

Disaster Management

Future Challenges and Opportunities

Editor
Jagbir Singh

I.K. International

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P.G. DHAR CHAKRABARTI, IAS
Executive Director

Message

Due to its unique geo-physical location and diverse hydro-climatic conditions India is prone to almost every type of natural hazards. Various man-made hazards, caused by unplanned and unsafe developments and practices, have compounded the situation. During the last decade and half, India faced a number of mega disasters – Latur earthquake of 1993, Orissa super cyclone of 1999, Gujarat earthquake of 2001 and Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004 – each causing enormous loss of life, property, infrastructure and livelihood of people, particularly poor and vulnerable people. Earlier the Bhopal gas tragedy of 1984 had left its scar on the health and psyche from which people are yet to recover fully.

Each of these disasters exposed the weakness of disaster management system of the country and at the same time provided huge opportunities to learn and improve. There is now a complete paradigm shift in our approach – from post-disaster relief and rehabilitation to holistic management of disasters covering all its phases. Lot of emphasis is now being placed on various structural and non-structural measures which can mitigate, if not prevent, disasters, but it would not always be possible to invest resources for example, every structure in high seismic zones cannot be retrofitted, not merely because we may not have the resources to do it, but also due to the enormous complexity of such tasks, which would be difficult to be achieved.

Therefore we have to live with certain degree of hazards and risks and be prepared to face disasters, but in a manner that losses of life and property can be reduced to its minimum. These would require pre-disaster planning, involving all stakeholders – government, corporate, community and individual, creation of awareness at all levels, development of standards and procedures, training and capacity building and mock drills and practices, so that we are always in a continuous state of preparedness.

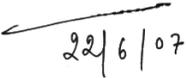
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A number of initiatives have been taken in this regard, ranging from advanced early warning system of hazards, to community based disaster preparedness programme, disaster management in education, disaster communication network, disaster response force etc. While some progress has been made, there are still lot of grounds to be covered and a lot of gaps to be attended on an emergency basis.

Disaster Management Act of 2005 has provided a legal and institutional framework at the national, provincial and local level to attend to these tasks in a comprehensive and systematic manner. Concerted attempts are now being made for better preparedness at every level. It is expected that all these initiatives would help us to better face the disasters in the waiting.

I understand that all these and related issues are going to be discussed in National Conference on Future Challenges of Disaster Management in India being organized by the All India Foundation for Peace and Disaster Management at New Delhi on 7th July, 2007

I Wish the Conference all success.

P.G. Dhar Chakrabarti

Preface

Floods, droughts, cyclones, earthquakes, landslides, tsunamis, attack by terrorists, fire and land degradation and the effects of their pollution are affecting the world on a scale which mankind has never witnessed before. Because of the unique geo-climatic conditions and topographical landscape of India, it is a country which is prone to more natural disasters than any other country in the world. The knowledge which we have gained from the experience of these disasters in most recent times has enabled us to realise that in all future challenges and disasters, it is the very subject of Disaster Management which must now be in the forefront of our minds. India needs to be divided, educationally speaking, into zones where the different types of disasters are most likely to occur. The north is prone to earthquakes—the southern and eastern coasts to Tsunamis. Cyclones batter the east coast. Floods occur mainly in Bihar and the West Bengal, droughts occur in Rajasthan, Haryana and the Punjab. Landslides occur in mountainous areas and fire can occur anywhere. A new awareness of Disaster Management must now enter the psyche of the Indian people as self-help and preparedness will help people face future disasters in a safer way. With more education at school and university level, together with the communities everywhere at a local, national and international level, important knowledge of Disaster Management could bring India to the forefront of this subject in the world thereby helping other countries as well. The local communities in a specified danger area throughout India can play an important role in managing any disaster at any time.

This book provides a broad range of critical and practical ideas and intensive information with the latest data regarding Disaster Management at local, regional, national and international levels. The importance of the Warning Systems, Remote Sensing, GPS (Global Positioning System) and the GIS (Geographical Information System) cannot be overemphasized as with highly trained people understanding and using this equipment, thousands of lives will be saved in the future.

JAGBIR SINGH



Acknowledgements

The disasters which have stretched our planet in the last ten years have been on such a monumental scale that the suffering from the aftermath has forced our minds to be mentally, physically, and emotionally prepared should another disaster occur. This book gives a message to the world community that the time to act has come now. The two words “Disaster Management” are now in the forefront of our minds and have outstripped “Environment” and “Ecology”, which have focused on the earth as it is. We are now dealing with new forces which are creating havoc on our planet due to different types of disasters in different forms. I am sure that this book will provide methods, approaches, and the latest application of Information Technology to reduce the challenges of disasters with the latest data.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge my late parents who gave me the opportunity to study. I would also like to thank Prof. Deepak Pental, Vice Chancellor, Delhi University, who always encouraged me to aim high. I am also grateful to Prof. Lal Wadhwa, James Cook University, Australia (my co-supervisor) for his valuable discussions regarding different environmental issues which affect both India and Australia. My sincere thanks also goes to Prof. M.S.S. Rawat, Dr. A.L. Ramanathan, Dr. P.V. Khatri, Mr. Dhramvir Dahiya, and Mr. Sheel Kumar (who always encourages and stands by me).

Last but not the least, I personally thank Prof. Joan Schreijjaeg-Gilmour who helped me in arranging all the literature on Disaster Management for this conference.

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