

A Review of Indian Participation in International Disaster Response

by Arjun Katoch, Senior Fellow, Delhi Policy Group

There is a political context to all international disaster response, which the Indian system inadequately recognises or exploits.



INTRODUCTION

India is one of the most disaster prone countries in the world. It is also located in the Asia Pacific region, which is the most disaster prone region of the world. Fairly regularly, India or another regional country is affected by a natural disaster severe enough for the world to offer assistance, such as the Bhuj earthquake (2001), Indian Ocean tsunami (2004), Pakistan earthquake (2005), Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar (2008), the earthquake and tsunami in Japan (2011), and the Nepal earthquake (2015).

Frequent exposure to disasters has motivated India to develop some specialized tools to deal with major disasters, such as the 10,000-strong National Disaster Response Force (NDRF). However, the paradox is that in spite of its frequent involvement with natural disaster response, both within the country and around it, India has not integrated itself into the international disaster response system, an action that ought to have been a natural corollary to its disaster prone environment. There is a political context to all international disaster response, which the Indian system inadequately recognises or exploits.

This paper examines the Indian interaction with the international disaster response system in three parts, i.e. India as a provider of international disaster assistance, India as a recipient of international disaster assistance and, finally, the Indian military in international disaster response. The paper is confined to dealing with issues related to international sudden onset disaster events such as earthquakes, floods, tsunamis or cyclones and not to those arising from conflict situations.

INDIA AS A PROVIDER OF ASSISTANCE IN INTERNATIONAL DISASTERS

After Independence, India was a net recipient of humanitarian assistance. However, things have changed significantly since then and "India has come a long way; once dependent on Western aid,

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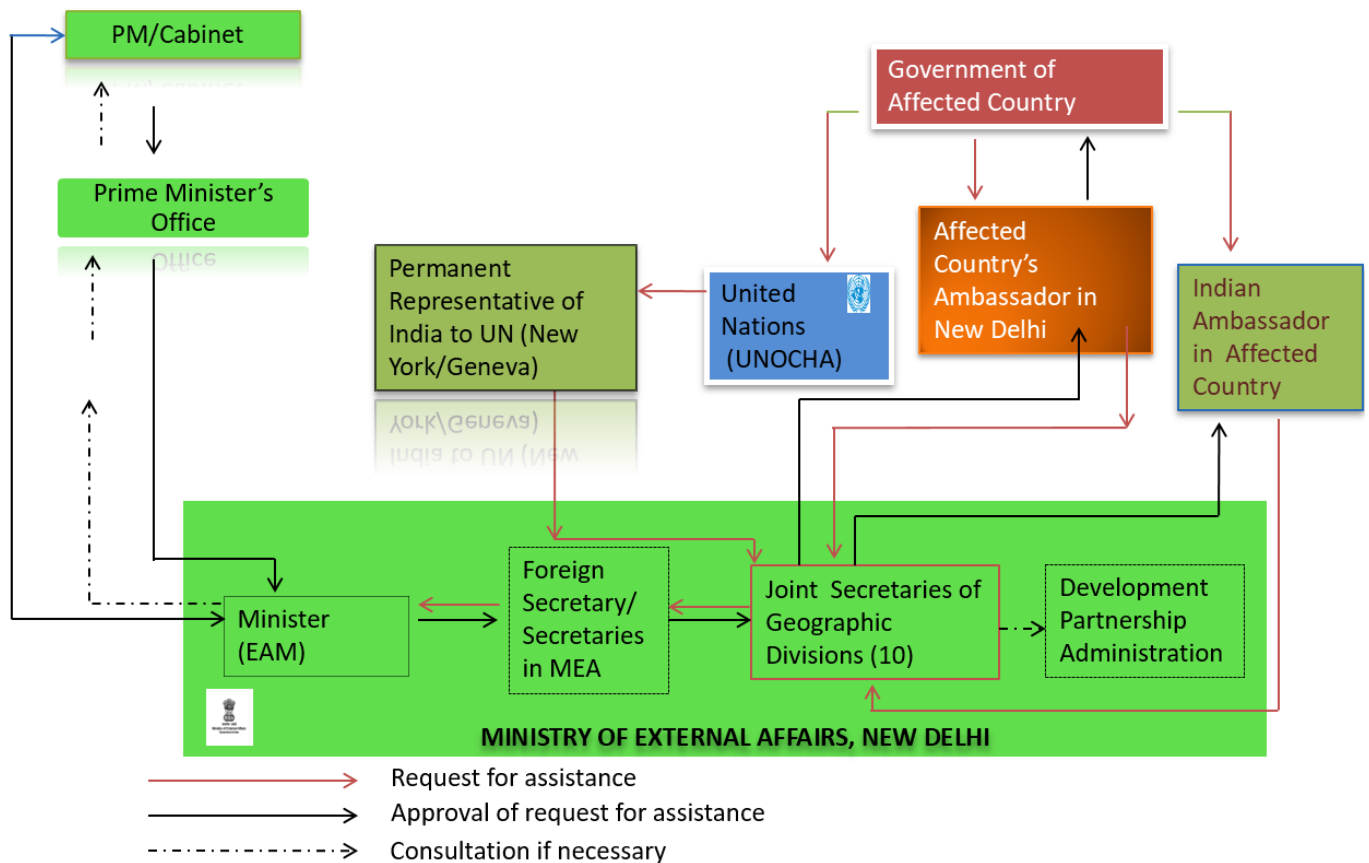
Ambassador Hemant Krishan Singh
Director General

