

CHAPTER VI – RECOMMENDATIONS TO INSTITUTIONALISE IRS
AND CONCLUSION

'More you sweat in peace less you bleed in war (read as disaster response)'

- An old Army adage



6.1 There can be no bigger disaster than a full scale war and Armed Forces can only manage it if they have a proper response system in place. It is reiterated that IRS is system akin to the system in use by the Armed Forces and it's institutionalisation in disaster prone states in India will strengthen our response to disasters. ICS/IRS is a time tested system and a suitable way ahead to manage mega disasters. Towards this end, the stakeholders need to be familiarized with the system and trained in its use. In any case our administrative machinery at state and district levels has been managing disasters using existing methods, use of IRS

only warrants realignment of these very methods /functions with some amount of pre-planning, role assigning and training.

6.2 Disaster management should be seen as part of good governance¹⁷¹. The emphasis of the govts should be to improve governance during normal peace times and the same will work well during disaster response times. Notwithstanding this, as a result of this study a few measures have emerged which may help institutionalise IRS in our disaster prone states. The same are summarised in the succeeding paragraphs.

Recommended Measures to Expedite Dissemination of IRS Guidelines in Disaster Prone States

6.3 **Synergy Amongst Apex Bodies at National Level**. The CAG in its Report No 5 has observed that there exists ambiguity in demarcation of roles and responsibilities between NEC, NDMA and MHA. The CAG has also observed that the states have not complied with the Guidelines on disaster response plans issued in 2007. In view of this, the CAG has made following recommendations to the Govt of India which if complied with will facilitate institutionalisation of IRS¹⁷²:-

(a) NEC and MHA should ensure that a comprehensive National Plan for disaster management (including national response plan) is developed at the earliest.

(b) The Guidelines should be made binding on the states. NDMA should follow up implementation of its National Guidelines by the Ministries, departments and the state govts.

¹⁷¹ 'The Report of High Powered Committee on Disaster Management', National Centre for Disaster Management, IIPA, Oct 2001', pp 4.

¹⁷² Report of the CAG on Performance Audit of Disaster Preparedness of India, Union Govt of India (MHA) 'Report No 5 of 2013', Chapter 3, pp 26.

(c) Roles and responsibilities of MHA, NEC and NDMA should be specified for clear demarcation of functions of these stakeholders.

6.4 Various measures recommended to disseminate IRS guidelines to include sensitisation of all the stakeholders/functionaries down to grassroots levels, communication and seeking of feedback at national, state, district and taluka levels are as follows:-

(a) Institutionalisation of any new policy has to be done using a top-down approach. Unless the upper echelons at the national and state levels are acquainted with the IRS Guidelines & sensitised to the need to professionalise our disaster response, IRS or any such system would not get implemented¹⁷³. Therefore, the following may be done:-

(i) MHA / NDMA / State Govts must sensitise disaster management community, functionaries at national and state levels including SDMA members by conducting series of workshops on disaster response in general and IRS in particular at various levels.

(ii) NDMA / MHA may request and intervene to emphasise the need to include IRS as an unavoidable agenda in all the national / state level seminars and training programmes / workshops on disaster management.

(b) MHA and state govts may initiate measures so that the subjects 'disaster response' in general and 'IRS' in particular are introduced in the training curriculum / syllabus in the probation academies like LBSNAA, National Police Academy, and various national and state level training

¹⁷³ Rajesh Bhatia, Asst Director, Deptt of Training, UTCS, Govt of NCT of Delhi, in recommendations to Questionnaire., 07 Jan 14.

institutes like IIPA, ATIs across the country¹⁷⁴. An introductory section must also be included in all the foundation courses of Group 'A' Services¹⁷⁵.

(c) NDMA / MHA may initiate case for inclusion of subjects of disaster management in general and disaster response in particular in the syllabus of graduation / post-graduation level programmes in Public Administration/ Governance.

(d) Although IRS guidelines have been disseminated by MHA / NDMA, the process be repeated as majority at grassroots level are not aware of IRS and the guidelines. The entire effort must be done in a time bound manner duly specified for all levels to facilitate monitoring and feedback.

