
UNIT – 5 DISASTER RESPONSE: CENTRAL, STATE, DISTRICT AND LOCAL ADMINISTRATION

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5.0 LEARNING OUTCOME

After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- evaluate the role played by various agencies – central, state, district and local government;
- assess the coordination and control mechanism; and
- discuss an integrated policy to strengthen and expand the capacity, preparedness and response of the various agencies to disasters.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Disasters are an unavoidable part of life. Every one of us face some degree of personal risk from disasters of one kind or another. Disasters have always been mankind's constant companion. Generations of people have had to withstand disaster. They suffered from the consequences and recovered from them, and life continued. But somehow, over the ages, the scenario has changed quite a bit, but there has not been much reduction in the traditional disaster threat. Natural disasters like earthquakes, cyclones, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, wildfires, floods, landslides and droughts continue to strike. While we have learned to cope with these problems to a certain extent, we have neither eliminated nor contained them. So, whilst their effects may have been modified, they continue to inflict unacceptable pressure on the world population. This applies to South Asian countries specifically, as they reel under the adverse consequences of natural and manmade disasters.

Besides the natural disasters, the world today witnesses new disaster threats. Increased social violence has drastically affected many nations and communities. Instances of hijacking, terrorism, civil unrest and conflict with use of conventional

arms have become commonplace. Instances of cross-border terrorism in parts of India continuing for many years and the organized simultaneous multi-targeted terrorist attacks in USA on September 11th, 2001 are the most despicable instances of willful manmade disasters. Dr. Kulshreshtha states that the consequence has been heavy burdens on governments and societies, more so in developing countries whose existence is already precarious because of poor economic and social conditions.

The reduction in the number of people killed over the last 30 years has been due to the preventive measures undertaken by the governments worldwide. Also, the UN declaration of International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction between 1990 – 2000, and the Yokohama (Japan) Declaration, 1994, ‘Towards Safer World’, helped to spread greater awareness among the nations to take up measures for disaster mitigation. The Natural Disaster Reduction Report, 1999, specifies that the largest sufferers are the least developed nations and economically weaker sections of the society. In this unit we will be discussing about the role played by central, state, district and local level in disaster response. We will also assess the coordination and control mechanism of the various agencies involved in disaster response and discusses various options available to integrate the policy to strengthen and expend the capacity, preparedness and response of various agencies to disasters.

5.2 PROFILE OF DISASTERS IN SOUTH ASIA

The South Asian countries namely, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka are among the world’s most vulnerable countries to both natural and man-made disasters. These countries have diverse agro-climate regions, each subject to particular natural disasters. Long coastal regions are prone to cyclones, arid and semi-arid regions are prone to droughts, the Himalayan mountainous terrain and parts of the continental crust are prone to earthquakes and landslides, and the near perennial rivers of the region are prone to floods. The countries of this region are densely populated and are low-income economies. Recurrent natural disaster inflict set backs to their efforts in development and aggravate poverty conditions. The region recorded 15 out of the 40 major disasters in the world in the last thirty years. This has also halted development efforts, as the funds earmarked for new initiatives are transferred to relief, response and rehabilitation work. The response of major stakeholders has been reactive rather than pro-active. There is a need for coordinated efforts towards disaster mitigation among these countries.

Many times disasters have cross border effects. Among, the South Asian countries, Carter state that India faces the largest number of disasters. The number of people killed during the last 20 years has gone up to 21,193.

In the ensuing paragraphs, the structure of disaster response as operating at varying levels, and coordination and control are discussed.

5.3 DISASTER RESPONSE IN INDIA

India is one of the world’s major theatres of disasters, both natural and manmade. It remains the worst affected country. In fact, the frequency of all categories of disasters, varying from epidemics to road accidents and perennial droughts and floods, is escalating, resulting in a multifold growth of injuries, disabilities, diseases, and deaths, disrupting life supporting systems, and adding to the health, social, and

economic burden of an already impoverished people. Because of the adverse weather conditions, population growth, urbanization and industrialization, there has been increase in the number of disasters every year.

India has attempted to follow the IDNDR guidelines. The effort is to make disaster reduction a part of India's development plan so that recurring disasters will not erode progress in social and economic sphere. One of the lessons learnt by victims of various natural disasters is that the aftermath of the disaster can be even worse than the disaster event itself. Thus, there is a need to acknowledge the need for preparedness towards disaster mitigation. Natural occurrences cannot be avoided altogether. What could best be done is to take maximum possible preventive measures at various levels within the society in order to minimize the impact of such natural disasters for the people. The impact of disasters can be reduced and the worst affects can be prevented. The communities, which are actively involved in the prevention of the natural disaster, belong to the international, regional, national, state and local institutions and organisations. What is important is that they seek to introduce a culture of prevention in all communities at different levels. This leads to strengthening the control and coordination mechanism for disaster response.

In this context, the unit examines the mechanisms adopted by the government at National, State, and District levels for managing the natural disasters besides analyzing its existing capacity for effective response and its ability to achieve unity of efforts among the governmental and non-governmental organisations.

5.4 COORDINATION AND CONTROL IN DISASTER RESPONSE

In disaster response coordination and control is required not only within the administrative framework of the nation, state and district but also with the various service agencies and the civil societies involved in it. Fig. 5.1 depicts this relationship

FIG 5.1 COORDINATION AND CONTROL IN DISASTER RESPONSE

The disaster response structure at the national, state and district level are discussed in the ensuing paragraphs.

