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## **UNIT 13            MANAGING RELIEF**

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### **13.0 Learning Outcome**

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After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the process and practice of Managing Relief Commodities and Services
- Discuss the way relief is managed in India along with various tools available for the purpose
- Outline the structure for relief management by international agencies
- Explain the essential components of any relief operations
- Emphasize the value of coordination in relief management

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### **13.1 Introduction**

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In the response phase, “relief” refers to the first stage response to any calamity including: setting up of control rooms, putting the contingency plan in action, issuance of warning, evacuation and moving people to safer areas, rendering medical aid to the needy and simultaneously rendering relief to the homeless, providing for food, drinking water, clothing, temporary shelter, sanitary facilities to the needy, and restoration of communication, as well as disbursement of assistance in cash and kind.

Immediate availability of relief commodities and supplies thus becomes an important factor in making the response effective. Following any disaster there is usually an urgent need to provide food, first aid and basic medical assistance and supplies, drinking water, clothing, shelter materials. The “relief operations” therefore comprise two main actions:

(a) procuring various commodities from the government stores, emergency stockpiles, commercial suppliers and international assistance sources (whenever deemed appropriate) and (b) organizing the distribution of these commodities according to the best possible orders of priority. As is evident, the management of relief commodities, supplies and services always poses a challenge for disaster managers.

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## **13.2 Major Considerations for Relief Management**

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### **13.2.1 Essential Components of Relief Management**

In order to ensure that relief commodities and services are made available to the real needy ones at the place and time required, it is essential to follow certain operational guidelines as follows:

- Designate a person (or a group of persons) within the supply section as the focal point(s) for the given disaster.
- Establish a mini emergency supply team for targeted action-oriented implementation, as a means of minimizing disruption of on-going supply functions while meeting emergency needs.
- Coordinate through concerned departments/ministries with other partners and counterparts to streamline supply procurement and avoid duplication.
- Provide suggestions on potential supply sources, as may be helpful to partners.
- Work with the Emergency Task Force (this could be operating under a different nomenclature) to finalize and establish correct products, specifications, quantities, qualities, destinations, distribution and storage systems.
- Assess sources, prices and availability to determine local or offshore options.
- Initiate the procurement process, keeping a provision for flexibility in decision-making and operation processes to meet emergency requirements.
- Establish an active communication mechanism that provides up-to-date about all supply activities, ensuring that all key players have access to the latest information.
- For items not available locally, coordinate emergency offshore procurement, including charter flight, port clearance, delivery and redistribution.
- Monitor the procurement, supply and distribution processes.

As a number of stakeholders participate in the process of providing relief it becomes obvious that specific roles and responsibilities need to be assigned to such actors for:

- Assisting the government other national and international agencies in the distribution of relief items;
- Ensuring that interventions are not duplicated and the most vulnerable are reached with relief and rehabilitation measures;
- Ensuring that the people in need receive their entitlements and compensation as appropriate.

### **13.2.2 Relief Management in India**

Disaster management being a State subject in India, at the State level, the State Relief Commissioner or Secretary, directs and controls the relief operations through District Collectors or Deputy Commissioners, who are the king-pins of all relief operations, coordination, direction and control at the District level.

### **A. Relief Codes and Manuals:**

The State Governments have formulated their Relief Manuals (or Codes) and the Districts have their Contingency Plans which are updated from time to time based on the experience. Routinely, NGOs and community are invited before the monsoon to share the contingency plan. In case of a disaster, the State Government invites NGOs and other relief organizations to join in the efforts in reaching out to the victims.

Majority of the existing State Relief Manuals carry a “scarcity” focus while addressing Relief. However, given the changing nature of disaster response coupled with the experience gained from recent disasters in the country, now an effort is under way by the Central Government to re-orient the existing State Relief Manuals and Codes with a “mitigation, prevention and preparedness” focus. Let us look at the existing Gujarat Relief Manual-1982. With variations in details, a typical State Relief Manual in the country usually contains following (or similar) provisions for management of relief:

- The system of Intelligence defining Authorities and Officials
- Programs and Estimates for Various Relief Works
- Reserves of Establishment and Tools
- Preliminary Preparation and Test
- Declaration of Scarcity and Commencement of Relief
- Powers and Duties of Supervising Officers including Police Officers, Medical and Public Health Officers
- The Organization of Village Inspection and Relief
- Organization of Relief Works
- Wages and Allowance on Relief Works
- Gratuitous Relief
- Rains Policy and Closure of Relief, Closure of Scarcity
- Provisions for Cattle and Fodder, Drinking Water
- Procedures for Maintenance of Accounts
- Involvement of Voluntary Agencies
- Tagavi Loans and Subsidies
- Relief for Other Calamities

