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# Role of Government of India in Disaster Management with Reference to the Disaster Management Act, 2005

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**ABSTRACT**

Today it is a proven fact that Natural Disasters can happen at any place irrespective of the developed, developing or the least developed status of a country. It can cause massive destruction to the lives and livelihoods of large population and hence, to the national economies. It is experienced that the least developed and developing countries are impacted more severely by large-scale natural disasters. India has been traditionally vulnerable to natural disasters on account of its unique geo-climatic conditions. India, with its diverse geo-climatic conditions, is particularly vulnerable to disasters such as earthquakes, cyclones, floods, and droughts. The Disaster Management Act, 2005 provides a legal framework for disaster risk reduction, preparedness, and response across national, state, and district levels. This paper examines various natural disasters and the roles and responsibilities of the Central and State Governments before, during, and after such events. Based on secondary sources, it analyzes India's disaster management strategies, legal provisions, and institutional mechanisms. The study emphasizes the need for coordinated efforts, policy implementation, and community participation to enhance disaster resilience and recovery.

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## INTRODUCTION

India's geo-climatic conditions as well as its high degree of socio-economic vulnerability, makes it one of the most disaster prone country in the world. A disaster is an extreme disruption of the functioning of a society that causes widespread human, material, or environmental losses that exceed the ability of the affected society to cope with its own resources. Disasters are sometimes classified according to whether they are "natural" disasters, or "human-made" disasters. Disaster Management (or Emergency Management) is the discipline of dealing with and avoiding risks. It is a discipline that involves preparing, supporting and rebuilding when natural or human made disasters occur. Though complete prevention of natural disasters is beyond human capabilities, the adverse impact of any disaster on human lives and their livelihoods can be minimized by taking adequate early warning, preparedness and mitigation measures.[1]

### Disaster – Introduction

The word 'Disaster' derives from Middle French désastre1 and that from Old Italian disastrous, which in turn comes from the Greek pejorative prefix "dus" - "bad"+ "aster" - "star". The root of the word disaster ("bad star" in Greek and Latin) comes from an astrological theme in which the ancients used to refer to the destruction or deconstruction of a star as a disaster.[2]

Disaster is an event or series of events, which gives rise to casualties and damage or loss of properties, infrastructures, environment, essential services or means of livelihood on such a scale which is beyond the normal capacity of the affected community to cope with. Disaster is also sometimes described as a "catastrophic situation in which the normal pattern of life or eco-system has been disrupted and extra-ordinary emergency interventions are required to save and preserve lives and or the environment".

**TYPES OF DISASTERS[3]**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Wildfires** | **Meteorological Disasters**<br>❖ Tropical Cyclones<br>❖ Blizzards<br>❖ Hailstorms<br>❖ Ice Storms<br>❖ Cold Waves<br>❖ Heat Weaves<br>❖ Droughts<br>❖ Thunderstorms<br>❖ Tomadoes |
| **Geological Disasters**<br>❖ **Earthquakes**<br>❖ **Avalanches and Landslides**<br>❖ **Sinkholes**<br>❖ **Volcanic Eruptions** | |
| **Hydrological Disasters**<br>❖ **Floods**<br>❖ **Tsunami**<br>❖ **Limnic Eruptions** | **Space Disasters**<br>❖ Impact events and airburst<br>❖ Solar flare |

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**Disasters in Global Trends**

More than one billion people throughout the world were affected by natural disasters during the last decade of the twentieth century, with direct economic losses of $629 billion (The World Disaster Report 200). Ninety-five percent of all deaths caused by disasters occur in developing countries, and losses due to natural disasters in developing countries can be 20 times greater (as a percentage of GDP) than in industrial nations. Because natural disasters have a disproportionate impact on the poor, disaster mitigation and management programs should be an integral part of poverty alleviation. Several devastating natural disasters of recent years underline the urgent need for a more proactive approach to hazard risk management. The focus of the international development community is shifting from emergency response and post disaster reconstruction to disaster prevention and risk reduction.[4]

**The Indian Experience[5]**

In order to reduce the risk and vulnerabilities in India ICT for Disaster Risk Reduction National Framework covers the prime sectors such as institutional mechanisms at all administrative levels, disaster mitigation/prevention to be mainstreamed into the development process, envisaged legal/policy framework, early warning systems, preparedness & emergency response measures and human resource development. Information coordination and management is seen as one of the major challenges in India due to the large geography and diversity of language/cultures. The GOI-UNDP DRM Programme addresses these issues very carefully by using Information and Communication Technology tools for faster response, effective decision making and develop well-informed practitioners. There are number of ICT based initiatives, tools and applications developed to help the disaster managers function efficiently.

