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Decentralization Community



Decentralization Community Consolidated Reply

Query: Local Bodies and the Disaster Management Act 2005- Examples; Experiences

Compiled by Alok Srivastava, Resource Person and Jeevan Mohanty, Research Associate
26 March 2007

From V. R. Raghavan, Oxfam GB, Kolkata
Posted 17 February 2007

The enactment of National Disaster Management Act 2005 and formation of the National Disaster Management Authority in 2005 was a big step forward in the area of disaster management in the country. It is a major step for initiating the institutional approach in more integrated way.

The national act envisaged that all state governments to enact similar acts and form guidelines and update their relief codes and convert them into disaster management code. A few state governments have started work in this direction. In this context, we at Oxfam East India office are planning to do an analysis of all relief codes in eastern states of the country and develop a note for wider consultation with civil society members for jointly recommending to the state governments for more people sensitive disaster management code at state level.

In my study of the documents available, I have discovered that there is little role built in, of PRIs and Nagarpalikas in Disaster Management. Even the national act only mentions the term 'Local Bodies', which includes the PRIs, and civil society organizations. The parliamentary debates on this issue speak a lot about the involvement of PRIs and the Act includes that the Chairperson of Zilla Parishad will be co-convenor of District Disaster Management Committee/Authority, which the state act should focus on. But in urban areas, there is little or no involvement of municipalities.

I, therefore, have the following questions for members:

- Examples and experiences of engaging Panchayat Raj Institutions and Nagarpalikas/ Municipal Corporations in management of recent disasters and responses in the light of provisions of the National Disaster Management Act 2005.
- Has any state government passed directives or Government Orders (GOs) to involve Panchayat Raj institutions/ Municipalities in disaster response/ relief/ rehabilitation/

mitigation measures and those initiated by state governments in transferring such powers to local bodies?

- What are the pre-requisites for making it possible to have partnership with PRIs, and what are the capacity building needs for panchayats in relation to disaster management?

Responses were received, with thanks, from

1. [Amlan Biswas](#), Karnataka Government, Haveri
2. Pradip Pradhan, The Humanity, Bolangir ([Response 1](#); [Response 2](#))
3. K Rajasekharan, KILA, Thrissur ([Response 1](#); [Response 2](#))
4. [G. Padmanabhan](#), UNDP, New Delhi
5. [Sampurnananda Mohapatra](#), UNDP Project Office, NDM III, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi
6. [Dipti Ranjan Gantayat](#), DRM Programme, Nuapada
7. [Sachidananda Pati](#), DRM Programme, Balasore
8. Susant Kumar Sahoo, DRM Programme, Khordha ([Response 1](#); [Response 2](#))
9. [Satyendra Sahoo](#), DRM Programme, Sambalpur
10. [Gyana Das](#), DRM Programme, UNDP Orissa, Bhubaneswar
11. [Chaitali Dave](#), DM Programme, UNDP, New Delhi
12. [Hrushikesh Mahapatra](#), DRM Programme, Koraput
13. [Partha Das](#), UNDP, Bhubaneswar
14. [Nalini Juneja](#), NUEPA, New Delhi
15. [Pranay K Swain](#), Microsoft Winclient Research Extension Team, Bangalore
16. [Jyotsna Bapat](#), Independent Consultant, New Delhi
17. [Vinay Gupta](#), Independent Consultant, New Delhi
18. [Anil Prasad](#), State IT Mission, Thiruvananthapuram

Further contributions are welcome!

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Summary of Responses

Respondents gave insightful responses to the query that sought to know engagement of local bodies in managing disasters, status of relevant state laws and directives to ensure involvement of local bodies, and capacity building needs of PRIs in managing disasters. They generally agreed that scientific management of disaster response is possible with effective coordination among different wings of government, with private parties chipping in with additional resources.

Provisions of National Disaster Management Act (NDMA) 2005

Stating that the [NDM Act 2005](#) provides a broad framework for empowering local authorities in managing disasters, respondents added that sections 30(1) and 30(2) along with 31(3) define the role of district authority in preparation and execution of Disaster Management (DM) plans for mitigation, preparedness, response, relief, restoration and reconstruction activities, while Section

31(3) outlines preparation of District Disaster Management Plan by the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) in **consultation with local authorities and municipalities**. They opined that while Chapter VI in the NDM Act is devoted to the 'Local Authorities', their role is limited to 'carrying out relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities in the affected area in accordance with the State Plan and the District Plan' [Section 41(1d) of [NDM Act](#)].