### **B. Calamity Relief Fund (CRF):**

As outlined above the basic responsibility for undertaking rescue, relief and rehabilitation measures in the event of natural disasters is that of the concerned State Government. The role of the Central Government is supportive, in terms of supplementing physical and financial resources and complementary measures in sectors like warning, transport and inter-State movement of food grains etc. The policy and arrangements for meeting relief expenditure are, by and large, based on the recommendations of the successive Finance Commissions. Earlier, margin money was allocated to each State for meeting the immediate needs of expenditure on relief measures. The quantum of margin money was calculated by averaging the non-plan expenditure (excluding advance plan assistance and expenditure of a plan nature) on relief measures.

The margin money so provided for each of the States was duly taken into account while working out the forecast of expenditure for each of the States, on the basis of which the Finance Commission finalized its recommendations for the devolution of resources for the period covered by them.

As against an annual CRF of Rs. 804 Crore provided by the Ninth Finance Commission, the Tenth Finance Commission provided Rs. 6304.2 Crore for the period 1995-2000 of which 75 per cent i.e., Rs. 4728.19 Crore is the State's share whereas the Central share came to Rs. 1578.08 Crore. The share of the Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) is released in four equal installments at the beginning of each quarter.

### **C. National Fund for Calamity Relief (NFCR):**

For dealing with calamities of "rare severity" requiring Central intervention, the Tenth Finance Commission suggested creation of National Fund for Calamity Relief. The fund was to be managed by a National Calamity Relief Fund Committee (NCRFC). In the absence of a clear definition of the term "rare severity", the functioning of the NCRFC has been haunted by a number of problems due to States asking for Central assistance for all types of calamities.

The arrangements for funding relief in India are further described in detail in Unit 13.

### **D. Provisions under the National Disaster Response Plan:**

The National Disaster Response Plan prepared by the High Powered Committee in September 2001 has cast the overall responsibility for the provision of relief supplies on the Ministry of Planning and Programme Implementation as the primary agency. This Emergency Support Function (No. 9) lists the following responsibilities for the Primary Agency:

- Coordinate activities involved with the emergency provisions;
- Temporary shelter;
- Emergency mass feeding;
- Bulk distribution;
- To provide logistical and resource support to local entities;
- Operate a Disaster Welfare Information (DWI) System to collect, receive, and report the status of victims, assist family reunification and coordinate bulk distribution of emergency relief supplies; and
- In some instances, services also may be provided to disaster workers.

## **13.2.3 Relief Management – The International Perspective**

For coordinating the humanitarian assistance provided and the relief efforts of the international agencies and the United Nations agencies, the UN General Assembly has created the Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC). The ERC reports to the UN Secretary-General and is assisted and represented by the in-country heads of the UN agencies called the UN Resident Coordinators (UNRCs). The ERC is the focal point in the UN System for disaster relief coordination, who is empowered by the UN General Assembly Resolution 2816 of 14 December 1971:

- To mobilize, direct and coordinate the relief activities of various organizations of the UN system in response to a request for disaster assistance from the stricken State;
- To coordinate the UN assistance with assistance given by inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, in particular by the International Red Cross;
- To receive, on behalf of the UN Secretary-General contributions offered to him for disaster relief assistance to be carried out by the UN, its agencies and programs for particular emergency situations;
- To assist the Government of the stricken country to assess its relief and other needs and to evaluate the priority of those needs, to disseminate that information to prospective donors and others concerned, and to serve as a clearing-house for assistance extended or planned by all sources of external aid; and
- To phase out relief operations under his aegis as the stricken country moves into the stage of rehabilitation and reconstruction, but to continue to interest himself, within the framework of his responsibilities for relief, in the activities of the UN agencies concerned with rehabilitation and reconstruction.

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## **13.3 Some Lessons Learned**

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The disaster managers regard each disaster as both a threat as well as an opportunity. While responding to emergencies many lessons are learned by those involved in dealing with a particular disaster. The learning from such lessons is used for corrective action so that similar mistakes are not repeated in future. During an emergency, the urgency of addressing immediate needs coupled with the challenges of procuring essential supplies and distributing the same to the needy often pose great difficulty. While on the one hand, the absence of planned and organized actions leaves chaos prevalent over the situation, on the other hand, experience has proven that organized actions, partnerships with stakeholders and information sharing do yield good results. To understand this dynamics in little detail, let us look at two cases: Mozambique Floods-2000 and Orissa Super Cyclone-1999.

