

National Structure for Disaster Management

In a large and densely populated country such as India, managing anything is a challenge even under normal circumstances. In disasters the challenges multiply and it is difficult to fulfil expectations of all citizens. But if right to life is to be considered a basic requirement, government has to fulfil its obligation with a dedicated and enthusiastic approach. First step, is understanding the needs then passing the necessary acts and then comes implementation. In the last two decades, we have come a long way in improving our legislations and restructuring our disaster management mechanism. These are now aimed at ushering synergy between numerous ministries and departments with Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) as the nodal agency.

Evolution of DM in India.

The first initiative towards formulating a systematic, comprehensive and holistic approach to all disasters was setting up of a High Powered Committee (HPC) in August 1999 under the Chairmanship of Shri J.C. Pant. The HPC prepared comprehensive model plans for DM at the national, state and district levels. Subsequently after the Gujarat earthquake, an all-party National Committee on Disaster Management (NCDM) was set up, under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister. It had representatives of national

and state level political parties and its aim was catalysing/ enabling the preparation of DM plans and suggesting effective mitigation mechanisms.

On 23Dec 05, the Government of India (GoI) took a defining step by **enacting the Disaster Management Act (DM Act, 2005).**²⁷ National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), headed by the Prime Minister and State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs) by the Chief Ministers now spearhead India's integrated approach to DM. Erstwhile relief-centric response has given way to a proactive holistic approach with emphasis on pre disaster mitigation, prevention and preparedness. (Sharma,2011)²⁸ After the recent earthquake followed by Tsunami in Japan, MHA has taken comprehensive steps to capture information about all such events and efforts made to mitigate them and to collate them at one place in a global perspective. (MHA,2011)²⁹

Responsibilities of the Central Government

The Central Government has administrative control of DM. It is to coordinate actions of the central ministries/ departments, state governments, non-governmental organizations in relation to DM; ensure the integration of measures for prevention of disasters and mitigation by central ministries or departments into their development plans and projects; ensure appropriate

²⁷ Gazette of India No.53 of 2005, The Disaster Management Act, 2005.

²⁸ Vinod K Sharma, "Recent Developments in Disaster Management in India", Delhi, 2011

²⁹ MHA, "Disaster Management in India", Delhi, 2011.

