

## PERFACE

“Optimising efforts to save human lives in Disaster Zones”, is like any other topic for many people associated with social sciences. It is an issue which moves from headlines announcing a disaster, to editorial pages and then vanishes for a long time, before re-emerging as a headline announcing the next disaster. Most talked about when alive and almost insignificant when all is well.

For me it is an issue very close to the heart. As a pilot in the Indian Air Force, I have been associated with many rescue and relief operations. For my family, a news scroll on TV announcing a disaster anywhere in India is an indication, that I am packing my bags to move into the disaster zone. A theme that has replayed itself many times and given me a chance to serve the distressed in many situations from the Bhuj Earthquake to the Tsunami. I am grateful to the almighty for giving me a skill which enables me to serve the humanity. I do bring back survivors and the distressed from disaster zones, but always have a nagging feeling, why is it always the same story. Why do we always loose so many human lives in disaster zones.

So when confronted with choice of topic for dissertation, I did not have to look far. This was my chance to amalgamate my professional experience as a pilot and as a student of public administration to identify, what more could be done to save human lives in disaster zones.

Our study tour during the course took me to Netherlands, a nation which geographically lies few feet below the mean sea level and has a perennial threat of floods. I was amazed to see how the society had overcome a perennial threat. Human society has the potential, intellect, energy and resources to tame disasters provided the government structures are designed to channelize these efforts.

So when it comes to the lives of fellow human beings in disaster situations, we must have a sense of urgency. My endeavour in this study is to utilise my operational experience as I explore many facets of this humanitarian issue.