5.4.1 Administrative Response Framework

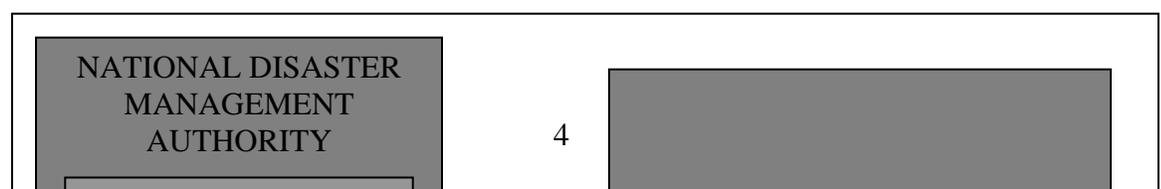
Under India's federal system, the states have the responsibility for disaster response and the Central Government supplements the efforts of the state governments by providing financial and material assistance when the disaster is severe or spread over several states. Recently the Nation Disaster Management Authority (**NDMA**) was constituted. The Prime Minister will be chairing NDMA and the other members consisting of one Deputy Chairman and six Members.

The **NDMA** will have the responsibility for laying down the policies and plans for disaster management. The Authority will approve the National Disaster Management Plan. It can lay down guidelines to be followed by Ministries and Departments of the Central Government and any state authority in drawing up the State Plan. The Authority will also coordinate the enforcement and implementation of the policies and plans for disaster management, and arrange for and oversee the provision of funds for mitigation measures, preparedness and response. It may also frame guidelines for the minimum standards of relief to be provided to persons affected by disaster and give direction regarding relief in loan repayment or grant of fresh loans on such concessional terms as may be deemed appropriate.

The Authority may also take such measures for prevention of disaster, of mitigation of its effects, or for preparedness and capacity building for dealing with a threatening disaster situation or disaster. The National Disaster Management Authority will be serviced by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The National Disaster Management Division (NDMD) is the division of Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in the Government at the Central level that deals with the subject of National Disaster Management.

FIG 5.2 ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSE FRAMEWORK



The disaster response is planned and organized within the paradigm of three phases: pre-disaster, during disaster or disaster impact and post disaster recovery. As a follow up to IDNDR and Yokohama declaration, the Government of India established the National Centre for Disaster Management (NCDM) to encourage effective training, coordination and planning for disaster response. The Government of India constituted a High Power Committee (HPC) to bring about institutional reforms in the field and planning of disaster management. The Committee had submitted its report in 2002 with numerous recommendations some of which re being implemented.

Number of educational institutions has started imparting education in the area of disaster management for long-term effect. The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) was the first in the country to offer a six months Certificate Course in Disaster Management through distance learning mode. Since launch of programme in January, 1999 it has been very well received by number of stakeholders through out the country. With regard to effective disaster response at micro level, IGNOU undertook a project on Community Awareness on Disaster Preparedness in 550 villages in 5 most disaster prone states in India namely Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat. Likewise the Gorakhpur University, Gorakhpur; Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla; Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur; Tata Institution of Social Sciences, Mumbai; and others are engaged in disaster management education.

The disaster response at various levels is as follows:

National Level

Even though history of disaster management in varied form is as old as the recorded history, yet in a formal sense in India, the famines and other major natural disasters had necessitated the need for building a disaster response mechanism into the civil administration system. Disaster management in the country dates back to 1878, when, as a result of a series of droughts in the country, the first Famine Commission

was appointed. It made several suggestions, on the basis of which the famine codes were promulgated in 1883.

In the initial years following independence the subject of natural calamities was handled in the Union Home Ministry before a Scarcity Relief Division was set up in the Ministry of Agriculture, to deal with the problem of food scarcity in the country. Subsequently, the division was upgraded to deal with other types of natural calamities.

Earlier, the division was called the Natural Disaster Management Division (NDMD). The NDMD within the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture and the National Centre for Disaster Management (NCDM) within the India Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) were the nodal agencies for natural disaster management in the country. Presently the NDMD has been shifted to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the Ministry has become the nodal agency for natural disaster management in India of course, although the Drought Management continues to be with the Ministry of Agriculture.

At the national level, depending on the type of disaster, a nodal ministry is assigned the task of coordinating all activities of the state and district administration and the other support departments /ministry. The nodal ministry for different type of disasters depicted in Table 2. The nodal ministries form part of the National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC). They have to prepare detailed contingency plans for each type of disasters falling in areas of their responsibility.

The various committees for achieving coordination at centre and state level at the time of disaster is discussed below:

Cabinet Committee

The Cabinet may set up a committee for effective implementation of Relief measures in the wake of natural disaster. The Secretary in the MHA acts as the secretary of this committee. In the absence of such a committee, all the matters related to the relief shall be reported to the cabinet secretary.

National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC)

Under the chairmanship of the Cabinet Secretary the NCMC has been constituted in the Cabinet Secretariat. The other members of this committee include the Secretary to the Prime Minister, Secretaries of the Ministries of Home Affairs, Agriculture and Defense along with the Directors of Intelligence Bureau, Research and Analysis Wing and an officer of the Cabinet Secretariat. The NCMC gives direction to the Crisis Management Group as deemed necessary.

