



# DELHI POLICY GROUP

*Advancing India's Rise as a Leading Power*

## DPG Seminar Reports, Vol. 1, Issue 1

### DPG-NDMA Seminar on "Review of Disaster Management in India"

India International Centre | New Delhi | August 29, 2017



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### DPG-NDMA Seminar Review of Disaster Management in India

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INDIA INTER



**DPG-NDMA Seminar on  
Review of Disaster Management in India  
August 29, 2017**

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# Abstract of Proceedings and Power Point Presentations

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# Programme



DPG Policy Seminar

# **SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**



## **DELHI POLICY GROUP**

### DPG/NDMA SEMINAR – SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

A seminar on ‘Review of Disaster Management in India’ was organised by Delhi Policy Group [DPG] in collaboration with National Disaster Management Authority [NDMA] at the India International Centre, New Delhi on August 29, 2017. The seminar discussed current aspects of disaster management in India with panel discussions deliberating on relevant issues in involving communities for disaster responses, coordination for field response and international disaster response.

#### **Opening Session**

Opening remarks by Ambassador H.K. Singh (Director General, DPG) and Shri R.K. Jain (Member, NDMA) gave an overview of the progress made by their respective organisations in the domain of disaster management and policy. This was followed by introductory remarks by Shri Arjun Katoch, Member Advisory Committee of NDMA and Senior Fellow, DPG.

Shri Kiren Rijju, Minister of State for Home Affairs then gave his Inaugural Remarks.

### SESSION 1 – THE ARCHITECTURE OF DISASTER MANAGEMENT IN INDIA AND THE DM ACT 2005

#### **Recommendation 1.1: *Prepare for the worst-case scenario***

Indian disaster management needs to prepare for the worst-case scenario, which is a major, shallow earthquake in North India. This is likely to result in hundreds of thousands of casualties due to density of population and poor housing construction. Government and other responders are currently totally unprepared for such an event. There is a need for the senior political and bureaucratic leadership to be exercised on such a scenario.

**Recommendation 1.2:** *Establish a clear line of responsibility and accountability in Government for Disaster Management*

Personnel in Government who are responsible to 'prepare' for disasters should also be people who are responsible for 'responding' to them. At present the decision making structure is too complicated and diffuse thus no one is accountable. The major problem is the split responsibilities between NDMA and the Disaster Management Division in the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) even though both entities report to MHA. To resolve this issue, NDMA, under MHA, should be the nodal point in Government for all disaster related activities. To do so, integrate the Disaster Management division of MHA and NDMA to eliminate duplication of responsibilities. One suggested solution is to make the Minister of State for Home Affairs who is responsible for Disaster Management also the Vice Chairman of NDMA and amalgamate the Disaster Management Division of MHA into NDMA. The Secretary NDMA should also be designated an ex-officio Secretary of the MHA.

**Recommendation 1.3:** *Integrate the Armed Forces into Disaster Management planning and preparation at all levels*

In all countries, including India, the Armed Forces are major responders in any large disaster due to their logistics and rapid deployment capabilities. They need to be formally incorporated into planning and preparation for disasters at all levels. Currently they are not formally represented at State and District levels. It is recommended that they be incorporated into these mechanisms at State and District level i.e. into the State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) and District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) as well as the State Executive Committee (SEC).

**Recommendation 1.4:** *Planning for Livestock*

India is a rural country with a large part of its population living in villages. Therefore, people will not abandon their livestock during disasters, as it is part of their livelihood. There is a need to cater for livestock in Disaster Management plans at the local levels.

**Recommendation 1.5:** *Establish Disaster Mitigation Funds and Terms of Reference for the 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission*

Disaster Mitigation Funds at all levels are required to be established in accordance with the Disaster Management Act 2005. This has not been done so far. These should be established and money allocated for disaster mitigation. This money should be routed to States through NDMA (in the same manner as with FEMA in the USA) so that there is oversight as to how they are spent. With regard to establishment of mitigation funds at the state, national and district level, several models exist around the world that can be drawn upon. Also, the Terms of Reference for the 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission are currently being framed. NDMA could advocate for the Commission to look into the establishment of mitigation funds.