(e) NDMA may prepare an abridged version of IRS Guidelines and the same may be posted / hosted on the net for quick reference by MHA, NDMA, NIDM and all the states / SDMAs.

(f) Feedback on 'whether the guidelines have reached down to grassroots levels and comprehended' is equally important. Hence, MHA /NDMA must work out a mechanism to seek feedback from the states. Besides, frequent visits by officials nominated by MHA /NDMA to disaster prone districts HQ, taluka HQ, periodic e-surveys may also be commissioned. This will not only give a feedback on dissemination but help initiate midcourse corrections on IRS architecture, when required.

(g) NDMA must carry out a check of the institutionalisation process based on the roadmap given out in the 9th Chapter in the NDM Guidelines- IRS to take stock and provide requisite impetus where progress is very slow.

¹⁷⁴ Anil Sinha, OSD to Vice Chairman, BSDMA, Patna, in response to Questionnaire, 22 Jan 14.

¹⁷⁵ Nayak Prashanta Kumar, Dy General Manager, OSDMA, Bhubaneswar, in response to the Questionnaire, 10 Jan 14.

(h) In order to dispel myths about IRS and instil confidence amongst the stakeholders and functionaries, IRS Guidelines must not be thrust down without homework and training. There will be some bit of resistance to change at various levels. Unless people are convinced of the need of the system they will like to maintain status quo. A case study method and learning from experiences from own disaster responses in past would facilitate establishment of the need for such a system for response. The functionaries must be motivated to just try IRS out in some emergencies or even in any major event management to ascertain its efficacy.

(j) MHA /NDMA must make IRS part of national disaster response plan and the same must also figure in the state / district disaster response plans and SOPs.

(k) Fear that IRS will warrant accountability and constraint functioning will have to be addressed by the senior functionaries at the state / district levels. Change management has to be led from the front. A strong resolve both by the political and bureaucratic heads will have to be displayed to get the process going.

(l) An orientation programme on DM Act 2005 will also help sensitise the officials and responders¹⁷⁶. The programme can be organised at various levels by NDMA and SDMA's seeking assistance from NIDM.

(m) IRS forms filling requires expertise and is often felt as barrier to understanding IRS and using it for actuals. Therefore there is a need to further simplify these forms and make these user friendly¹⁷⁷.

¹⁷⁶ Anil Sinha, OSD to Vice Chairman, BSDMA, Patna, in response to Questionnaire, 22 Jan 14.

¹⁷⁷ Saurabh Kumar, Asst Director, Disaster Management Institute, Bhopal, responding to the Questionnaire, 19 Feb 14.

Recommended Measures to Expedite Adaptation of IRS in Disaster Prone States

6.5 **Measures to Structure/Restructure Response Mechanism & Pre-nomination of IRTs at State / District Levels.** Unless a proper structure exists in a state that can support disaster response initiatives, IRS or any such process can never be institutionalised. Various measures recommended to structure / restructure response mechanism in the disaster prone states are as follows:-

(a) While SDMA's in the states have been formed not all of these are functional as they ought to. The SDMA's need to be gingered up. SDMA's must meet regularly and steer the effort of disaster management in respective states.

(b) DDMA's have come up only in a few states. All states need to form DDMA's, giving priority to disaster prone districts and ensure the DDMA's assume ownership of disaster response in respective districts and function as per specified mandate.

(c) IRS or any such response can only be professionalised when the state is equipped with requisite wherewithal to deal with disasters of some magnitude. Towards this end MHA / NDMA have recommended states to raise 3-6 SDRF companies. The same needs to be accorded high priority as mere raising of SDRF would not suffice, they need to be structured, equipped and trained in their role.

(d) Disaster response are tactical level operations necessitating professional / skilled approach, a very high degree of junior leadership, endurance etc. Unless those nominated are trained and prepared, they will not be able to do justice and sustain high tempo of operations as observed

in Uttarakhand. Hence, the need to follow a three step process; nominate, train and prepare. Chief Secretary (RO) must nominate /designate various officers of line department for corresponding IRS positions to perform duties linked to IRS guidelines. DC/DM need to have standing orders for formalising of IRTs in their districts which must be reviewed periodically. Suitable functionaries at state/ district / taluka levels have been identified in the IRS Guidelines by NDMA, with the help from IRS pilot states NIDM may be asked to develop a few models of IRTs at state, district and taluka levels and share these models on NIDM website to facilitate structuring IRTs by states.