Crisis Management Group (CMG)

This is a group under the chairmanship of the Central Relief Commissioner comprising the senior officers from the various ministries and other concerned departments. CMG's function is to review every year contingency plans formulated by the Central Ministries/Departments and the measures required for dealing with any disaster; co-ordinate the activities of the Central Ministries and the State Governments in relation to disaster preparedness and relief and to obtain information from the nodal officers on measures relating to the above. The Joint Secretary (NDM) & Additional Central Relief Commissioner is the Convenor of CMG. The CMG meets twice a Year under the Central Relief Commissioner.

State Crisis Management Group (SCMG)

There is a State Crisis Management Group (SCMG) under the Chairmanship of the state's Chief Secretary/Relief Commissioner. This Group comprises Senior Officers from the Departments of Revenue/Relief, Home, Civil Supplies, Power, Irrigation, Water Supply, panchayat (local self-government), Agriculture, Forests, Rural Development, Health Planning, Public Works and Finance.

The SCMG is required to take into consideration the guidance received, from time to time, from Government of India and formulate action plans for dealing with different disasters.

Central Control Room

An **Emergency Operations Centre** (Control Room) in the Ministry of Home Affairs assists the Central Relief Commissioner in the discharge of his duties. The Control Room functions full-scale and round-the-clock, with a full complement of staff after receipt of first information about the occurrence of a major natural calamity. It remains operational on these terms for a period specified by the Relief Commissioner for dealing effectively with the crisis arising out of a natural calamity. At other times, the arrangement for receiving messages outside office hours are by way of a Night Duty Cell facility. The Control Room is intended to be the nerve centre of all emergencies; therefore it is adequately equipped and optimally located.

State Control Room

It is the duty of the Relief Commissioner of the State to establish a emergency operation centre Control Room at state headquarters as soon as a disaster situation develops. Besides having all updated information on forecasting and warning of disaster the centre would also be the contact point for the various concerned agencies.

District Control Room

Likewise in the wake of natural disasters, a Control Room is set up in the district for day to day monitoring of the rescue and relief operations on a continuing basis, operationalising the

contingency plan and keep close liaison with the State Headquarters, NGO's and other agencies dealing with disaster management and relief.

TYPE OF DISASTER AND NODAL MINISTRY

Type of Disaster/Crisis	Nodal Ministry
Air Accident	Ministry of Civil Aviation
Civil Strife	Ministry of Home Affairs
Major breakdown of any of the essential services posing widespread and protected problems	Concerned Ministries
Railway Accidents	Ministry of Railways
Chemical Disasters	Ministry of Environment
Biological Disaster	Ministry of Health
Nuclear Accident inside or outside the country which poses health or other hazards to people in India	Department of Atomic Energy
Droughts	Ministry of Agriculture
Natural Disasters	Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)

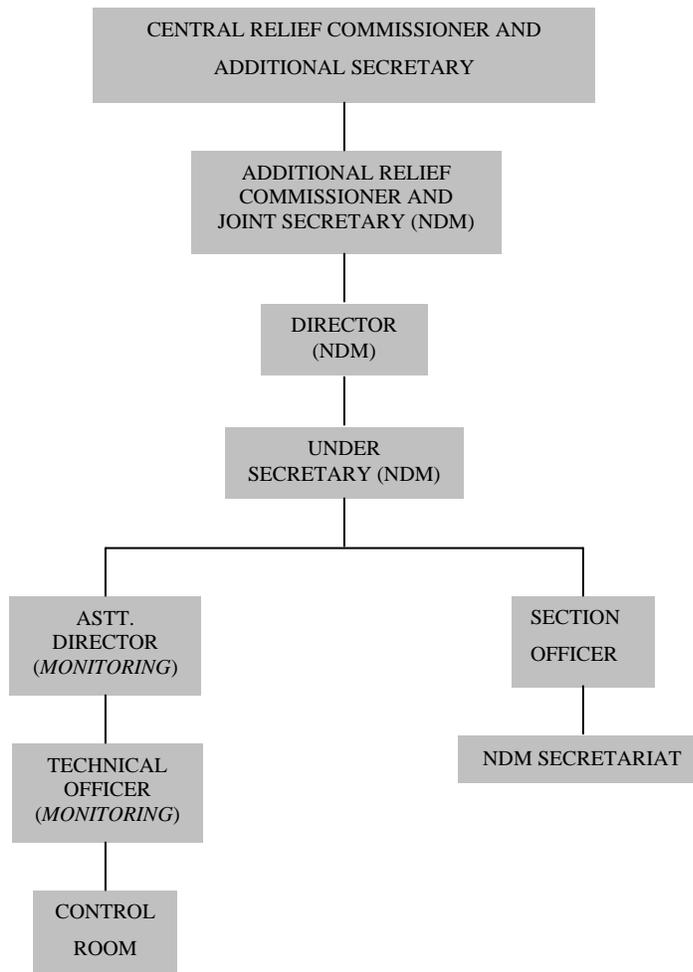
Source: Ministry of Home Affairs

Table - 2

5.4.2 Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Home Affairs

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) is the nodal ministry for all matters concerning natural disaster relief at the Centre. In the MHA, the Relief Commissioner functions as the Nodal Officer to coordinate relief operations for all natural disasters. The MHA will deal with the disasters except drought, which is dealt by Ministry of Agriculture. The organizational setup of the NDMD is shown in the Figure 3.