it is now part of the group of non-Western humanitarian donors which together account for at least 12 percent of worldwide humanitarian aid each year.”¹ Between 2000-2010, it provided \$ 315 million to 53 countries around the world, of which \$ 240 million was to six countries of South Asia² reflecting the “neighbourhood first” priorities of Indian foreign policy. Disaster assistance is an emotive and visible form of foreign intervention that has the potential to deliver significant goodwill to the donor. In addition to being humanitarian ‘seva,’ international disaster assistance is also a potent tool of foreign policy for furthering national interests. Western countries have long recognised this fact and put in place robust systems to maximise the leverage of such assistance delivered by them. In contrast, the Indian Government has been dealing with this issue on an ad hoc basis over the years, thereby not reaping as much goodwill and benefits as it could have. This is primarily because of systemic shortcomings which are examined in greater detail below.

DECISION MAKING IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (MEA)

The nearest that the MEA has to a specific body dealing with foreign assistance is the recently established Development Partnership Administration, which deals primarily with developmental assistance on a bilateral basis. Decisions relating to provision of international assistance to disaster-affected countries are taken on a case-by-case basis, depending on the interest taken by the Indian Ambassador in an affected country, the Regional Division Heads and Secretaries in MEA, the Minister of External Affairs, or the Prime Minister. Considering that there are 10 Regional Divisions in MEA, this can sometimes lead to a certain unpredictability of response. There is consultation and coordination between MEA and the Ministry of Defence and Service Headquarters in delivery of international humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. However, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is not generally involved in this process.*

DECISION MAKING PROCESS IN MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE



- **Graphics: DPG**

*This is illustrated by the fact that the Indian National Disaster Management Plan issued by NDMA in 2016, which is a 162 page document, deals with the provision of international assistance in disasters in just one line which states “India is looking forward to engage with international community in providing humanitarian assistance to other countries in need”.³

However, India provided an excellent example of how it can respond to an international disaster when its vital interests are affected in its response to the earthquake in Nepal in 2015. In spite of being the largest ever international disaster response operation undertaken by India, decision making and coordination within the main entities of the Government of India i.e. MEA, Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), NDMA, Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Armed Forces Headquarters was good, primarily because it was driven by Prime Minister Modi personally. Such coordinated decision-making should be consistent, predictable and driven by need as well as Indian interests. It is essential that policy and decision making procedures to respond to various types and levels of disasters abroad should be institutionalized, with MEA taking the lead.

RECOMMENDATION 1

To ensure consistency of decision making, the Ministry of External Affairs, in consultation with relevant partners such as the Integrated Defence Staff of the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Prime Minister's Office should formalise an institutionalized approach on the conditions, modalities and procedures by which humanitarian assistance would be provided by India to countries affected by disasters.



Indian NDRF rescuing a child in Kathmandu, Nepal after the earthquake.

Source: dnaindia.com

RELUCTANCE OF MEA TO WORK THROUGH MULTILATERAL CHANNELS IN INTERNATIONAL DISASTER RESPONSE

“India can consider dealing separately with these two facets of UN OCHA’s mandate, as it has much to gain by participating in international disaster response networks of which UN OCHA is the manager and Secretariat.”