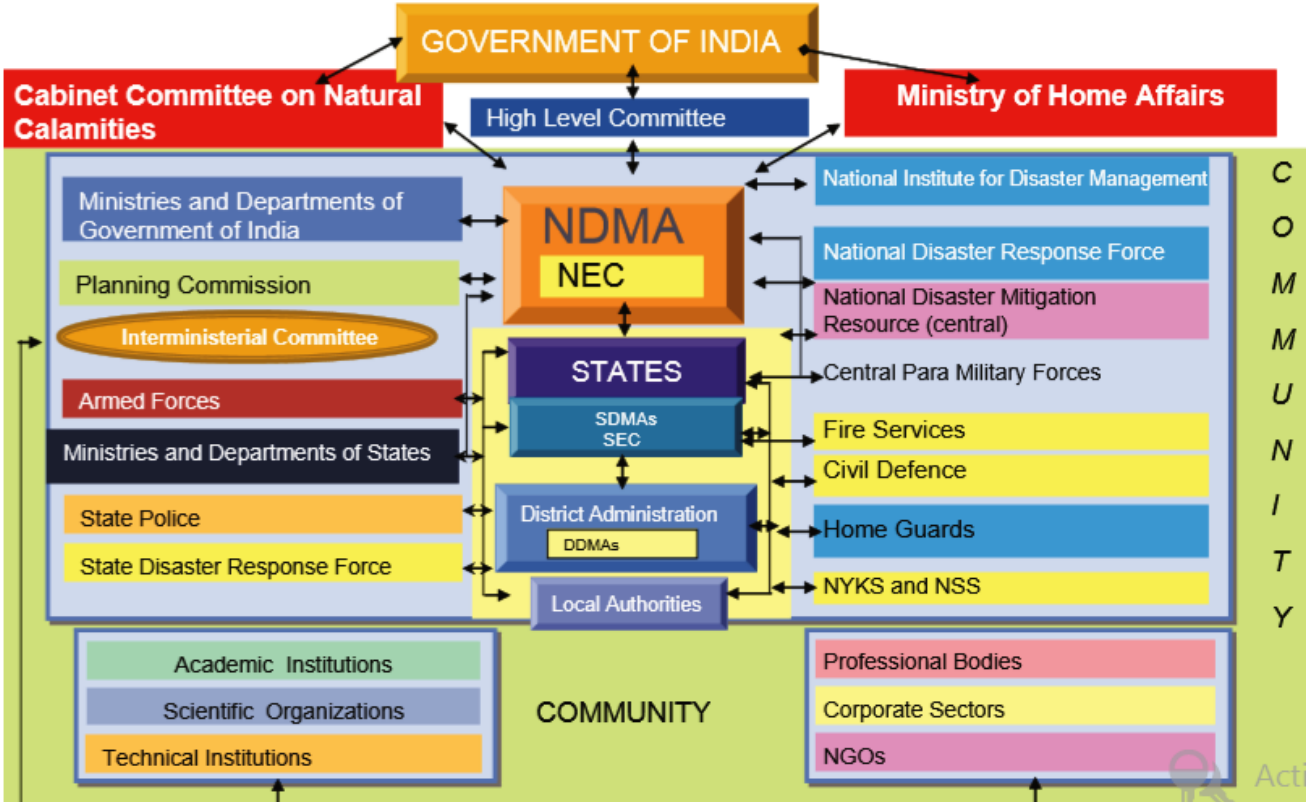
**Role of Government in Disaster Management**

Disaster management in India has evolved from an activity-based reactive setup to a proactive institutionalized structure; from single faculty domain to a multi-stakeholder setup; and from a relief-based approach to a 'multi-dimensional pro-active holistic approach for reducing risk'. The institutional structure for disaster management in India is in a state of transition. Thus, the two structures co-exist at present. The National Disaster Management Authority has been established at the centre, and the SDMA at state and district authorities at district level are gradually being formalized. In addition to this, the National Crisis Management Committee, part of the earlier setup, also functions at the Centre. The nodal ministries, as identified for different disaster types of function under the overall guidance of the Ministry of Home Affairs. Within this transitional and evolving setup, two distinct features of the institutional structure for disaster management may be noticed. Firstly, the structure is hierarchical and functions at four levels – centre, state, district and local. In both the setups – one that existed prior to the implementation of the Act, and other that is being formalized post-implementation of the Act, there have existed institutionalized structures at the centre, state, district and local levels. Each preceding level guides the activities and decision making at the next level in hierarchy. Secondly, it is a multi-stakeholder setup, i.e., the structure draws involvement of various relevant ministries, government departments and administrative bodies.