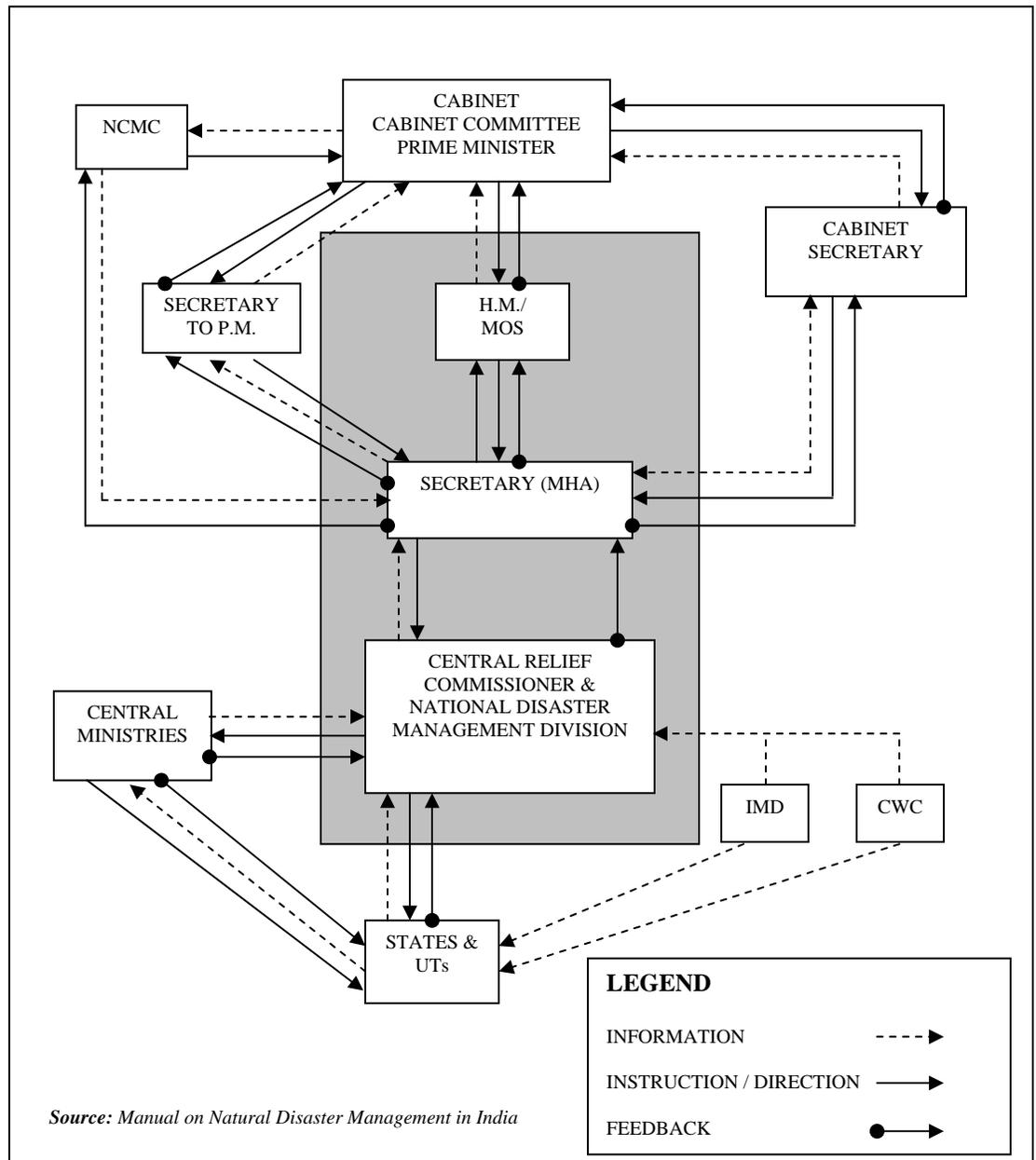
**Figure - 3, National Disaster Management Division
(Ministry of Home Affairs)**



Source: Ministry of Home Affairs

The Central Relief Commissioner receives information relating to forecast/warning of natural disasters from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) or from the Central Water Commission (CWC) on a continuing basis. He also would send the information up the chain of command to keep everyone informed- Secretary (MHA), Home Minister, Cabinet Secretary and the Secretary to the Prime Minister, and through him the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the National Crises Management Committee (NCMC). He may, whenever required also disseminate the information to different central government ministries/departments and the state governments for the appropriate follow up action. The Central Relief Commissioner also monitors the development of the situation on a continuing basis. The pattern of interaction amongst the different ministries and departments in the event of natural calamities is illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure - 4, Interaction Among Ministries and Departments



While the Ministry of Home Affairs is the nodal ministry managing disaster situations, other ministries support it as well for their specialised functions. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare through the Emergency Medical Relief Division of the Directorate General of Health Services makes an important contribution. In a typical disaster situation, the Medical Relief Division gets in touch with the Central Control Room in M.H.A. and obtains feedback on the extent of disaster situation on a particular day, the population affected and the health profile of the victims, such as, the number of casualties, type of injuries /diseases.