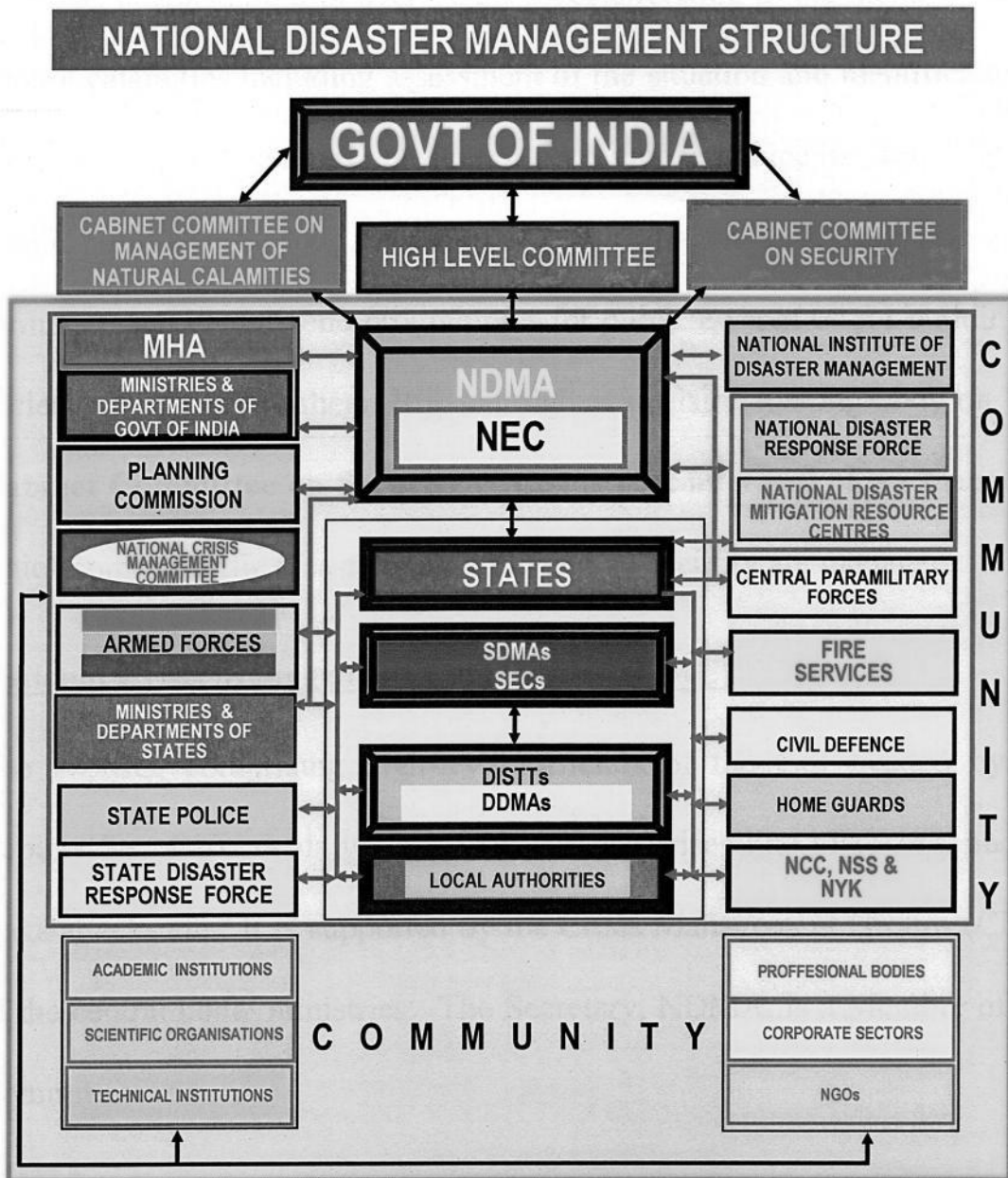
allocation of funds for prevention of disaster, mitigation, capacity building and preparedness by the central ministries or departments; ensure that central ministries or departments take necessary measures for preparedness to promptly and effectively respond to any threatening disaster situation or disaster.

It is to extend cooperation and assistance to state governments, as requested by them or otherwise deemed appropriate by it; deploy naval, military and air forces, other armed forces of the Union or any other Civilian personnel as may be required for the purposes of the DM Act.

Coordination with the United Nations agencies, international organizations and governments of foreign countries for the purposes of the DM Act is also an important activity.

Central Government is responsible for establishing institutions for research, training and development programmes in the field of DM. It has to deal with such other matters as it deems necessary or expedient for the purpose of securing effective implementation of the provisions of the DM Act; and extend such support to other countries affected by major disasters as it may deem appropriate.

FIG 4.1- Structure of DM in India



- Notes:
1. This diagram reflects interactive linkages for synergised management of disasters and not a hierarchical structure.
 2. Backward and forward linkages, especially at the functional level, are with a view to optimise efficiency.
 3. Participation of the Community is a crucial factor.

Integration of Existing Institutional Arrangements

Cabinet Committee on Management of Natural Calamities (CCMNC)

CCMNC is constituted to oversee all aspects relating to the management of natural calamities including assessment of the situation and identification of measures and programmes considered necessary to reduce its impact. It is to monitor and suggest long term measures for prevention of such calamities, formulate and recommend programmes for public awareness for building up society's resilience to them. It is the highest decision making body on DM.

Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) is kept informed of the manner in which some specific disasters having effect on security are managed.

National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC)

The NCMC, comprising high-level officials of the GoI headed by the Cabinet Secretary, deals with specified major crises like hijacking, nuclear leaks/attacks etc. It is supported by the Crisis Management Groups (CMG) of the central nodal ministries. The Secretary, NDMA, is a Member of this Committee.