(e) States must ensure that all state / district level functionaries with a role in disaster response are trained in IRS immediately on assuming new appointment. The outgoing official must also hand over the duties of IRT to the incoming new incumbent.

(f) Civil Defence department in any state has the largest number of trained personnel / volunteers in rescue and fire fighting¹⁷⁸. Hence, Civil Defence personnel must be tapped for inclusion in the IRTs at state / district levels.

(g) Ex-servicemen in some of the states are in a large numbers eg in Uttarakhand, Andhra Pradesh etc. They are a trained pool of manpower readily available for incorporation. The state govts may work out some kind of incentive and incorporate them in the IRTs at taluka and district levels. Retired defence officers can also be taken on board at state level to help IRTs work.

(h) Though disaster response is a governance issue, the state govts must find innovative ways to incentivise accepting of added responsibility of IRS

¹⁷⁸ Pankaj Kuderia, Asst Dy Comdt, Department of Civil Defence, Bareilly UP, in response to the Questionnaire, 19 Feb 14.

positions by the district / taluka level officials. Else, the state govts may consider taking a recourse to make IRS positions binding through State DM Act or any such legislation.

(j) IRS will only be effective if the IRTs are equipped with fail-safe communications and requisite wherewithal to respond. Hence, IRTs must be equipped accordingly.

(k) EOCs play an important role in decision making and monitoring of the situation and in many cases district / state EOCs can be used as Incident Command Posts depending upon the situation. Hence, the states must also equip their state / district EOCs and not use these as mere *communication centres or Night Duty Rooms*. The EOCs must also be manned by skilled personnel who are capable of interpreting weather warnings.

(l) Inter-departmental coordination and cooperation must be promoted and emphasised to ensure synergy of efforts in times of need. The culture of coordination must not be just personality based but must get institutionalised in the distts / states.

(m) The golden hours or initial 24-48 hours are very crucial in disaster response. The functionaries at any level cannot be missing at this critical juncture. Hence, the state govts must make it binding on the officials to reach their area / place of responsibility by themselves, even if on leave.

6.5 Measures to Ensure Disaster Response Plans / SOPs Prepared for Disaster Response. Various measures to prepare disaster response plans, incorporate IRS and allocate roles and responsibilities in disaster response are:-

(a) Disaster prone states must formulate their disaster response plans and SOPs based on assessed disaster vulnerability and ensure the following:-

- (i) Incorporate IRS and nominate state / district level IRTs.
 - (ii) Incorporate various stakeholders' capacities and limitations while developing the plan.
 - (iii) Incorporate the Armed Forces units stationed in the state / district and take their view point in finalisation of plans.
 - (iv) Coordinate employment of various agencies / responders on ground and review arrangement from time to time.
 - (v) Review state / district level plans on periodical basis.
- (b) Lack of culture of sharing of credit, turf wars and non-delegation of roles / responsibilities are detrimental to success of any response mechanism. The states must promote a culture of collaboration and inclusion from the very inception of making of disaster response plans and keep all stakeholders in the loop. A lot of these misgivings can also be addressed by periodical interactions and joint training of responding agencies.
- (c) The culture of various responders working in isolation and lack of integration is also caused due to the problem of interoperability, different modes of communications, various codes & varying terminologies and differing SOPs. Bringing IRS and ensuring reliable communications will facilitate getting all responding agencies on a common grid and ensure synergy in operations.
- (d) Many a states have already prepared their response plans but are neither disseminated down to functional levels nor used when needed. The plans must positively be known to the key functionaries at state and district

levels. The plans must be prepared, disseminated, used, reviewed and revised from time to time. The plans must be actionable catering various contingencies and be able to guide the respondents in times of need.