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**Structure of Disaster Management in India[6]**




**Disaster Management Act, 2005**

This Act provides for the effective management of disaster and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto. The Act provides for setting up of a National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs), District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs). The Act further provides for the constitution of different Executive Committee at national and state levels. Under its aegis, the National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) for capacity building and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) for response purpose have been set up. It also mandates the concerned Ministries and Departments to draw up their own plans in accordance with the National Plan. The Act further contains the provisions for financial mechanisms such as creation of funds for response, National Disaster Mitigation Fund and similar funds at the state and district levels for the purpose of disaster management. The Act also provides specific roles to local bodies in disaster management. The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the constitution and emergence of local self- government, both rural and urban, as important tiers of governance, the role of local authorities becomes very important. The DM Act, 2005 also envisages specific roles to be played by the local bodies in disaster management.

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| Disaster Management Authorities[7] | | |
|---|---|---|
| **National level** | **State level** | **Local level** |
| • **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)**<br>• **National Executive Committee (NEC)**<br>• **National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM)**<br>• **National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)**<br>• **Directorate General of Civil Defence (DGCD)** | • State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA)<br>• State Executive Committee (SEC)<br>• State Disaster Response Force (SDRF)<br>• Civil Defence Setup in the States | • District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA)<br>• Fire Services<br>• Home Guard |

**National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)**

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) was initially constituted on May 30, 2005 under the Chairmanship of Prime Minister. Following enactment of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, the NDMA was formally constituted in accordance with Section-3(1) of the Act on 27th September, 2006 with Prime Minister as its Chairperson and nine other members, and one such member to be designated as Vice-Chairperson. The NDMA has been mandated with laying down policies on disaster management and guidelines which would be followed by different Ministries, Departments of the Government of India and State Government in taking measures for disaster risk reduction. It has also to laid down guidelines to be followed by the State Authorities in drawing up the State Plans and to take such measures for the management of disasters.

**National Executive Committee (NEC)**

A National Executive Committee is constituted under Section 8 of DM Act, 2005 to assist the National Authority in the performance of its functions. NEC may as and when it considers necessary constitute one or more sub-committees for the efficient discharge of its functions. For the conduct of NEC, Disaster Management National Executive Committee (Procedure and Allowances) Rules, 2006 NEC has been given the responsibility to act as the coordinating and monitoring body for disaster management, to prepare a National Plan, monitor the implementation of National Policy etc. vide section 10 of the DM Act.

**National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM)**

National Centre for Disaster Management was established at the Indian Institute for Public Administration (IIPA) in 1995. The Centre was upgraded and designated as the National Institute of Disaster management (NIDM) on 16th October 2003. It has now achieved the status of a statutory organisation under the Disaster Management Act, 2005. Section 42 of Chapter VII of the Disaster Management Act, 2005 entrusts the institute with numerous responsibilities, namely to develop training modules, undertake research and documentation in disaster management, organise training programmes, undertake and organise study courses, conferences, lectures and seminars to promote and institutionalize disaster management, undertake and provide for publication of journals, research papers and books.

**National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)**

It has been constituted under Section 44 of the DM Act, 2005 the NDRF consist of 144 specialised teams trained in various types of natural, manmade and non-natural disasters. 72 of such teams are designed to cater to the Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) calamities besides natural calamities. Each NDRF battalion consists of 1149 personnel organized in 18 teams comprising of 45 personnel, who are being equipped and trained for rendering effective response to any threatening disaster situation or disaster, both natural and manmade. All these eight battalions are being trained in natural disasters while four of them are being additionally trained for handling CBRN disasters.

Based on vulnerability profile of different regions of the country, these specialist battalions have been presently stationed at the following eight place such as Chennai (Arakonam), Uttar Pradesh (Greater Noida), Kolkatta (Barasat), Maharastra (Pune), Orissa (Mundali), Punjab (Bhatinda), Assam (Guwahati), Gujarat (Gandhinagar) and Government of India has approved the raising of two additional battalions of National Disaster Response Force by upgradation and conversion of one battalion each of Border Security Force and Central Reserve Police Force to be located in the states of Bihar (Bihata, Patna) and Andhra Pradesh (Vijaywada) respectively.