Historically, MEA has shown a marked preference to work with other countries on a bilateral basis rather than through multilateral channels, reflecting a degree of distrust of multilateral Agencies as well as an overriding concern for sovereignty issues. This mindset has resulted in

a certain isolation of India from the mainstream of international disaster response and coordination. The focal point of multilateral international disaster response and preparedness is the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The Under Secretary General of UN OCHA is designated as responsible for the international response to disasters by the UN General Assembly through a resolution that India is party to⁴. India’s working relationship with UN OCHA has not been cordial, principally because OCHA is also responsible for conflict related response which is inherently political, and in which India considers it to be under strong Western influence. India can consider dealing separately with these two facets of UN OCHA’s mandate, as it has much to gain by participating in international disaster response networks of which UN OCHA is the manager and Secretariat.

The UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) system⁵, the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG)⁶, the Civil Military Coordination Section (CMCS)⁷ and the Virtual On Site Operations Coordination Centre (Virtual OSOCC)⁸ are all practical, practitioner driven disaster response

“A well-considered participation in multi-lateral mechanisms will provide a platform to leverage wider influence.”

networks and tools that have been in the forefront of developing common professional standards for emergency responders around the world. India has been occasionally engaged with them over time, with

the result that it has not been able to derive the benefit of advances in this highly professionalized field. For example, India has more than 10 professionals qualified to be part of the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination team, but is unable to deploy them as part of UN international emergency response teams when requested by UN OCHA. This is because between MEA and MHA, the Indian Government has not been able to finalise procedures that allowed for these personnel to be deployed abroad within the 24-hour period that UN OCHA requires. Since more than 70 countries which are also part of the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination system have already created such internal procedures, India loses out on valuable international exposure in practical disaster management by being unable to do so. As a result, the international disaster response launched by India does not leverage wider influence. Its benefits remain limited to earning short-term visibility and some goodwill from the host countries. A well-considered participation in multi-lateral mechanisms will provide a platform to leverage wider influence.

RECOMMENDATION 2

India must fully engage with UN OCHA on disaster preparedness and response issues and participate in international disaster response networks managed by UN OCHA such as the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination team and the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group to derive benefits from global advances and developments in disaster response and leverage wider influence.

RECOMMENDATION 3

“The Disaster Management Division of MHA is staffed by generalists who stay for short periods and have no experience of international disaster response, which is detrimental to Indian interests.”

other countries.

DEPLOYING SPECIALIST SUPPORT TO INDIAN EMBASSIES PROVIDING HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO COUNTRIES AFFECTED BY SUDDEN ONSET DISASTERS.

India’s ‘in kind’ support to other countries affected by disasters has been provided primarily utilizing the assets of the Indian

Armed Forces, such as in the case of assistance to Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka in June/July 2017 during flooding. However, in major disasters, India is just one of the many nations that respond with disaster relief; and there is an entire international coordination structure that is usually established in the recipient country to ensure the best utilization of incoming relief. This is a specialized function and it is not always possible for Indian Embassies abroad to have experienced staff to deal with such contingencies. Most major countries have standard procedures under which a small (4-5 person) team of military and aid specialists is flown in for a short period to the affected country to advise the Ambassador and assist in the optimum utilization of their country’s contribution. For example, the United States sends in a Disaster Assistance Response Team to its Embassies in such eventualities.⁹ India has no such procedure, but should establish one by creating a standby roster of individuals, from the Armed Forces and NDMA, ready to deploy anywhere in the world on short notice to support the Ambassador and Indian Embassy in an affected country to optimize Indian assistance to the affected country.

RECOMMENDATION 4

MEA must establish a procedure to deploy, anywhere in the world and on short notice, a small team of Armed Forces and humanitarian aid specialists with experience in international humanitarian assistance to support the Ambassador and the Indian Embassy in a disaster affected country in working closely with local officials and international responders, in order to optimize Indian assistance to the affected country.

ABSENCE OF DOMAIN KNOWLEDGE AND CONTINUITY WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA IN DEALING WITH INTERNATIONAL DISASTER RESPONSE

Within the Government of India, international disaster response is led by MEA, supported by MHA, NDMA, MoD and Integrated Defence Staff. However, MHA is the nodal Ministry in Government for domestic disaster response issues. The Disaster Management Division of MHA is staffed by generalists who stay for short periods and have no experience of international disaster response, which is detrimental to Indian interests. One recent example is the case of the BIMSTEC 2017 disaster response exercise, which India volunteered to conduct for the seven BIMSTEC countries (Bangladesh, India,

Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan and Nepal) in October 2017. MEA requested MHA to conduct the exercise. MHA further delegated this task to the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF). NDRF, which is purely a domestic rapid response force manned by police personnel, planned a 'demonstration of skills' type of exercise that involved a boat rescue and collapsed building scenario, but did not include the Armed Forces or incorporate any of the extremely complicated and sensitive political and coordination issues involved in international disaster response. Thus, an excellent opportunity for India to facilitate international coordination and leadership in regional disaster response was effectively lost. To provide consistency and domain knowledge within the Government of India, there is an urgent need to establish a cell, staffed by long-term professionals from the Armed Forces, MEA, the humanitarian community and NDMA, that is responsible for all international disaster preparedness and response issues. This MEA-led cell can also conduct exercises such as BIMSTEC 2017 professionally and more frequently, focusing on interoperability and coordination in emergency response involving several countries rather than specific skill sets.

“Within the country, the Indian Red Cross has a unique relationship with the Government as it was incorporated by an act of Parliament.”

RECOMMENDATION 5

MEA should take the lead in establishing an inter-agency cell (in MEA or NDMA) which is staffed by professionals, including Armed Forces humanitarian specialists and NDMA personnel, which is responsible for all issues relating to the policy, coordination, preparedness and response on international disaster management issues within the Government of India.

“It is understood that India, like China, informally follows a policy, which can be summarised as ‘we do not ask for international assistance but may welcome appropriate assistance on a case by case basis if offered voluntarily.’”

RECOMMENDATION 6

MEA, with support from MOD, MHA and NDMA, should convene joint exercises with other countries at regular intervals. The design of these exercises should be informed by high quality expertise on international disaster response. The aim should be to evolve and strengthen the coordination “mechanism” as opposed to practising specific skills.

WORKING WITH THE INDIAN RED CROSS ABROAD

The Indian Red Cross (IRC) is the largest national Red Cross society in the world. It is also a member of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) that has 190 countries as members. Consequently, the Indian Red Cross has access to vast amounts of international knowledge and experience on disaster response issues. Within the country, the Indian Red Cross has a unique relationship with the Government as it was incorporated by an act of Parliament.¹⁰ The President of India is the President and the Health Minister is the Chairman of the Society. Logically, the Indian Red Cross would be a good partner for MEA to utilize while delivering disaster relief abroad. However, MEA has hardly any dealings with the IRC in providing international disaster relief. Most Western Governments fund contingents from their national Red Cross Societies to provide international relief. This has the dual benefit of the money going to a national entity while fulfilling the objective of providing international assistance. MEA should develop procedures by which it can fund the Indian Red Cross to deliver assistance in an affected country during disasters.

RECOMMENDATION 7

MEA should support and partner with the Indian Red Cross to deliver international disaster relief in an affected country.

INDIA AS A RECIPIENT OF INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE IN DISASTERS

There is no official policy document of the Government of India outlining its position with respect to receiving international assistance in the case of a major domestic disaster. It is understood that India, like China, informally follows a policy, which can be summarised as 'we do not ask for international assistance but may welcome appropriate assistance on a case by case basis if offered voluntarily'. During the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, India refused to accept international assistance while being amongst the first to provide it to Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Maldives. Notwithstanding, in the past India has accepted international humanitarian assistance in disasters. During the Orissa Cyclone of October 1999 as well as the Bhuj earthquake of January 2001, India accepted a UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination team as well as international assistance. A major disaster like a powerful earthquake in North India

will certainly see the country needing international assistance, especially in the field of urban search and rescue. This reinforces the case for more engagement in international disaster networks managed by UN OCHA. Some of the issues that need to be considered while accepting international assistance in the case of a major natural disaster in India are outlined below.



German Emergency Response Unit at Bhuj, 2001.
Source:bbmckerrow.blogspot.com

INFLUX OF INTERNATIONAL RESPONDERS IN MAJOR DISASTERS

In today's world of speed of instant information and easy air travel, any affected country will have to make some very rapid decisions on acceptance of international assistance to control the sudden, overwhelming influx of international urban search and rescue teams, NGOs and 'in kind' contributions. These involve clearly articulating who will be allowed into the country and the process for doing so. For example, after the Nepal earthquake of April 25, 2015, the first seven international search and rescue teams from the NDRF of India were in Kathmandu within six hours of the earthquake.¹¹ By May 1, 2015 there were 68 international urban search and rescue teams from 28 countries with 118 dogs and 2080 personnel in Kathmandu.¹² This does not include the hundreds of international humanitarian workers from the Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs), NGOs and other donor countries. It has been recognized for some time that such an influx is a destabilizing strain for local Government authorities already overwhelmed by the disaster.