6.6 Measures to Provide Impetus to Training in Disaster Response and IRS at State / District Levels.

NDMA rightly decided IRS training as the principal driver to institutionalise IRS in the country. Hence, various measures recommended to provide impetus to training in disaster response and IRS in the disaster prone states are as follows:-

(a) Training in disaster response and in IRS should be made principal driver to institutionalise IRS at state and district levels.

(b) Disaster prone states must take the following measures:-

(i) Shortage of trainers in states is a major constraint. Hence, a state must prepare a pool of trained functionaries in IRS based on ToT basis taking help from NIDM and available master trainers in own / neighbouring states. Then ensure adequate number of trained personnel in every district by launching training campaign to train people down to grassroots level.

(ii) Nominate an ATI or any institute of the state to be a nodal agency to steer the training effort.

(iii) Train functionaries based on a training roadmap and ensure progress. Maximum number of officials from line departments must also be trained in IRS¹⁷⁹.

¹⁷⁹ Anil Sinha, OSD to Vice Chairman, BSDMA, Patna, in response to Questionnaire, 22 Jan 14.

(iv) Make minor modifications to IRS to suit very peculiar administrative structure of respective states.

(v) Ensure a few top level state functionaries are also trained to be able to comprehend the nuances of the system who could then facilitate continuance of training in IRS.

(vi) Those detailed to attend training and mock exercises must not just meet the mere formality of attending. The participants must be chosen based on their likely role and responsibility during disaster response. IRS being a tool at the operational level, training in IRS must focus on the *critical mass* on ground.

(vii) Training in IRS must not be restricted to only the govt officials. Joint training of all the likely responding agencies be it govt officials, Civil Defence, Armed Forces, NGOs, Community or other agencies must be ensured.

(c) IRS training must not remain a theoretical exercise. Conduct of table top exercises followed by mock drills using IRS will be a right approach at the end of each training programme. In fact till the participants see an IRT functioning on ground, the functions of IRT cannot be comprehended. Hence, a training film in an Indian setting with an IRT in action will give a good idea to the participants. In addition, table-top exercises & mock drills must be conducted in the states just prior to the onset of monsoons and when disasters of any kind can be foreseen eg prior to organising 'Kumbh Mela' to address stampede type of disasters.

(d) States should not depend on funding by either NDMA / MHA for conduct of training programmes / mock exercises. Disaster response is a state subject and hence in their best interest states must allocate sufficient funds

for the requirement. However, NDMA / MHA may be approached for a large level training requirement / exercise involving central agencies like NDRF, Armed Forces, NGOs and functionaries from neighbouring states.

(e) IRS demands specialised training and hence to ensure responders are kept updated, periodical refresher training in IRS must be planned at functional levels.

(f) The training modules developed by NIDM for IRS may also be developed in Hindi¹⁸⁰ and gradually in other regional languages for wider use & circulation.

Recommended Measures to Expedite Implementation of IRS Guidelines in Disaster Response

6.7 **Measures to Implement IRS Guidelines.** Various measures recommended to use IRS and implement IRS guidelines in disaster situations are as follows:-

(a) The best way to train people in a system is to make them use the system in disaster response or in near disaster like situations. Hence, maximum functionaries at state / district level must be encouraged to learn the system on the job while conducting mock exercises.

(b) IRS can be used as effectively for organising events such as rallies, elections, melas, high profile visits, yatras and any such time bound events involving multiple agencies and large scale resources.

¹⁸⁰ Saurabh Kumar, Asst Director, Disaster Management Institute, Bhopal, responding to the Questionnaire, 19 Feb 14.

(c) Experiences and lessons learnt from such exercises and events must be incorporated in disaster response plans / SOPs to further refine the response.

(d) The state/ district level functionaries are often embroiled in routine functions with little or no time for preparedness for response. A strong resolve and according of priority by the political hierarchy and requisite support by the bureaucratic machinery is a prerequisite for ensuring preparedness for disasters in the states.

(e) NDMA/ MHA may also take the following measures:-

(i) A dedicated cell may be set up at MHA/ NDMA to monitor the progress on IRS implementation across the country.

(ii) A well designed database system be maintained at national level to register, track and mobilize IRS trained personnel.

