



## ***Disaster Management: Need of Revival in Policy Framework***



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### **Abstract**

*This paper propagates that disaster safe neighbourhoods must be recognized as a basic human right and continued responsibility of local government. Emergency response is what most people associate with disasters. Timely, efficient and effective response relies on careful planning for quick action by different actors and institutions in alliance. The local bodies can be effective instruments in tackling disasters through early warning system, relief distribution, providing shelters to victims, medical assistance, etc.*

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Mainstreaming of disaster risk reduction as core principal of every urban development work is the key for disaster safe future. Although the Yokohama Strategy (1994) emphasized that disaster response alone is not sufficient. It has been realized during recent catastrophic events of natural disasters in India that there is always a human factor involved in degree of destruction and losses occurred due to these natural events. With more than 300 districts in seismic zone III, IV and V, and 180 districts facing multi hazard threats, disaster management and risk reduction initiatives require consistent public policy support and active community participation.

By 2025 half of Indian population is expected to live in urban areas. Disaster vulnerability though most crucial, it is one of the most underestimated issue in urban development. With increasing vulnerability of megacities, disaster and risk management requires to be a continual process rather than one time government intervention. A leap frog approach of handling disasters has lately proved as short sighted of vision done in twenty years of document period. Vulnerability of urban habitats is due to ignorance of existing hazards. Although it is not a source in itself, rather multiplies due to unprofessional, unskilled and unprepared handling of the aspects which are generating or strengthening existing hazards to higher level of risk.

Disaster safe neighbourhoods must be recognized as a basic human right and continued responsibility of local government. Emergency response is what most people associate with disasters. Timely, efficient and effective response relies on careful planning for quick action by different actors and institutions in alliance.

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**Table 1 Damage due to Natural Disasters in India**

Year	People affected	Houses and Buildings, partially of totally, damaged	Amount of property damages/loss (Rs. Crore)
1985	595.6	2,449,878	40.06
1986	550.0	2,049,277	30.74
1987	483.4	2,919,380	20.57
1988	101.5	242,533	40.63
1989	30.1	782,340	20.41
1990	31.7	1,019,930	10.71
1991	342.7	1,190,109	10.90
1992	190.9	570,969	20.05
1993	262.4	1,529,916	50.80
1994	235.3	1,051,223	10.83
1995	543.5	2,088,355	40.73
1996	549.9	2,376,693	50.43
1997	443.8	1,103,549	n.a.
1998	521.7	1,563,405	0.72
1999	501.7	3,104,064	1020.97
2000	594.34	2,736,355	800.00
2001	788.19	846,878	12000

Annual Reports, NDM Division, Ministry of Agriculture

## 2. MAINSTREAMING DISASTERS INTO DEVELOPMENT

Human development has been recognized to be more than rise or fall of national income. It has been about enabling environment in which people can develop full potential and capabilities for happy and creative lives. Enhancing the capabilities of the community through levels of human development also ensures resilience of people to face the hazard in systematic manner.

Through it has been recognized that technological and engineering solutions dealt with symptoms rather than with the cause of the problem, thus cannot offer long term solutions. Disaster risk reduction (DRR) need to be integrally based on the long term programmes of urban development. Due to cross cutting nature of disaster risk, potential implication of decision in one area of intervention leads to vulnerability in another sector.

Steps to mainstreaming as adapted from Benson and Twigg (2007) are as follows:

- Raising Awareness;
- Enabling Environment;
- Change in Operational Practice;
- Measuring Progress; and

- Learning and experience sharing.

Mainstreaming DRR component in development planning revolves around the following hypothesis:

- Mainstreaming for whom, and with what goals;
- Instruments of mainstreaming and factors of choice for setting priorities; and
- Efficacy of instruments for enabling disaster resilient development.

Disaster is an issue for Development. People get marginalized and get deprived of the outcomes of the development. Disaster triggered by natural hazards put development gains at risk. It has been recognized as a living threat in achievement of Millennium Development Goals. As per the United Nations Development Programme 2004, disasters are both cause and product of failed development. It is important to analyze the impact of development initiative on the existing degree of vulnerability to natural hazards or sometimes creating new forms of vulnerability.



It has been recognized over a period of time that characteristic of disaster are more associated with its physical impact than with the intensity of natural hazard. In 1980-1990, researches from various fields have advocated that impact of natural hazard depends not only on the physical resistance of a structure, but on the capacity of people to absorb the impact and recover from loss and damage. Thus the casual factor of disaster have been shifted from natural event towards the development process generating different levels of vulnerability and also altering or magnifying pattern of existing hazard.