State Statutes and Devolution of Power regarding DM to Local Bodies

Respondents stated that State DM Acts, which have been notified either before or after National DM Act 2005, are presently under a consultative process to harmonize with the National Act. They shared details pertaining to [relevant laws from various states](#) and guidelines issued:

- [The Orissa Panchayat Samiti Act, 1999](#) gives powers to panchayats to review action plan of block level officers entrusted with DM. The Orissa State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA) authorises Sarpanches/Panchayats to distribute relief and construct godowns and roads damaged by floods and disasters. The PR Department of the state has asked Collectors to constitute DDMA's by involving the PRIs.
- Under Sections 8(1) and 8(3) of Bihar state regulations, PRIs/ULBs are responsible for preparation and implementation of DM plan taking into account local requirements.
- Under Section 22(1) of Uttarakhand Act, local authorities are required to assist District Magistrate and USDMA in preparing District DM plans. Section 21(1) vests responsibility to provide training and oversee compliance of building regulations with local bodies.
- In the laws of Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh, the local authority is enjoined upon to carry out relief operations, reconstruction and rehabilitation work in accordance with state DM guidelines, and prepare DM plan for local area. Gujarat government has outlined the roles and responsibilities of ULBs, PRIs and other Civil Society organizations in the Gujarat State Disaster Management Policy ([GSDMP](#)).
- In [Kerala](#), the government has constituted a Department of Disaster Management in 2005, yet DM function still remains with the Revenue Department as government has not yet decided to involve local bodies in DM functions and has also not constituted any authority to carry out DM functions under the newly constituted department.

Experiences on Role of Local Bodies in Managing Recent Disasters

Members noted that the GoI-UNDP Disaster Risk Management Programme ([GOI-UNDP DRM Programme](#)) has facilitated the formation of DDMA's prescribed under the Act. They pointed out that in some states like [Kerala](#), non-devolution of powers to local bodies has made dealing with disasters/accidents difficult. Some other states, notably [Orissa](#), have issued orders to make PRIs responsible of preparing community based disaster preparedness plans and addressing mitigation issues. Members stated that PR functionaries now spontaneously respond to search, rescue and relief operations (as seen in [Koraput, Orissa](#)). On the urban side, DM Teams in Municipal Bodies in Gujarat (e.g. [Rajkot Municipal Corporation](#)) undertake search and rescue operations during excess rainfall and floods, and also extend help in contiguous areas. They also mentioned about [Sambalpur](#) (Orissa), where municipal authorities were actively involved in relief operations and damage assessment during recent floods. In [Karnataka](#), involvement of public representatives in calamity relief task forces has given rise to misdirected expenditures.

Capacity Building for Panchayats for Disaster Management

Members were in general agreement on the responsibility of government and other development partners for building necessary capacity and establish systems to ensure prevention of disasters. Examples of capacity building initiatives in states mentioned included:

- **Orissa:**
 - Issuing DOs for making PRIs responsible for preparing Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP) Plans and mitigation issued by state government

- Developing a training manual for PRIs and asking SIRDs to include sessions on DM in their various training programmes by the state government
- Carrying out disaster preparedness activities and implementing annual action plans for training related people by District Offices (see [Khordha experience](#))
- **Gujarat:**
 - Undertaking [training programmes](#) to strengthen coping mechanism and skills of representatives from government departments, municipal bodies, fire officers, and other stakeholders by seven municipal bodies.
- **[GOI-UNDP Programme:](#)**
 - It lays emphasis on strengthening capacities of communities. As a result of this project, some states like Orissa have issued orders to make PRIs responsible for preparing community based disaster preparedness plans and addressing mitigation.

Members also suggested location-specific training, adding that imparting of knowledge on search, rescue, relief, socio-economic and geographical attributes of the area, possible hazards, hazard specific local resource inventory etc. is critical. They emphasized that [training and orientation](#) of Panchayat staff and functionaries at regular intervals is essential.

Finally, advocating amendment of [NDM Act 2005](#) to give formal and effective role to elected representatives, contributors stressed on introduction of provisions in State DM laws for developing partnership with PRIs (as has also been [recommended](#) by 2nd Administrative Reform Commission). They provided varied suggestions about involving local bodies and elected representatives in pre- and post-disaster scenario; manpower provision by local bodies for relief and rehabilitation work, and fixing of responsibility on panchayats in managing disasters. They emphasized on adequate provision of resources, specifically setting aside 10 percent of the local bodies' funds for prevention of disasters, and delegation of financial powers to sarpanches to meet emergency needs. They also advocated a social audit role to local bodies in reconstruction. They provided interesting experiences in their responses, which are given below.