NDMA

The **NDMA, as the apex body at the centre is entrusted with** framing policies and laying guidelines for states to ensure a timely and effective response. It approves plans prepared by the ministries of the GoI. Its

mandate includes integration of various development plans with prevention and mitigation plan under DM. In addition it is also responsible for

- Capacity building and Recommending funds for mitigation.
- Authorise emergency procurement for rescue and relief;
- Direct and control National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)
- Recommend guidelines for the minimum standards of relief.

National Executive Committee (NEC) is the executive committee of the NDMA, and assists it in all functions and ensuring compliance. Union Home Secretary is the chairperson, members include secretaries to the GoI in ministries of Agriculture, Atomic Energy, Defence, Environment, Finance, Health, Power, Rural Development, Science and Technology, Telecom, Urban Development, Water Resources and the Chief of the Integrated Defence Staff of the Chiefs of Staff Committee.

State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) in each state is headed by the Chief Minister. It approves the state plan and coordinates implementation. It is responsible for reviewing development plans of state to integrate prevention, preparedness and mitigation. It recommends funds for mitigation and preparedness. In case of calamities of severe nature, Inter-Ministerial Central Teams are deputed to the affected states for assessment of damage caused by the calamity and the amount of relief assistance required. NEC scrutinises the assessment made by the central teams and

recommends the quantum of assistance to be provided to the state from the National Calamity Contingency Fund (NCCF).

District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) is the body at operational level headed by the District Magistrates with the elected representative of the local authority as the co-chairperson. DDMA replicates functions at district level as per guidelines laid down by the NDMA and SDMA.

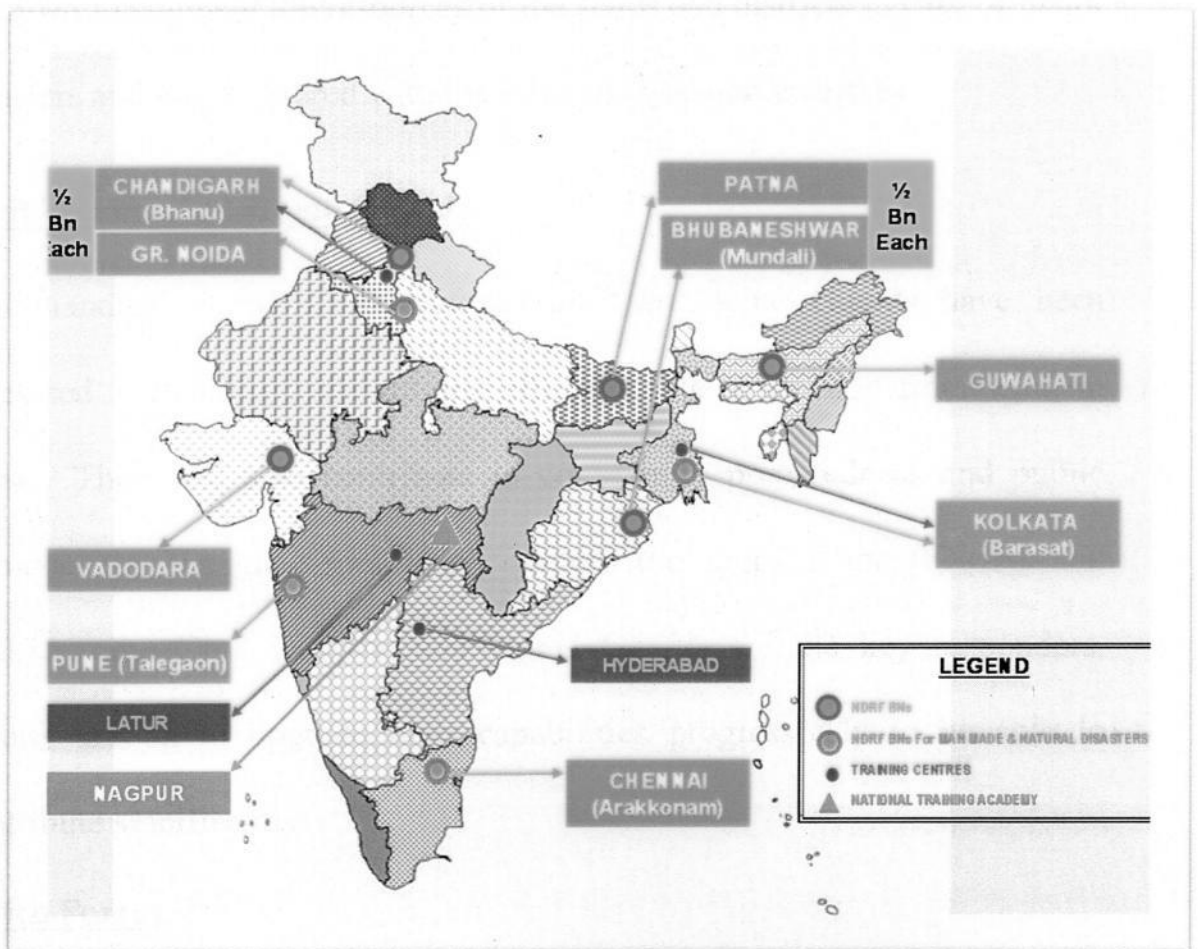
Local Authorities include Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI), Municipalities, District and Cantonment Boards and Town Planning Authorities. They ensure capacity building of their employees in DM, carry out relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction in affected areas and prepare DM Plans.