(e) A well accepted mechanism be made for movement of IRS trained personnel from one state to another to respond to disasters.

(f) Formulation of simplified procedures to use the IRS on small events such as accidents, fires etc.

(g) Continuous research be carried out to modify and upgrade the system and training tools.

(f) Disaster prone states must either task SDMAs or have a cell of experts to monitor training and implementation of IRS in the state as per laid down timelines.¹⁸¹ To provide requisite impetus states like Uttrakhand may even

¹⁸¹ Chowhan Balaji Singh, US Forest Service, responding to the Questionnaire, 25 Feb 14.

plan to have officers / officials on deputation to DMMC or DDMA's to ensure institutionalisation of IRS¹⁸².

(g) Use of technology and automation will help a great deal in institutionalising IRS in states. Resource mapping and resource visibility on a wide area network or internet will greatly facilitate use of IRS. IRS needs to be integrated with the automated network¹⁸³. States must also plan to stock some amount of relief material at pre-selected locations crucial from the point of induction in vulnerable areas.

Recommended Measures to Resolve Conflicts when Using IRS in Disaster Response

6.8 **Measures to Resolve Conflicts between Armed Forces and the Others when Using IRS.** While likelihood of conflicts when employing Armed forces within the ambit of IRS has been questioned, various measures recommended to resolve conflicts if any when conflicts do arise are as follows:-

(a) IRS permits operations by individual agencies as per their individual line of jurisdiction. This aspect of IRS must be highlighted during training and awareness campaign so that fears can be put to rest.

(b) Joint planning and training incorporating central agencies like Armed Forces and NDRF will help address the differences in perception and resolve conflicts owing to a developed rapport during Peace time.

(c) Assigning of clear roles and responsibilities during planning and later execution stage will greatly help resolve such conflicts. The same must also be practiced during the conduct of joint mock exercises. Assigning clearly

¹⁸² Ashutosh Subhash, IFS Participant at APPPA 39, responding to Questionnaire, 24 Feb 14.

¹⁸³ Disaster Management Department, Govt of Jharkhand, in response to the Questionnaire, 17 Feb 14.

demarcated area of responsibility also helps avoid duplication and adhocism and will help eliminate conflicts¹⁸⁴. The dictum of *right man for the right job* is quite pertinent in this case¹⁸⁵. Allocation of tasks based on the strengths and weaknesses of the responding agencies will mitigate chances of conflicts and ensure optimal results.

(d) Most of the conflicts arise owing to requirement of chain of command. Armed Forces have their own specified chain of command and the same needs to be understood by the civil authorities. When unavoidable, unified command structure would smoothen the process. In any case the IRTs must have clear and unambiguous chain of command¹⁸⁶ which does not violate Armed Forces chain of command.

(e) Conflicts normally arise owing to lack of understanding of the aim and objectives of disaster response operations. Incorporating the Armed Forces right from the inception stage of operations will help in this regard.

(f) Exchange of liaison officers in such operations helps remove misunderstandings and hence the same be also done besides a good communication¹⁸⁷ network for regular interaction. Terminology and language can also be a barrier to communication. Hence, where required interpreters may be used.

(g) Often by the time the Armed Forces are called in for disaster response, the situation becomes out of control resulting in some kinds of conflicts. Hence, Armed Forces units in the area must be kept in picture of developing

¹⁸⁴ Col JS Rawat, General Staff Branch HQ Uttarakhand Sub Area, Dehradun in response to the questionnaire, 28 Feb 14.

¹⁸⁵ Srikanta Panda, Deptt of Telecom, APPPA 39, IIPA, New Delhi, in response to the Questionnaire, 24 Feb 14.

¹⁸⁶ Atul Tewari, IAS, APPPA 39, IIPA, New Delhi while responding to the Questionnaire, 24 Feb 14.

¹⁸⁷ Suresh Mohan Tangri, Jt Director, JCAC in response to the Questionnaire, 27 Jan 14.

disaster situation and deployment be ensured not when the situation is beyond complete control¹⁸⁸.

(h) Another possible reason for cause of conflict could be political interference. The same must be checked where the troops are deployed in response¹⁸⁹.