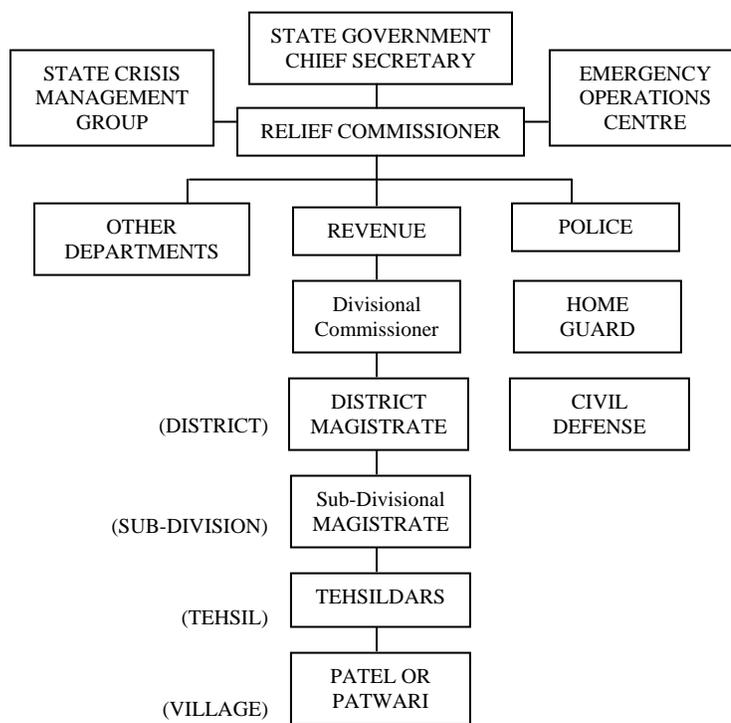
State Level

State governments are autonomous in organizing relief operations in the event of natural disaster and also for purposes of long-term preparedness and rehabilitation

measures. The Central government’s role is limited to supplementing the efforts of the state governments.

Every State has a Relief Commissioner who is incharge of disaster relief. In states where there is no designated Relief Commissioner, the Chief Secretary or an officer nominated by him is given overall charge of relief operations. Every state has a number of secretaries who head various departments connected with administration and they all function under the overall supervision and control of the Chief Secretary, who ensures that their combined efforts are coordinated for effective disaster management. The states deal with natural disasters through their Revenue Departments or Relief Departments. The State response system is being depicted below in Figure 5.

Figure - 5, State Response System



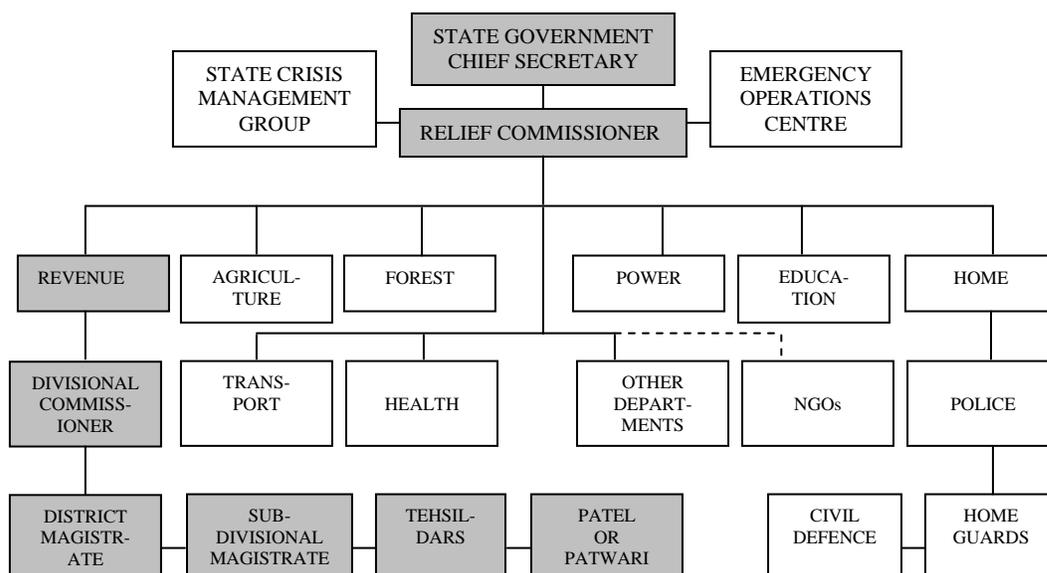
Source: National Disaster Management Division. Ministry of Home Affairs

The State also has a State Crisis Management Group (SCMG), which functions under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary / Relief Commissioner. The Group comprises senior officers from the departments of revenue/relief, home, civil supplies, power, irrigation, water supply, local self-government (panchayat), agriculture, forests, rural development, health, planning, public works and finance. The SCMG is expected to take into consideration the guidance received from the Government of India from time to time and formulate action plans accordingly for dealing with different kinds of natural disasters.