**Directorate General of Civil Defence (DGCD)**

DGCD was established in 1962 with its headquarters at New Delhi in the Ministry of Home Affairs to handle all policy and planning matters related to Civil Defence, Home Guards and Fire Services including the functioning of National Civil Defence College, and National Fire Service College, Nagpur. An IPS officer in the rank of Director General of Police heads the organisation. He has dual charge of D.G. National Disaster Response Force and Civil Defence (DG, NDRF & CD).

**State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA)**

The DM Act, 2005 provides for constitution of SDMAs and DDMAs in all the states and UTs. As per the information received from the states and UTs, except Gujarat and Daman & Diu, all the rest have constituted SDMAs under the DM Act, 2005. Gujarat has constituted its SDMA under its Gujarat State Disaster Management Act, 2003. Daman & Diu have also established SDMAs prior to enactment of DM Act 2005.

**State Executive Committee (SEC)**

The Act envisages establishment of State Executive Committee under Section 20 of the Act, to be headed by Chief Secretary of the state Government with four other Secretaries of such departments as the state Government may think fit. It has the responsibility for coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the National Policy, the National Plan and the State Plan as provided under section 22 of the Act.

**State Disaster Response Force (SDRF)**

The states/UTs have also been advised to set up their own Specialist Response Force for responding to disasters on the lines of National Disaster Response Force vide Ministry of Home Affairs letter dated 26th July 2007 and 8th March, 2011. The Central Government is providing assistance for training of trainers. The state governments have been also advised to utilize 10 percent of their State Disaster Response Fund and Capacity Building Grant for the procurement of search and rescue equipment and for training purposes of the Response Force.

**Civil Defence Setup in the States**

The state government for the purpose of coordinating the activities of the Controllers of Civil Defence within the state appoints a Director of Civil Defence and also may constitute, for any area within the state a body of a person to be called the Civil Defence Corps. Out of 225 tons from 35 states notified as CD towns, currently the CD organizations at only 130 towns

have been activated. Each town has nucleus of four Permanent Staff along with 400 CD Volunteers for a two lakh population. It is expected that each state will have one CD Training Institute with permanent strength of 36 personnel, five vehicles and other equipment's. The District Magistrate is designated as a Controller for CD Towns. The present strength of CD volunteers is 5.72 lakhs, out of which 5.11 lakhs are already trained. The target strength of CD volunteers has been fixed at 13 lakhs based on the population of CD towns as per 2001 census. In accordance with the directions issued by Hon'ble Home Minister, one member high powered committee was constituted on 7th February, 2006 under the chairmanship of one of the member of NDMA to analyses the existing functions of Civil Defence Organizations and suggest changes required to enlarge its role to include Disaster Management.

**District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA)**

Disaster Management Act provides for constitution of DDMA for every district of a state. The District Magistrate/ District Collector/Deputy Commissioner heads the Authority as Chairperson besides an elected representative of the local authority as Co-Chairperson except in the tribal areas where the Chief Executive Member of the District Council of Autonomous District is designated as Co-Chairperson. Further in district, where Zila Parishad exist, its Chairperson shall be the Co-Chairperson of DDMA. Other members of this authority include the CEO of the District Authority, Superintendent of Police, Chief Medical Officer of the District and other two district level officers are designated by the state Government. 2.12.2 The District Authority is responsible for planning, coordination and implementation of disaster management and to take such measures for disaster management as provided in the guidelines. The District Authority also has the power to examine the construction in any area in the district to enforce the safety standards and also to arrange for relief measures and respond to the disaster at the district level.