National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) has capacity development as its main tasks, in addition to research, documentation and development of a national level information base. It is also responsible for coordinating research and training officials.

National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has been created to provide a specialised response to disaster situation. It comprises of seven battalions which have been positioned at nine different locations in the country. This force is being equipped with state-of-the-art equipment. It maintains close liaison with the designated state government and are available to them in shortest possible time, thus avoiding long procedural delays in deployment,

in the event of any serious threatening disaster situation. Four of these battalions are equipped and trained in dealing with NBC disasters. The NDRF units have been tasked to impart basic training to the State Disaster Response Forces (SDRF) in their respective locations.

FIG 4.3 Location Map of NDRF Battalions



The concept of NDMRCs has been evolved by NDMA to help the States in capacity development, running of mock exercises and facilitating the process of central assistance to the States. These are being co-located with the NDRF battalions and set up at nine locations on a pilot basis.

A reserve of relief stores for 325,000 is being created at the national level, for use in the event of a disaster of a severe magnitude. These will include stores for 100,000 persons affected in high altitude areas. These reserves are intended to augment the resources of the states and districts in case of major disasters and will be stored with the mitigation resource centres.

Civil Defence and Home Guards

The mandate of the Civil Defence and the Home Guards have been redefined to play predominant and effective role in the DM framework in India. They will also contribute in community preparedness and public awareness at the grass-root level. Under the aegis of the SDMAs and DDMAAs, the Civil Defence and Home Guards are the key responders. Efforts are on to upgrade their capabilities progressively to be able to contribute significantly.

Police Forces

The police forces play a key role in management of disasters. Their role consists of isolation of disaster site, evacuation, traffic control etc . The

armed forces battalions of the Police in the state have been encouraged to earmark and train one company per battalion in DM.

Fire Services

Fire Services are one of the first responders, but have appreciable deficiencies in manpower and state-of-the-art equipment. Fire Services is a state/local subject, but Central Govt. is taking measures like identifying fire fighting equipment & providing financial assistance to upgrade their operational capabilities.

Summary/ Inference

Like in many other developed and developing countries, the disaster management structure in India has evolved with time. While NCDM laid the foundation, DM Act 2005 has renewed the focus by defining the responsibilities of various institutions at various levels. Guidelines issued from time to time have clarified issues and ensured progress. The awareness about these structures is gradually increasing.

There is a shift in focus from reactive policy of calamity relief to proactive policy on disaster management. Intention is that prevention, mitigation and preparedness be mainstreamed with planning and development.

On ground however, many of the individuals in position of responsibility in the DM structure are burdened by additional responsibilities. i.e. for a

district collector the responsibilities of DDMA are one amongst many. This obviously dilutes the focus and slows down the progress given the enormity of workload in government bodies.

Far-reaching changes will thus take some time to be effective and civil administration will meanwhile continue to be dependent on military to combat disaster. Next chapter will deal with the role played by the armed forces during disasters.