Some of the states like Gujarat and Maharashtra have enacted a Disaster Management Act. In few states there are authorities set up like the Orissa State Disaster Management Authority and the Gujarat State Disaster Mitigation Authority. The Relief Codes are existing in all the states and some of these have been updated to

specific response plans for cyclone, floods etc. The Relief Commissioner of the State establishes an Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) Control Room as soon as disaster situation develops. The EOC collects and disseminates the latest information on forecasting and warning of disaster, and functions as the focal point for coordinating disaster relief efforts with the other concerned departments. This is depicted in Figure 6

Figure – 6, State Level Interaction among Ministries, Departments and Officials



Source: National Disaster Management Division (Ministry of Home Affairs)

District Level

World Disaster Report 1998 states that effective and accountable local authorities are the single most important institutions for reducing the toll of natural and human induced disasters.

Every state is divided into a number of districts. The country's day-to-day administration centres round the District Collector, (in some states he is also known as District Magistrate or Deputy Commissioner) who heads the administrative organization in a district. District administration is the focal point for field level organizations and implementation of all government contingency plans. The District Collector is incharge of all the relief measures at the district level. The State Government routes its instructions through him (in some states through the Divisional Commissioner also) and he ensures that the total efforts of the district are geared in a coordinated manner for providing relief to the people affected by disasters.

The various measures undertaken at the district level are:

- **Contingency Plans**
The District Magistrate develops a district level plan, which is submitted to the state for approval. The plan assigns measures to be taken by the different district departments and their functionaries, and it identifies the areas of coordination

- ***District Relief Committee***
The relief measures are reviewed by the district level relief committee consisting of official and non-official members and including the local representatives of the people, members of the Legislative Assembly and the Parliament.
- ***District Control Room***
A Control Room is set up in the district as soon as a natural disaster occurs. The Control Room monitors the rescue and relief efforts on a continuing basis.
- ***Coordination***
The District Collector also coordinates with central government authorities and defence forces that may be posted in the district. He synchronizes the voluntary efforts of NGOs with the efforts of the district administration. The communication channels are maintained through the police wireless network in the event of breakdown of the normal means of communication, including the telephone and the telegraph systems.

Sub-district Level

A district is further divided into sub-divisions and tehsils or talukas. The head of the sub-division is called a Sub-Divisional Officer or Deputy Collector, while the tehsil is under the charge of the Tehsildar (Talukdar or Hamlatdar in some States). The lowest unit of administration is the village whose revenue matters are attended to by a functionary known as Patel or Patwari. All these tiers of administration – the Patwari, Tehsildar, Deputy Collector and the District Collector - function as a team to provide succour to the people in the event of a disaster. The entire chain beginning at the Centre to the village level is connected by the means of a telecommunication system.

The Panchayats at the village level are incorporated in the disaster management plans. Besides the governmental functionaries, the civil societal organisations play an important role in disaster response. They include the non-governmental organisations, voluntary organisations, community based organisations, and various other agencies. The international organisations also play a role. Efforts pertaining to disaster response by various stakeholders are discussed in the ensuing paragraphs.

5.5 ROLE OF SERVICE AGENCIES

Various agencies like army, fire, police and emergency health services can serve as an effective first line of response for rapid and effective disaster interventions. The role of various service agencies in disaster response is now discussed.

Medical and Public Health Services

The Emergency Medical Relief Division of the Directorate General of Health Services discharges the responsibility of catering to emergency help. The Medical Stores Organisation maintains the depots in Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkatta , Karnal, Hyderabad and Guwahati. These depots maintain civil defence stocks and mobile hospitals units for emergency use.

India has taken steps to educate medical professionals about their role in disaster relief. The training activities were conducted under the WHO funded programme by

the disaster management collaborating centers with a view to create awareness among the officials of the health and other departments on various aspects of health sector disaster management. This has contributed to building up a cadre of officials in the health and other departments who are sensitive to natural calamities and are conversant with the drill to be adopted and the procedures to be followed in the event of a disaster so as to provide necessary relief to the affected population.

The states, the districts and sub-districts and the primary health care centers also provide medical relief in case of disasters. Some charitable, voluntary and private institutions also provide medical relief at times of disasters.

Fire Fighting Services

The National Fire Service College, Nagpur, conducts different types of courses for the training of fire officers in India including disaster management. Fire services at the local level always respond to any emergency.

Civil Defence

Civil Defence aims at saving life, minimizing damage to property and maintaining continuity of industrial production in the event of a hostile attack. It has small number of staff and establishment which gets augmented during the emergencies.

Police

In times of disaster, the police is first to respond and it maintains security and law and order and provides disaster assistance through effective police communication system. It also regulates the movement of victims, rescue and relief, medical assistance and supplies.

Paramilitary Forces

The paramilitary forces such as Border Security Force (BSF), Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), National Security Guard (NSG), Railway Protection Force (RPF), Home Guards and Assam Rifles (AR) have well defined roles in disaster situations.

Defence Forces

The Defence forces are frequently called upon to assist the civil authorities in natural calamities. The defence forces are most useful they provide timely assistance such as dropping food, water and medicines to affected areas, erecting military bridge equipment and other services that save lives immediately.

These service agencies work in coordination with the government at various levels. They also coordinate with the NGOs. Control is exercised by the respective Ministries/Departments under whom they operate.