**Recommendation 1.6:** Future development of NDRF

Over the last ten years, the establishment of NDRF has professionalised emergency disaster response in the country. In times of disasters, it inspires confidence in the government's ability to launch an effective response, and different levels of administration have come to depend on it. NDRF has also motivated many states to establish their own State Disaster Response Forces. This notwithstanding, the future development of NDRF needs to be guided by two considerations: 1) It must stay at the cutting edge of technology, specialised technical capacities, and international best practice. This means that in addition to its operational capacity, it needs to have capacity to strategise its development futuristically. In the early days of its establishment, this capacity was provided by NDMA. This needs to be reactivated and NDMA should supervise the professional development of NDRF. 2) NDRF must not be seen as a substitute for local emergency response capacity. It should supplement not supplant the local capacity. At present, the NDRF strength amounts to 1 NDRF responder per 1 lakh population of India. For a disaster response country, this is short by many orders of magnitude. This gap can only be addressed by investment in local capacity – community volunteers, civil defense, home guards, local fire services, SDRF units etc.

## SESSION 2 – COMMUNITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES – THE CORE OF DISASTER RISK REDUCTION AND RESPONSE

### **Recommendation 2.1:** *Empower the locals*

Neighbours are the first responders. They and the local communities have to be included in all decision making and preparedness for disaster response, which is not the case right now. There is a need to utilise local society leaders to propagate disaster risk reduction and response programmes as they are connected to the local population. It is recommended that Panchayats be empowered with both funds and powers to further disaster mitigation, preparedness and response programmes.

### **Recommendation 2.2:** *Utilise the Indian Red Cross network*

The Indian Red Cross has the President of India, Chief Ministers and DCs as its office bearers. It is also the largest Red Cross society in the world with over one million volunteers and members and has representation down to local level. This unique built in synergy between the Government and Red Cross needs to be leveraged for disaster mitigation and response programmes as is being done in Mandi District of Himachal Pradesh.

### **Recommendation 2.3:** *Utilise volunteers, NGOs and grass roots organisations in disaster management at the local level*

For disaster mitigation and preparedness programmes to succeed, there is a need to include on a large-scale volunteers, NGOs and Civil Society organisations in disaster preparedness and response schemes. Currently this capacity, with its local knowledge is not utilised. In addition, it is recommended that the existing Home Guards, Civil Defence and NCC networks be used in all major disaster preparedness and response schemes.

### **Recommendation 2.4:** *Establish Local Emergency Response teams and upgrade Fire Services with the support of private entities*

The most lives are saved in disaster response in the first hours after the event. For this to happen there is an imperative need to establish local emergency response teams at village, municipality and town levels. These should be established utilising volunteers, Home Guards or Civil Defence units. Funding for equipment and

training by private parties for local teams should be encouraged. It is also recommended that Fire Services at all levels must be upgraded and for this purpose also use of CSR funds and private contributions should be encouraged.

**Recommendation 2.5:** *Train local masons in techniques of constructing earthquake resistant housing*

Building codes in villages do not exist yet most of the population lives in houses constructed by local masons. It is recommended that a major training programme be instituted to train local masons in simple low cost construction techniques that make houses more earthquake resistant since they are the ones who build the houses for the vast majority of the population.

### **SESSION 3 – COORDINATION OF DISASTER RESPONSE IN INDIA IN THE FIELD**

**Recommendation 3.1:** *Establish a standardised system of On Site Coordination Centres at the District level in major disasters*

No all India standardised system for field coordination at the disaster site exists on ground. All responding entities including the CAPFs and Armed Forces respond in silos to their own chain of command. This is counter productive in both information sharing and prioritisation of needs and response. A standard model of an On Site Coordination Centre to be established by a central trained cadre of civilian and Armed Forces officers that are rapidly deployable from parts of India not affected by the disaster needs to be developed by NDMA which can support the DC of the District. This should be deployed in all major disasters of all types throughout the country.