**Fire Services**

Fire services are mandate of the Municipal Bodies as estimated in item 7 of Schedule 12 under Article 243W of the constitution. The structure across is not uniform. Presently Fire prevention and Fire Fighting Services are organized by the concerned States and UTs. Ministry of Home Affairs, Govt. of India, renders technical advice to the States and UTs and Central Ministries on Fire Protection, Fire Prevention and Fire Legislation. The Government of India in 1956, formed a "Standing Fire Advisory Committee" under the Ministry of Home Affairs. The mandate of the committee was to examine the technical problems relating to Fire Services and to advise the Government of India for speedy development and upgradation of Fire Services all over the country. This committee had representation from each State Fire Services, as well as the representation from Ministry of Home, Defence, Transport, Communication and Bureau of Indian Standards. This Committee was renamed as "Standing Fire Advisory Council" (SFAC) during the year 1980.Fire Services in Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Punjab, Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh excluding Indore are under the respective concerned Municipal Corporations. In other remaining States it is under the Home Department. While some States have enacted their own Fire Act, some others have not. As on today, there is no standardization with regard to the scaling of equipment, the type of equipment, or the training of their manpower. In each state it has grown according to the initiatives taken by the States and the funds provided for the Fire Services. Presently the only Basic Life Line of Fire & Emergency Services which is fully committed to the common public, is the Municipal in some states and State Fire Services. The Airport Authority, Big Industrial Establishments, CISF and Armed Forces, however also have their own Fire Services and many a times in case of need rush in aid to the local Fire Services. Apart from the lack of being a proper government department with a complete developmental plan, State Fire Services have

their own organizational structure, administrative setup, funding mechanism, training facilities and equipment's.

**Home Guard**

The role of Home Guards is to serve as an auxiliary to the police in the maintenance of law and order, internal security and help the community in any kind of emergency such as air-raid, fire, cyclone, earthquake, epidemic etc. They are also expected to help the police in maintenance of communal harmony, assist the administration in protecting weaker sections, participate in socio-economic and welfare activities and perform Civil Defence duties. Home Guards are of two types – rural and urban besides in Border States, Border Wing Home Guards Battalions at national level. Border Wing, Home Guard serve as an auxiliary to the Border Security Force. The total strength of Home Guards is 5, 73,793 against which the raised strength is 5,00,410. The organisation is spread over all states and UTs except in Kerala. Eighteen Border Wing Home Guards (BWHG) Battalions have been raised in the border states viz. Punjab (6 Bns.), Rajasthan (4 Bns.), Gujarat (4Bns.) and one of Bn each. for Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and West Bengal to serve as an auxiliary to Border Security Force for preventing infiltration on the international border and coastal areas, guarding of vital Installations and lines of communication in vulnerable areas at the time of external aggression.

**CONCLUSION**

Disaster Management has to be a multi-disciplinary and pro-active approach. Besides various measures for putting in place institutional and policy framework, disaster prevention, mitigation and preparedness enunciated in this paper and initiatives being taken by the Central and State Governments, the community, civil society organisations and media also have a key role to play in achieving our goal of moving together, towards a safer India. The message being put across is that, in order to move towards safer and sustainable national development, development projects should be sensitive towards disaster mitigation. Our mission is vulnerability reduction to all types of hazards, be it natural or manmade. This is not an easy task to achieve, keeping in view the vast population, and the multiple natural hazards to which this country is exposed. However, if we are firm in our conviction and resolve that the Government and the people of this country are not prepared to pay the price in terms of massive casualties and economic losses, the task, though difficult, is achievable and we shall achieve it. Our vision 2020 is to build a safer and secure India through sustained collective effort, synergy of national capacities and people's participation. What looks a dream today will be transformed into reality in the next two decades. This is our goal and we shall strive to achieve this goal with a missionary zeal. The path ahead, which looks difficult today, will become a lot easier as we move along together.

The Act also mandates the formulation of disaster management plans at multiple levels, ensuring that every government department integrates disaster mitigation into its policies and development projects. The establishment of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) has further enhanced India's capacity for immediate response and rescue operations. Additionally, financial provisions such as the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) and National Disaster Mitigation Fund (NDMF) ensure that resources are available for relief and rehabilitation efforts.

However, despite the comprehensive legal framework, challenges remain in terms of execution and awareness. The effectiveness of disaster management depends on robust infrastructure, well-trained personnel, public participation, and the integration of technology-driven early warning systems. Many states and districts still face gaps in resource allocation, preparedness, and inter-agency coordination. The active involvement of local authorities and communities is essential to improving disaster resilience.

Moving forward, a proactive approach focusing on prevention, preparedness, and capacity-building is critical. Strengthening early warning systems, improving communication networks, and incorporating climate adaptation strategies can further enhance India's disaster management capabilities. A combination of legal enforcement, policy implementation, and public awareness will help build a disaster-resilient nation capable of reducing risks and safeguarding lives and livelihoods effectively.

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