5.6 STATE DISASTER MANAGEMENT PLAN – MAHARASHTRA

Several States have been active in training disaster management personnel and preparing contingency plans. A good example is the Centre for Disaster Management, at the Yashwant Rao Chavan Academy of Development Administration, Government Training Institute in Pune, Maharashtra. It is a research and training institution which has focused on assisting the districts with developing their disaster management plans. Among the states, Maharashtra has taken lead in preparing a comprehensive multi-hazard Disaster Management Plan (DMP). The plan has three components namely (i) risk analysis and vulnerability assessment, (ii) response planning, and (iii) mitigation strategy. The details of which are given below:

- The Risk Analysis and Vulnerability Assessment depicts the present picture for each disaster-exposure, loss of life, property damage, etc. It also shows geographic distribution of each hazard. The various monitoring facilities, regulatory regimes, and the countermeasures available for each disaster have been depicted in the analysis.
- The Response Plan gives the organizational structure of all the state, central and non-governmental agencies to effectively deal with disaster in a coordinated manner to mitigate its impact. It identifies the functional areas such as relief, communications, information, transport, health services, and proposes assignments to the various departments. The plan also lays down preparedness checklists, operating procedures and reporting formats.
- The mitigation strategy focuses on the long-term planning for disaster reduction. It deals with issues of continued commitment to hazard identification and risk assessment, applied research and technological transfer, investment-incentives of mitigation, and leadership for mitigation. The strategy argues for better land use management, building codes, traffic standards, health standards, etc. These objectives are to be secured through disaster legislation, mitigation, regulation, and incentives for the same.

Based on the State Plan, detailed district plans have been made. These plans are frequently rehearsed and periodically updated. There are also linked to the activities of various response agencies.

5.7 ISSUES

In the recent past, government response to natural disasters has progressively improved in terms of its effectiveness. This is chiefly due to the emergence of well organized administrative machinery, presence of Relief Manuals at district level, predetermined allocation of duties and recognized public-private partnerships. However, there are certain aspects, which still need to be addressed to answer to the very cause of disaster management.

- **Absence of a national policy on disaster management**
There is an absence of an integrated and coordinated policy at the national level. The Government of India has the requisite structure to cope with disasters. However, it has yet to publish a national emergency management plans. It also lacks the strategy for guidance and doctrinal development.

There is non-existence and non-formalization of standard operating procedure to be followed in providing disaster relief. Presence of such a policy will also help clearly define government's approaches on a continuing basis. It will also provide for an appropriate legislation and associated regulations in this regard besides providing an overall national competence and self-reliance.

The Disaster Management Act needs to be given for effecting implementation.

- **Fragile coordination and control mechanism**

The coordination and control mechanism is very fragile, because the significance is given to personalities rather than to structures, which lead to inadequate coordination between the different stakeholders. It also leads to overlapping and competition on same financial resources and emergency response assets and ultimately end up with ineffectiveness and confusion.

Likewise, there is discrepancy in the distribution of relief to the affected community as a result those who are in need of relief are not reached in proper time.

- **Improper risk assessment and vulnerability analysis**

There is improper risk assessments and vulnerability analysis. This makes it difficult for different stakeholders to understand risk, which makes it difficult to address the issue of disaster prevention, preparedness, response and recovery.

- **Bureaucratic apathy and lack of political will**

It has been found that in cases of disaster like Gujarat earthquake, Orissa Cyclone, Gorakhpur Floods and other disasters in the different parts of the country the government response have been found very tardy and lukewarm. The state administration lacks attitude and temperament to respond. Bureaucracy is not as responsive as required.

Again downsizing of many civil defence organisations has left a gap in the individual emergency response capacity of many states.

- **Lack of Community participation**

The government views rescue and relief work on a piecemeal basis as the responsibility is accorded to the revenue department. The community involvement and public support is not factored into it.

People's participation and involvement in the design, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of disaster management plan is absent. The administration views the people as a passive recipient rather than as active partners in dealing with disasters. Involvement of local people and civil society groups in rescue and relief is viewed as obstruction by the authorities.

Even if few community-based initiatives exist, they have limited outreach and they fall short of achieving greater impact, this is a major challenge.

5.8 ENHANCING DISASTER RESPONSE MANAGEMENT

- **Constitutional and Legal Framework**

To ensure the efficiency and effective management of natural and other disasters and for achieving greater coordination and responsiveness with respect to prevention and mitigation of disaster and also to provide better relief and rehabilitation of victims of disaster, strong constitutional and legal framework needs to be developed.

As recommended by High Power Committee (HPC) the Disaster Management as a subject/item should be mentioned in any one of the lists (Centre or State). In addition to the constitutional framework a suitable legislation is to be adopted at the centre and the state to clearly defined the role and responsibilities of government at various levels.

There is a need to have an effective act at the Centre and the State level. Such an act will entail the formulation of a national policy on disaster management.

The state should adhere to the larger principles guiding emergency humanitarian assistance in crises as laid down by international humanitarian law. These principles will be guiding factor in the preparation of national policy, plan, relevant documents and manuals pertaining to disasters. The state should also integrate these principles to prepare the plan to suit to the local context and conditions. For this, there should be disaster preparedness plan at the national, state and district level which play a vital role by instructing the officials what they should follow at the time of disaster and also instruct and issue directions to the their subordinates and affected people. This has the affect of not only speeding up the rescue and relief operation but also boosting the morale of the affected people.