The Government of India needs to conceptualise its response to international assistance after a major disaster before and not after the event, when it would be under significant pressure. This would require far greater interaction between MEA and MHA than is the case at present. The 10th Five Year Plan

“The Government of India needs to conceptualise its response to international assistance after a major disaster before and not after the event, when it would be under significant pressure.”

document identified this need over a decade ago when it stated “Closer interface with and better understanding of the international system for disaster response, and putting in place systems for dealing with international assistance once it comes in i.e. customs,

immigration, foreign policy implications. A greater appreciation is needed of the speed and automaticity of modern international response to a natural disaster.”¹³ One of the immediate steps that should be taken to control an unwanted influx is a decision to suspend visa on arrival procedures that are currently available for dozens of countries. Thought has also to be given to the process of establishing speedy Customs clearance of items like search and rescue equipment, medical drugs, communications equipment such as Satphones (which are banned for import into India), at airfields that may not be amongst the designated international arrival airfields.

RECOMMENDATION 8

The Government should decide upon a series of integrated steps to be taken immediately after a major disaster to prevent an uncontrolled influx of international responders into the country. Amongst these should be an immediate temporary suspension of the visa free and visa on arrival facility.

RECOMMENDATION 9

MHA and MEA should to develop standard operating procedures to rapidly establish Immigration and Customs outposts at airfields, which may not be amongst the normal international arrival airfields, and to formulate a process for temporary clearance of items, which are normally banned for import into India such as Satphones and some medical drugs.

ON SITE COORDINATION OF INTERNATIONAL RESPONDERS

India has no system by which it can coordinate the operations on site of the hundreds of international

responders and dozens of international Agencies and NGOs that can be expected to respond to a major disaster. It is unrealistic to expect the Collector of a District affected by a disaster or a State Government to have the knowledge and experience to coordinate such a large influx of outsiders. During the Bhuj earthquake of 2001, the UNDAC team set up an On Site Operations Coordination Centre (OSOCC) to assist in coordination of international responders. "An OSOCC was established in the compound of the office of the District Collector and Chief Magistrate on February 2, 2001."¹⁴

"There is urgent need for Central Government to develop an internal system to rapidly deploy an On Site Operations Coordination Centre to coordinate both domestic and international responders at a disaster-affected site."

There is urgent need for Central Government to develop an internal system to rapidly deploy an On Site Operations Coordination Centre to coordinate both domestic and international responders at a disaster-affected site. This need had also been identified long ago in the 10th Five Year Plan document which stated "Establishment of a national stand by, quick reaction team composed of experienced professionals, both military and civilian, drawn from Central and State Government staff to respond immediately by flying in a matter of hours an experienced response team to the locations when a disaster strikes."¹⁵ NDMA should be tasked to establish this capacity.

