibility of the State Governments and the Union Government should play a supportive role.
2. The Act should provide categorization of disasters (say, local, district, state or national level). This categorization along with intensity of each type of disaster will help in determining the level of authority primarily responsible for dealing with the disaster as well as the scale of response and relief - detailed guidelines may be stipulated by the NDMA on this subject.
3. **The functions of the National Disaster Management Authority should be:**
  - a. To recommend policies, to lay down guidelines for preparation of different disaster management plans and standard operating procedures; to promote and organize vulnerability studies, research and evaluation;
  - b. To advise on parameters of categorization and on declaration of national and state level disasters
  - c. To develop expertise and knowledge in the field of crisis/disaster management and disseminate to the field, to develop and organize training and capacity building programmes, to coordinate the early warning systems;