**Recommendation 3.2:** *Update the legal authority for deployment of Armed Forces for response to disasters*

The Armed Forces were called out 274 times in 12 years in response to disasters. This relied on the 'Aid to Civil Power' legal authority, which is decades old and out of date. It is recommended that a separate legal authority be enacted which deals with deploying the Armed Forces for disaster preparedness and response and which permits them to spend funds to prepare and equip themselves for disaster response.

### **Recommendation 3.3:** *Integrate all responders in field coordination structures*

Field coordination structures whether they be SDMA, DDMA or On Site Coordination Centres must integrate representatives of Indian Red Cross, NGOs and Civil Society organisations during disaster response, relief and rehabilitation as these are major capacities available which should be utilised in a coordinated manner. Similarly, local Armed Forces units need to be integrated at State and District level in preparedness discussions and planning on an ongoing basis in order for there to be better field coordination during disaster response.

### **Recommendation 3.4:** *Conduct regular exercises in disaster prone districts*

It is recommended that a programme of conducting regular District and Block level exercises in field coordination incorporating establishment of On Site Coordination Centres and with the participation of all non-Governmental responders be established.

### **Recommendation 3.5:** *Conduct a Study to establish levels of disaster related stockpiles in disaster prone districts*

It is recommended that a holistic study should be carried out of disaster prone districts in the country to recommend levels of stockpiling of disaster related items as part of disaster mitigation measures.

## **SESSION 4 – INDIA AND INTERNATIONAL DISASTER RESPONSE**

### **Recommendation 4.1:** *Deployment of coordination personnel*

Besides the deployment of NDRF teams and provision of relief materials, India should make use of every possible opportunity to deploy qualified and trained personnel as part of international disaster response. These qualified personnel will bring coordination skills and help link the Indian response with the host government as well as other international responders. This will help enhance the effectiveness of Indian response and ensure that the Indian response is both strategic and visible. This can be divided in two parts: a) deployment of Indian nationals who are already a member of international surge mechanisms such as UNDAC; and b) development of surge capacity that can be deployed in support of Indian embassies to countries where India response bilaterally. For both these types of overseas response capacity, it is recommended that the Government of India develop simplified systems to ensure swift deployment.

**Recommendation 4.2:** *Engagement with International Mechanisms such as INSARAG, Civil-Military Coordination Mechanism*

India should proactively engage with international mechanisms such as INSARAG and Civil-Military Coordination Mechanisms. In this regard, it is important that Indian Search and Rescue teams obtain all the necessary certifications. In an international response, this will ensure that the Indian response teams follow the internationally agreed procedures and protocols to ensure interoperability with the international disaster response system.

**Recommendation 4.3:** *Drawing on international best practice to develop State and local level coordination mechanisms for disaster response*

The experience of recent disaster response in India suggests that a lot remains to be done to improve coordination at the district level. In this regard, the Indian response system can draw upon the international best practice on field coordination of disaster response. Efforts need to be made to establish clear coordination mechanism at the district level that brings together the capacities of different arms of the state and national governments, the Red Cross, the civil society organisations as well as private citizens who may offer support for disaster response.

**Recommendation 4.4:** *Prioritise the operationalisation of SAARC Disaster Response Mechanism*

Within the framework of SAARC, a regional response mechanism has already been ratified. As the host of expanded SAARC Disaster Management Centre, India should prioritise the operationalisation of this mechanism. This would entail the conduct of joint disaster response exercises, development of a roster of emergency responders distributed across the SAARC countries and trained in a common methodology, development of a common methodology and protocols that address operational (including issues such as customs, visas) in times of disasters.

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