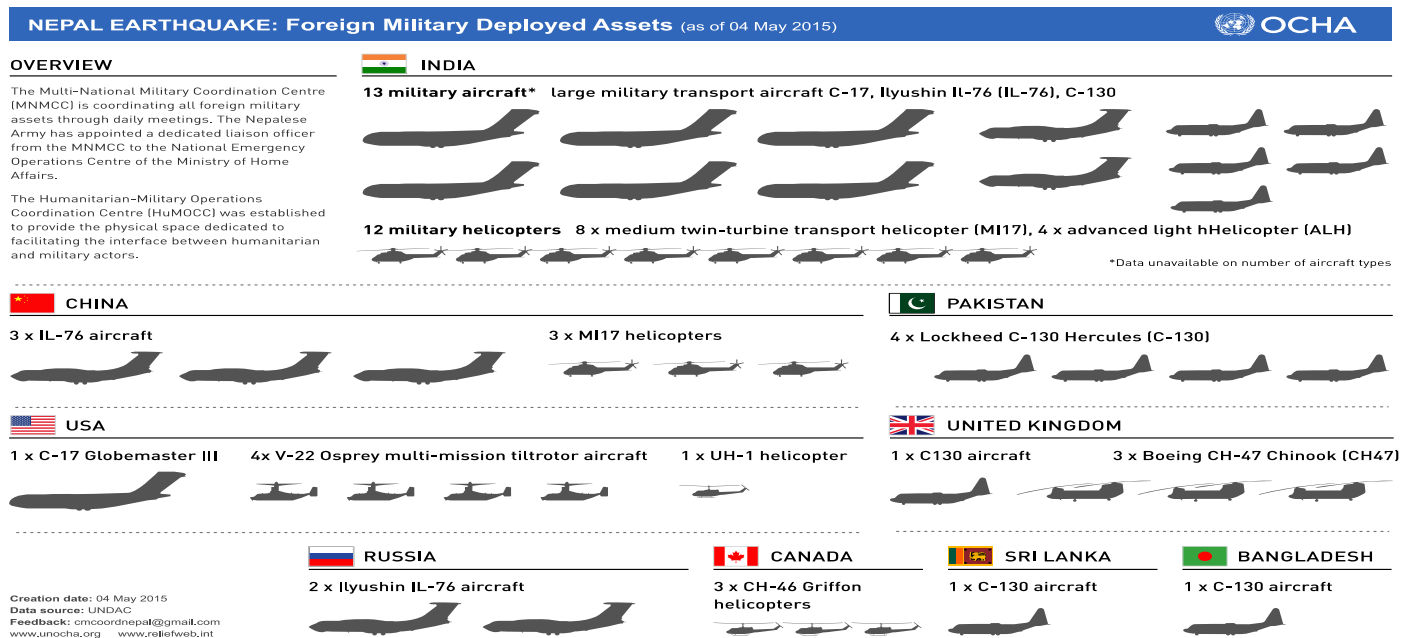
RECOMMENDATION 10

The Government of India must develop procedures to rapidly deploy an experienced team of civilian and military experts to a disaster affected site to support the local administration in coordinating the activities of the large number of international responders expected on site. NDMA should be tasked to establish this capacity.

INDIA AND INTERNATIONAL MILITARY HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN DISASTER RESPONSE (HADR)

"In the Asia-Pacific region, the military is very often the primary responder in both domestic and international disaster response."

In the Asia-Pacific region, the military is very often the primary responder in both domestic and international disaster response. However, in the Government of India, there is inadequate acknowledgement of the role played by the military. The provision of emergency international assistance by India in disasters, such as to Sri Lanka during the May 2017 floods, is almost always executed by the Armed Forces. The largest international Indian Armed Forces HA/DR operation remains the support provided to Nepal after the earthquake in April 2015. "In the first 96 hours the Indian Armed Forces flew 29 Sorties of C-17, IL-76 and C-130 aircraft bringing in 340 tons of relief material, two Army Field Hospitals, 18 Army Medical teams and 18 Army Engineer Teams along with 16 National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) Search and Rescue teams. It also deployed 8 MI-17 helicopters and 5 ALH helicopters at Kathmandu and Pokhara airfields." This was indeed an effort for any country to be proud of. To put it into perspective relative to other countries, the deployment of foreign military aviation assets in Nepal is illustrative.¹⁷



However, an analysis of the International HA/DR operations carried out by the Indian Armed Forces over the years bring out some systemic issues that need attention.

THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS FOR INTERNATIONAL MILITARY HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN DISASTER RELIEF (HA/DR)

If MEA takes a decision to send international humanitarian assistance utilising the Armed Forces, it contacts MoD. For major crises, the National Crisis Management Committee under the Cabinet Secretary with representatives from other concerned Ministries may be activated. Once MoD receives a request from MEA, it activates the Defence Crisis Management Group (DCMG) which is chaired by the Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (CISC). DCMG nominates a lead Service and constitutes a Joint Task Force (JTF) for executing the task. All necessary assets of the three Services are placed under the Commander of the JTF. On reaching the affected country, the JTF works to support the Indian Ambassador in assisting the affected country. This appears to be a complicated and extended process. The decision making process should be streamlined to ensure rapid action so that once the initial Government decision to provide aid is made, MEA deals directly with the CISC and his staff, while the MoD can be kept informed.

RECOMMENDATION 11

The decision making process within the Government of India to provide international HA/DR utilizing military assets should be streamlined and once the initial decision to provide aid to a country affected by a disaster is made, MEA should deal directly with the Integrated Defence Staff.



INS Jalashwa offloading relief supplies during flooding in Sri Lanka, May 2017.