- **Coordination and Control Mechanism**

To improve coordination and control at national and state level a Cabinet Committee should be vested with the subject of Disaster Management. Further the All Party Committee consisting of all major political parties, bureaucrats, NGOs, community, and other actors under the Chairmanship of Prime Minister at the National Level and Chief Minister at the State Level should be set up. This will help in generating the requisite political will, much needed consensus and coordination among the various stakeholders in disaster management.

National Institute for Disaster Management also needs to be established as a centre of excellence in the area of creation of knowledge and dissemination including training and capacity building related to disasters.

A networking of training institutions led by a national level disaster management institutions with symbolic linkages with other national and state level institutions need to be forced and developed. There should actively in value all the training and educational institutes.

To respond to disaster properly, there is a need to identify the strength and gaps in the operational capacity of different agencies involved in disaster preparedness and response. Hence, proper inventory for assessment of

government, non-governmental and other agencies and civil society have to be initiated likewise.

A clear grading of disasters that is who should take the responsibility in providing relief and rehabilitation at the time of disaster is to be clearly defined. The HPC, in its report, has recommended that a district level disaster should be dealt by district administration, the State level disaster should be looked into by the concerned State Governments and the National level disasters by the Central Government.

Trigger mechanism has to be incorporated as an emergency quick response mechanism, which would spontaneously set the vehicle of management into motion on the road to disaster mitigation process.

To improve cooperation and coordination in crises prevention and response by civil society humanitarian agencies, there is a need to develop coherent protocols that ensure national policies are observed by these organizations in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and colliding initiatives at the time of a crisis.

Bilateral agreements between neighbouring countries has to be facilitated. The reception and delivery of emergency humanitarian assistance and for this purpose the earmarking of resources that will be made available in response to specific disaster should be identified.

There is a need to evolve continues process of analysis – action – reflection which will help to decipher the gaps in disaster management plans. This will result into new actions. This will also help to share lessons learnt from disaster episodes and incorporate the best practices.

Parasuraman and Unnikrishnan have suggested a four-tier response model in the Indian Context. This will operate at the National, State, District, and Block Level and they also suggested setting up of a Rapid Rescue Relief Force comprising community, panchayat, government, and civil service agencies at each of the four-tiers in all disaster prone areas. They pinpoint the promising feature of India, that is the existence of functioning peoples' institutions at all levels. These levels have played a very effective role in responding to disasters. What is wanting and necessary is the identification of all institutions, their roles and responsibilities and the assessment and strengthening of their capacities. Thus according to them in the final analysis effective coordination between the concerned government agencies, voluntary groups, professional groups, the international community and the affected community will determine the out come of any disaster management programme.

- **Promoting People's Participation**

People's participation is a pre-requisite for success of disaster management efforts. They should find a suitable role in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of the disaster management plan. The community awareness in disaster preparedness should be taken up in the disaster prone areas of different states. The women, the youth and the people from all walks of life should be involved in preparedness, prevention, response and recovery. The

capacity of the community should be strengthened so as to enable them to cope with disasters. The NGOs and educational institutions can play a significance role in community awareness and preparedness for disasters.

There is a much felt need to identify those persons, communities and households most at risk to disaster through assessment and analysis of risks, vulnerability and capacities as a basis for prioritizing location and focus of programme activities.

Create a security plan and relevant capacity to ensure the protection of both service providers and relief recipients at the time of crisis.

5.9 CONCLUSION

As rightly stated in the HPC report, disaster management needs a dedicated political commitment at all levels of national and local governments. A structure with clearly defined authority and appropriate budget to maintain an effective disaster plan is needed. Preparedness plans should be comprehensive in scale and operation, ideally through a nominated national body. There should be well-coordinated network between NGOs and the Government and also between NGOs themselves. Better coordination would result in a wider reach and a more comprehensive approach to disaster management. Coming to the control, it is expected to be the basic duty of the Government to coordinate, integrate and control various activities and operations at the time of responding to disaster.

The central, state, and local governments and the NGOs have stressed more upon relief. Now it is high time that all the agencies, involved in the disasters, should direct themselves towards the entire process of disaster management - prevention, preparedness, response and recovery. They should also evolve an integrated and holistic approach in dealing with disasters. The initiative should come from the government and also from the community, as the community is the first responder in case of disasters. The local bodies namely the panchayati raj institutions and urban local bodies have to be integrated in the disaster management, as these bodies are nearer to the communities. Apart from all these, the recommendations of the HPC should be implemented in true spirit that will create coherent, cohesive, and well-coordinated disaster response system in India.

5.10 KEY CONCEPTS

Nodal Ministry: The Ministry mainly responsible.

Relief Operations: It includes any action or steps or measure taken, assistance given or support rendered or succour delivered, at anytime, before, during or after disaster towards preventing, easing, alleviating, mitigating any suffering or hardship, pain or injury or distress arising out of or related to a disaster.

District Magistrate: It includes Collector and/or Deputy Commissioner in charge of district by whatever nomenclature he may be called.

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5.12 ACTIVITIES

- 1) Discuss the role played by Central and State Administration in Disaster Response.
- 2) Assess the coordination and control mechanism at nation, state and local level.
- 3) Discuss the issues and enhancing the Disaster Response Management.