### **13.3.1 Mozambique Floods-February 2000**

Mozambique is classified by the UN Human Development Report as one of the ten poorest countries in the world. Characteristics of its human vulnerability profile include widespread poverty and low per capita income, high infant, child and maternal mortality, low literacy, increasing rates of HIV infection and limited access to health, education, safe water and sanitation. A series of environmental risks and hazards also make up its physical vulnerability profile, these include a history of seasonal floods, cyclones and droughts. Colonial records and oral testimonies refer to a series of disasters affecting the region dating back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Environmental degradation, poor river system management and protection as well as the complexities of a volatile global weather system continue to pose a threat to Mozambique and the region.

Heavy rains from “Cyclone Connie” hit southern Mozambique during 4-7 February 2000 causing flooding, isolating Maputo City and damaging thousands of houses in

Maputo and Gaza provinces. The rains filled dams and rivers in southern Africa causing large-scale flooding of the Limpopo, Incomati and Umbeluzi rivers. “Cyclone Eline” hit the central Mozambique on 22 February, flooding the Save river and ultimately causing massive flooding along the Limpopo river valley. The rains continued throughout much of March 2000.

The crisis resulted in the displacement of 250,000 people, with 950,000 in need of humanitarian assistance of which 190,000 were children under the age of five. Hundreds of children were separated from their families. In one of the most dramatic and well-covered air rescue missions in media history, 14,800 people were rescued by helicopter.

A number of UN agencies along with other international humanitarian agencies provided assistance to Mozambique in response to the February-2000 floods. The relief operations provided a number of lessons for the overall relief management. Various donors had contributed 218 small boats for rescue and relief distributions. These were used effectively and Mozambican Naval personnel assisted in their operations. However, there was no coordination of boat assets by the local authority (called INGC – Instituto Nacional de Gestao de Calamidades). The whereabouts and deployment of all boats was not known. Also, some donors did not inform the INGC of materials and equipment being sent into the country. The INGC was unable to establish an orderly system for receiving, storing and distributing these assets.

### **13.3.2 Orissa Super Cyclone-October 1999:**

The devastating super cyclone of 29<sup>th</sup> October 1999 that struck Orissa left the State in a virtual paralytic condition with its communications system and infrastructure totally wrecked. It severely affected more than 13 million people in 97 Blocks, 28 Urban Local Bodies and in 12 Districts including the State Capital Bhubaneswar and the old city of Cuttack. Overnight, the State seemed to have slipped into a stone-age apocalypse. The agriculturally rich and prosperous districts of Khurda, Puri, Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Kendrapara were devastated due to the storm while districts like Jajpur, Bhadrak, Keonjhar, Balasore and Mayurbhanj were severely affected by unprecedented flood.

The knock-down effect of the breakdown of lifeline infrastructure had been most severe, completely halting rescue and relief operations (for the first few days and to the most affected areas), in spite of a significant presence of the armed forces, air dropping of supplies and support of rapid response teams, provided by Government of Andhra Pradesh. The Army and Air Force were called in on 29<sup>th</sup> October, but they were not able to undertake operations till the 31<sup>st</sup> October, 1999 due to bad weather conditions. Flash floods from 31<sup>st</sup> October onwards hampered the rescue operation by the Army. The Indian Navy reopened the navigation channel in Paradip Port on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1999. This facilitated the movement of ships with relief material into the Port. The Government of Andhra Pradesh dispatched 100 engineers and a number of Rapid Response Teams to clear road blocks and assist the Government of Orissa in emergency rescue and relief operations.

Once the State moved out from rescue and relief phase to reconstruction and rehabilitation and further sustainable development phase, gradually the Community Based Disaster Preparedness concept evolved from the need for bringing people

together to face natural disasters like the Super Cyclone of 1999. The devastation caused by the Super Cyclone re-initiated thinking at different levels and questioned people's ability to face disasters boldly and in an organized manner. It also forced a critical analysis of the decision-making processes on appropriate actions during a crisis and the need for incorporating these into development activities so as to achieve the twin objective of restoration and reconstruction as well as building up the capacity to face future calamities.

To find answers to this and many other questions regarding people's strengths and weaknesses, the Orissa State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA) and the United Nations system in India brought all NGOs, donors and government agencies to a common platform and a training "manual" specific to Orissa context, known as the Community Contingency Plan (CCP) for Floods and Cyclones" was prepared.

The CCP casts various responsibilities (before, during and post disaster) on community groups created by community members themselves. Amongst these is the Relief Group. Members of the Relief Group collect, distribute relief materials such as food supply, utensils, clothes, kerosene, diesel etc. and coordinate all the relief requirements of the other action groups. Both men and women members have to be capable of interacting with the local authorities to ensure that adequate supplies reach the village in times. They also keep track of all government provisions related to gratuitous relief, relief works to prevent starvation, deterioration, migration, health and sanitation measures for both people and livestock so that people do not lose out on their entitlements.