Source: new Indian express

COORDINATION OF MILITARY HADR ASSETS AT THE DISASTER AFFECTED COUNTRY

As discussed in paragraph 8 and Recommendation 4, it is imperative that a small team of 3-4 Armed Forces personnel be flown to the affected country prior to the arrival of the Joint Task Force to support and advise the Indian Ambassador there. This team should be deployed as part of Standard Operating Procedures whenever the Armed Forces are utilized to provide international assistance, irrespective of whether a composite team is deployed by MEA as suggested in Recommendation 4 above.

RECOMMENDATION 12

Whenever the Armed Forces are deployed for provision of international assistance in disasters, as part of Standard Operating Procedures, a small team of Armed Forces personnel should also be deployed to the affected country to support and advise the Indian Ambassador.

CHANGING THE MINDSET OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

“It cannot be emphasised enough that international HADR always has a geo-political, foreign policy context, a fact that seems to be inadequately recognised by MoD.”

It cannot be emphasised enough that international HADR always has a geo-political, foreign policy context, a fact that seems to be inadequately recognised by MoD. Most interactions of the Indian Armed Forces with foreign militaries in exercises have a military disaster relief assistance scenario as their basis. During US Defence Secretary James Mattis' first visit to India in September 2017, Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her statement “welcomed his reiteration of the U.S. commitment to work with India in ensuring maritime security in the Indo-Pacific and as first responder to HA/DR situations.”¹⁸ This interaction of the Indian Armed Forces with foreign militaries in international HA/DR would probably have been far more extensive by now but for the restrictive policies of the MoD in the past. The mindset of the MoD has to change so as to be able to facilitate military participation in international HA/DR and related exercises.

RECOMMENDATION 13

The Ministry of Defence should facilitate the participation of the Indian Armed Forces participation in international disaster response and related exercises, seminars and other activities with foreign militaries and shed past hesitancy towards such interaction.

TRAINING WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES ON INTERNATIONAL HA/DR

“As a result of the restricted interactions with foreign militaries during the past, training within the Armed Forces of how to operate in a multi-military international HA/DR scenario has not kept pace with developments in the world.”

As a result of the restricted interactions with foreign militaries during the past, training within the Armed Forces of how to operate in a multi-military international HA/DR scenario has not kept pace with developments in the world. As one study puts it, “the Indian Armed forces handle disasters without any database of the resources, skills and services essential

for effective response at short notice. Emergency preparedness, drills, and forecasting of possible disasters that can be anticipated over time and space are absent. The forces do not have any training establishment dedicated to this mission.”¹⁹

Modern coordination concepts such as the establishment of a Multi-National Military Coordination Centre (MNMCC) that the Nepalese Army established during the 2015 earthquake are neither taught nor practised. Nor is there any interaction between Indian Military training institutions and international entities such as UN OCHA’s Civil Military Coordination Section, which conducts international civil-military coordination courses and exercises around the world. This needs to change. All training institutions within the Armed Forces must have a capsule on coordination of international HA/DR which deals with the internationally established procedures for interacting with international humanitarian and military responders.

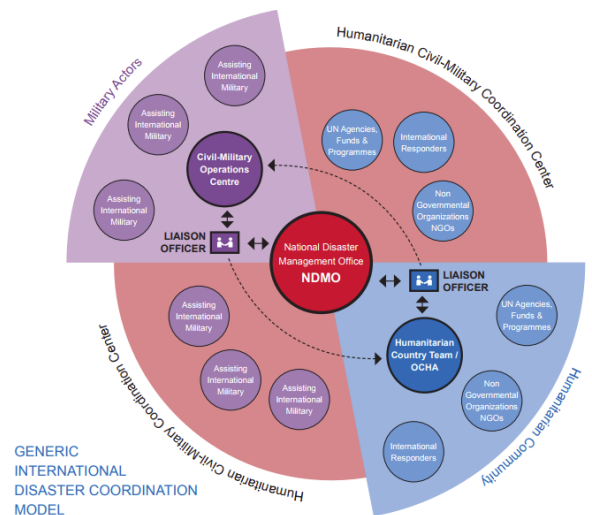
RECOMMENDATION 14

Indian Army and Joint Services training institutions must include a capsule on functioning with humanitarian and foreign military responders in HA/DR within accepted international coordination structures in the curricula of relevant courses at all levels.