### 3. DISASTER DEVELOPMENT LINKAGES

Disaster and development linkages clarify to have potential of increasing or reducing risk. Number of large scale disasters occurred at the end of IDNDR (1990-1999), United Nations International Decade of Natural Disaster Reduction, articulated serious consideration of disaster development relationship. Disaster - Development Nexus<sup>1</sup> comes under three categories:

**Disaster Impeding disasters:** Disaster impede the process of development setting forth economic losses as well GDP losses. Hygo Framework of Action 2005-2015, adopted by 168 countries at World Conference on Disaster Reduction at Kobe, Japan, identified five priority actions to reduce risk of disasters and significantly gain of development projects.

**Development creates Disasters:** Development has sometimes created new risk of disasters. May it be due to rapid industrialization and urbanization creating pressure on urban growth, leading to informal settlements with unstable climatic conditions, degradation of forest, land resources, inefficient governance and corruption leading to poor enforcement of building regulations, substandard construction?

**Development without disasters:** Here innovative tools and methodologies have to be developed to ensure that development does not create a new disaster. Climatic change adaptation and coping with high density urban growth would be the two most challenging task of development without disasters.

**Disaster Management Act and Techno Legal Regime:** Disaster legislation though new in India (2005), it dates back to 1978 in Philippines prone to multi hazards. Legislation over period of 30 years found to be primarily of reactive approach focusing on preparedness and response. The zoning ordinances and master plans prepared by town planning departments have been overtaken by the dynamics of urban growth<sup>2</sup>.

This has brought a qualitative shift from post-disaster management to disaster risk management, as a proactive approach. In India, an expert group studied the town

1 2nd Asian Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, Panel Discussion on Development without disaster, Nov.2007

2 Establishment of Techno Legal Regime for Safer Construction, by BMTPC.



and country planning legislation, development control regulations and building byelaws adopted in several states in the past.

- Amendments in Model Town and country Planning Act, 1960; and
- Functions and Powers to Local Planning Authorities (section 11)

Section 11a states for land use map indicating hazard prone areas, section 11b for interim development plan for regulation of hazard prone areas

Section 11c requires Comprehensive Development Plan.

- Model Regional and Town Planning and Development Laws;
- Model Urban and Regional Planning and Development Laws;
- Model Town and country Planning Act, 1960; and
- UDPFI Guidelines as applicable to different states under the existing provision of town and country planning legislation when Master Plan and Development Plan are formulated, However, these zoning regulations have to be implemented through provisions of development control regulations and building byelaws.

#### 4. GOALS OF MAINSTREAMING

Disaster Risk reduction is a cross cutting issue that needs to be owned, rather than by a single department. There is disconnect between policy decision making bodies and practices on ground. Horizontal and vertical integration in urban governance is desired.

- Identification of knowledge and procedural gaps in disaster preparedness at city, zone, neighbourhood, buildings and individual level;
- Understanding of day today relationship of disaster and urban development through modelling simulation similar to EIA;
- To develop a state that can help localities withstand and overcome damage and reduced quality of life from Natural Hazard event; and
- Monitoring framework of land use zoning regulations, etc. on regular basis for different levels of urban development like building code effectiveness and grading schedule.

##### 4.1 Organized Efforts in Mainstreaming

Earthquake and Megacities Initiatives has been disseminating technical knowledge to the communities with two pronged approach. One to enhance focus of urban government on risk reduction in organized manner, and second to enhance communities role with urban government to make the effort of disaster risk reduction easier to accomplish. Prevention Consortium is a unique partnership on disaster risk reduction that international organization, governments, private sectors, civil society organizations and academic institutions.



## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The 73rd and 74th constitution amendments recognize the *Panchayati Raj* Institutions as institutions of self government. The amendment has also laid down necessary guidelines for the structure of their composition, power functions, devolution of finances, regular holding of elections and reservation of seats of weaker section including women. These local bodies can be effective instruments in tackling disasters through early warning system, relief distribution, providing shelters to victims, medical assistance, etc. Continuum in DRR require following manifestations:

- Incorporation of culture of safety through every process of urban development;
- Identification of knowledge and procedural gaps in disaster preparedness with five tiered approach;
- Development of safety indicators and grading schedules for every development works, not as goal but as a process; and
- Discovering out sourcing and other partnership possibilities in safety culture at city, zone, neighbourhood, building and individual level.

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