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## **13.4 Coordination of Relief Activities**

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Coordination of various relief activities (planning and procurement of supplies, following inventories, organizing and ensuring the distribution according to priorities and needs and continually sharing information) during and after any disaster/emergency is an important though difficult and one of the challenging tasks. An emergency situation is characterized by overwhelming needs, competing priorities, destroyed or damaged communication and transportation infrastructure, a rapid influx of providers of humanitarian assistance coupled with an outburst of mutual aid from local citizens, and highly stressed local governmental and non-governmental institutions. Given this view of the emergency conditions an image of chaos quickly springs to mind.

While coordination may not be easily defined, its absence is characterized by gaps in service to affected population; duplication of efforts; inappropriate assistance; inefficient use of resources; bottlenecks, impediments and slow reaction to changing conditions; and frustration of relief providers, officials and survivors – in general, an unsatisfactory response to the emergency.

Coordination is a result of intentional actions to harmonize individual responses to maximize impact and achieve synergy – a situation where the overall effect is greater than the sum of the parts. Coordination begins with the initiation of working relationships and regular sharing of information. As coordination increases there is a resulting change in the way relief providers (whether governmental or non-governmental) implement their programs of assistance. Since relief providers

cooperate, individuals and organizations adapt and adjust their efforts based on changing needs and each other's strengths and weaknesses.

The recent experience from Gujarat Earthquake-January 2001 serves as the best illustration emphasizing the value and need for coordination. It could be recalled that along with the relief supplies sent by various State Governments, many voluntary agencies, business houses, inspired groups of individuals rushed loads of relief supplies (drinking water bottles, clothing, temporary shelter materials, food grains etc.) to Bhuj. As the consignee remained to be defined clearly, and as the stressed local administration was struggling for receiving, storing and distributing tasks, many of the relief providers soon began camping outside Bhuj town and started distributing the supplies to anyone who takes it --including the passersby. Also, many items were sent (like medicines) without even checking the local need for it.

Further, two and half years after the earthquake (June 2003), it is observed that the Indira Gandhi International Airports Authority is concerned over disposing off the consignments containing relief materials (old clothes, blankets etc.) sent by donors for the earthquake affected people in Gujarat. Neither the inland agencies who called for these materials from overseas never turned up to claim these nor did the senders clearly define the recipients. Whatever could be the reason, it is clear that the wastage of resources could have been avoided with some efforts.

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## 13.5 Conclusion

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This Unit describes what relief management in general is about and how relief is managed in India and outside. The key components of a typical relief operation are outlined. An in-depth understanding of the in-country procedures is facilitated by describing existing mandatory provisions and the changes under way. Also explained is the international framework in which the United Nations agencies and other bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies operate. The two case studies (Mozambique Floods and Orissa Super Cyclone) highlight important lessons learned while addressing "relief" in two major disasters. The Unit concludes by outlining the value and significance of "coordination" for the management of relief commodities and services.

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## 13.6 Key Concepts

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**Coordination:** The challenging task of working together with all involved while providing a degree of direction and control. Buying in the support of all stakeholders and maintaining respect for all partners' individual portfolios are the two challenging tasks involved. Regular information sharing increases the opportunities for effective coordination.

**Humanitarian Assistance:** Assistance provided free of cost in order to reduce sufferings caused by emergency/disaster

**Rapid Response Team:** Teams deployed to perform specific tasks in response to a given disaster/emergency. Could comprise members from the government or non-government agencies.

**Relief Commodities:** Items meant for the use of and by the affected population. These include: food grains, temporary shelter material, medical supplies, first-aid kits, household effects, clothing, drinking water, boats and life-jackets etc.

**Relief Operations:** The term referring to the process of procuring and distributing supplies.

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## **13.7 References and Further Reading**

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National Centre for Disaster Management, 2001. Manual on Natural Disaster Management in India, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi.

National Centre for Disaster Management, 2000. India: IDNDR and Beyond, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi.

Orissa State Disaster Mitigation Authority, 2000. Community Contingency Plan for Floods and Cyclones (Community Based Disaster Preparedness), Bhubaneswar.

Gupta, M.C. and Sharma, Vinod K., 2000. Orissa Super Cyclone '99, National Centre for Disaster Management, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi.

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## **13.8 Activities**

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- 1) What do you understand by the term Relief Management?
- 2) Briefly explain the international framework available for relief management.
- 3) Why is coordination of relief activities considered to be a challenging task?