(j) Parties to likely conflict must understand and respect competitive advantages of each other to avoid likelihood of conflicts¹⁹⁰.

6.9 To promote institutionalisation, a system of incentive must be instituted by the Govt of India based on a criteria worked by the experts to reward states who are able to institutionalise IRS as per the timelines laid out by NDMA¹⁹¹. The reward could be in form of additional budgetary support for conduct of training and purchase of disaster relief equipment for the state in question.

CONCLUSION

7.1. With ongoing climate change, rampant development with unsafe practices and burgeoning world population the disaster risks across the world especially in a developing countries like India is on the rise. In times to come, not only the frequency of both, natural but also manmade disasters will increase but the enormity of these disasters may surpass human imagination. Those interviewed and interacted with, clearly identified 1999 Super Cyclone in Odisha, the 2001 Earthquake in Gujarat and Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004 in Tamil Nadu as turning points in disaster management history of India. These events drastically changed Govt perceptions about the policy domain, prompting policy makers to adopt robust response mechanisms such as ICS in the disaster prone states in India.

¹⁸⁸ Brig Sanjay Thapa, APPPA 39, IIPA, New Delhi, in response to the Questionnaire, 24 Feb 14.

¹⁸⁹ Mihir Bhatt, All India Disaster Mitigation Institute, Ahmedabad responding to Questionnaire, 17 Jan 14.

¹⁹⁰ Atul Tewari, IAS, APPPA 39, IIPA, New Delhi while responding to the Questionnaire, 24 Feb 14.

¹⁹¹ Capt (IN) Gopal Sharma, APPPA 39, IIPA, New Delhi in response to the Questionnaire, 24 Feb 14.

Accordingly, we are graduating from our earlier approach of reaction & relief to preparedness & response but we have miles to go. IRS therefore is needed to eliminate adhocism and professionalise our response to disasters across the country. In spite of dissemination of NDM Guidelines in 2010 by NDMA to institutionalise IRS in the country, progress of institutionalisation is below mark. IRS is still in the theoretical phase in most of the states. Hence, the level of preparedness of states differ, Uttarakhand Floods of 2013 and Cyclone Phallin in Odisha are the recent cases in point. Notwithstanding the apprehensions about IRS, felt-need for a standard response system with common terminology across the country is indisputable. Even the critiques of IRS agree to the need to improve response and have a system in place. This need assumes larger proportion in view of enormity of disasters requiring response by multiple agencies involving more than one states, as was the case in recent disasters. There is therefore a strong need for the disaster prone states to try out IRS duly customised to suit administrative peculiarities of respective states. Disaster response being a state subject, the onus and ownership of institutionalisation of IRS must also shift from MHA /NDMA / NIDM to the state govts of the disaster prone states. It is understandable that it takes time to institutionalise such a system in a huge country like ours but then the time is running out and the states must work on this issue in a time bound manner.

7.2 **Seven Steps Strategy to Institutionalise IRS in States.** Curbing of adhocism and implementation of policies, prepared plans and SOPs in right earnest are two grey areas which must be the focus of all planners and functionaries at various levels. Notwithstanding this, IRS being mainly relevant at functional level can be institutionalised by a simple strategy of seven steps in the disaster prone states: –

- (a) Sensitise upper echelons in the States to the need to professionalise our disaster response by adopting a standard / uniform system which synergises our response in disasters.

(b) Make key functionaries in state aware of the opportunity and strengths of IRS to ensure a top-down approach of institutionalisation of IRS.

(c) Legislate IRS in the state disaster management plans to make it binding on the functionaries, incentivise its use.

(d) State govts need to issue executive orders to pre-nominate officials and form IRTs at various levels.

(e) Ensure training and mock exercises of concerned officials, involve other stakeholders, central agencies and community participation.

(f) States need to conduct exercises and practice IRS in conduct of mega events at various levels.

(g) Carry out reappraisal of the system created and make corrections to suit state / district peculiar requirements.

7.3 Finally the MHA / state govts must strengthen collaboration and integration between diverse stakeholders required to work on disaster response and use IRS. There is also a continued effort required to promote regular learning and reflection to implement the system in the disaster prone states.