PARTICIPATION IN REGIONAL MILITARY HA/DR COORDINATION INSTITUTIONS

After its successful military HA/DR interventions during the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, India was proactive in following up on the experience gained during that operation and hosted jointly with UN OCHA a regional lessons learnt meeting in New Delhi on December 8, 2005. This meeting led to the establishment of the regional process to formulate Standard Operating Procedures for responding international militaries under the Asia-Pacific Conferences on Military Assistance in Disaster Relief Operations (APC-MADRO) process, which over a period of five years developed the Asia Pacific Regional Guidelines for the Use of Foreign Military Assets in Disaster Relief Operations.²⁰

“After its successful military HA/DR interventions during the Indian Ocean tsunami of 2004, India was proactive in following up on the experience gained during that operation...”



*The Military in International Disaster Response Coordination*²¹

Unfortunately, the UPA government years saw the Indian MoD drop out of this process midway through it. As a result, the Indian Military is now out of date on the latest thinking on military HA/DR and is not part of regional groupings such as the UN OCHA Civil Military Coordination Section supported Regional Coordination Group (RCG) for Humanitarian Civil Military Coordination in the Asia Pacific Region.²² It also lacks insight into the thinking in institutions such as the Singapore based Changi Regional Humanitarian

Assistance and Disaster Relief Coordination Centre for ASEAN or the US Pacific Command's Centre for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance. As C. Raja Mohan says: "On the face of it, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief appear to have been clearly identified as important military diplomatic objectives for India. Yet it is quite clear that Delhi is a long way from effectively pursuing it in the region either unilaterally, in collaboration with major powers, or through regional multilateral organisations."²³ It is imperative that the Indian Military re-engage with regional groupings and institutions dealing with HA/DR. This should be facilitated by both the MEA and MoD.

RECOMMENDATION 15

The Indian Military must, through facilitation by MEA and MoD, re-engage at the earliest with regional groupings and institutions, such as the UN OCHA supported Regional Coordination Group, which are in the forefront of developing procedures and policy for humanitarian military interaction during disaster relief in the Asia Pacific region.

CONCLUSION

International disaster response is a potent tool of foreign policy that, if used effectively, can bring significant goodwill. If India is to become a leading power that influences events in the Asian region and the world, then it must be ready and able to not only assist countries affected by disasters, but also be at the forefront of efforts to develop the processes that enable disaster assistance to be executed in a harmonious and coordinated manner. To do so, the Indian Government has to formalise robust and effective internal procedures dealing with both provision of international emergency assistance as well as possible receipt of international assistance in major disasters. These procedures need to efficiently unify the actions of all entities of the State, both civilian and military. This is essential in order to bring them at par with the requirements of speed in decision making, implementing response, as well as the compulsions of multinational cooperation required in such disaster situations. This will enable India's contributions to international disaster response around the world to deliver optimal goodwill and benefits.

Endnotes:

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²*ibid.* Illustrations 3 to 7.

³ National Disaster Management Plan, para 9.4, page 145. *National Disaster Management Authority, Government of India, May 2016.*

⁴ UN General Assembly resolution 46/182 "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations", 19 Dec 1991, *United Nations, New York*

⁵ See <https://www.unocha.org/legacy/what-we-do/coordination-tools/undac/overview>

⁶ See <https://www.unocha.org/our-work/coordination/international-search-and-rescue-advisory-group-insarag>

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⁸ See <https://vosocc.unocha.org/>

⁹ For DART team see <https://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/organization/bureaus/bureau-democracy-conflict-and-humanitarian-assistance/office-us>

¹⁰ Parliament Act XV of 1920.

¹¹ OP Singh, DG NDRF, in Indian Express at <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/nepal-earthquake-special-to-the-express-how-we-raced-against-time-in-nepal/>

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¹⁴ United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team Bhuj Final Report, *UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 20 Feb 2001, Geneva*

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¹⁷ Nepal Earthquake: Foreign Military Deployed Assets, *UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination team, 4 May 2015, Kathmandu, Nepal*

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¹⁹ Shivananda H. and P.K. Gautam, "Reassessing India's Disaster Management Preparedness and the Role of Armed Forces," page 111, *Journal of Defence Studies, Vol. 6, No. 1, January 2012, Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis, New Delhi*

²⁰ Asia-Pacific Regional Guidelines for the Use of Foreign Military Assets in Natural Disaster Response Operations, *UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, January 2014, Geneva*

²¹*ibid*, page 13

²²https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/ROAP/Civil%20Military%20Coordination/images/RCG_05042017_Final_electronic.pdf

²³ C. Raja Mohan, "Indian Military Diplomacy: Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief", page 12, *ISAS Working Paper No 184*, National University of Singapore, March 2014, Singapore

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