Comparative Experiences

Karnataka

Issues related to disaster prevention (from [Amlan Biswas](#), Deputy Commissioner, District Haveri)

In Karnataka, authority over calamity taskforces of MLAs and Panchayat representatives, and their representation in disaster management and mitigation bodies has given rise to misdirected expenditures on crop compensation, *murrum* road building and constituency-wise building repairs, which is done without addressing the genuine needs. This has not caused any adequate improvement in the disaster preparedness mechanism.

Orissa

From [Susanta Kumar Sahoo](#), DPO, DRM Programme, Khordha

Capacity Building of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)

In Khordha district, the PRIs were trained to carry out some disaster preparedness activities and gained knowledge on preparing the annual development action plans from the disaster mitigation point of view. This training facilitated the practice of constructing concrete roads instead of traditional black top roads in disaster prone areas under different government schemes.

Emergency Helplines and Emergency Operation Centre

Since 2004, every district in Orissa has a functional Emergency Operation Centre, manned round the clock and there is a dedicated Toll Free Number 1077 and 1070 at the State Level Emergency Operation Centre. These numbers were effective during recent natural disasters in Orissa and major accidents affecting rural community. Similarly, Toll Free numbers for agriculture, transport and health departments work toll free from landlines whereas charged in case of mobile phones.

Involvement of Urban Local Bodies in Relief Operation (from [Satyendra Sahoo](#), DPO, DRM Programme, Sambalpur)

During the massive floods in Sambalpur town last year, the Chairman and Councillors of the Sambalpur municipality were involved in relief and rehabilitation work and later on became part of the damage assessment operation. It helped in developing a convention as part of which, the Chairman is kept informed of relief and rehabilitation activities by executive officer regularly.

From [Hrushikesh Mahapatra](#), DPO, DRM Programme, Koraput

Active Participation of PRI Members in Flood Management and Relief Operation

During the floods and landslide in Koraput district in 2006, the disaster management teams under panchayats actively participated in search, rescue and relief operations. These teams rescued the villagers of Durgabhatta village of Jeypore block and distributed relief. Immediately, after the floods, disaster management committee meetings were convened at district, block and panchayat levels to manage the flood situation. In this the PRIs played a commendable role.

Orientation of Panchayat Members on Disaster Management Act

In Koraput, after the election of the new panchayat body, plan has been made to orient the newly elected representatives on various facets of Disaster Management Act to facilitate their meaningful involvement. This orientation would result in the representatives getting to understand disaster preparedness, mitigation and planning activities.

Kerala

From [K Rajasekharan](#), KILA, Thrissur

Revenue Department retains Powers to deal with Disasters

Though Kerala Panchayat Act 1994 in its third schedule includes (1) Protection of relief centres, and (2) Conduct works relating to natural calamity and compensation of damages caused to the assets to be done by respective Panchayats, all the work relating to disasters and major accidents still remain with the Revenue Department. This has meant that the involvement of community and panchayats in providing relief and rehabilitation is minimal

Local Bodies and Community can provide Immediate Relief and Succour in Major Accidents

The Thattakad boat tragedy in February 2007 that took away 18 lives of school kids happened as the boats were unfit, overloaded and operated by an unlicensed crew. Combined with this was a lack of preventive measures, ill-preparedness to handle such a disaster. All this brought to fore the need to have a new law, appropriate authorities and measures to involve the community – the people around - in the grief resolution should also be there in DM plan.

Gujarat

From [Chaitali Dave](#), Project Officer, Disaster Management Programme, UNDP, New Delhi

Relief and Rehabilitation in Rajkot Municipal Corporation

During heavy rainfall and consequent floods in Rajkot, trained Search and Rescue and First Aid Teams in urban areas saved many lives and also extended help to nearby villages and towns. These teams have been instrumental in the preparation of City Disaster Risk Management Plans (CDMPs) and Ward Disaster Management Plans (WDMPs), which have sound provisions of disaster mitigation compared to the previously stipulated Contingency Plans.

Capacity Building Initiatives by Seven ULBs of Gujarat

Training programmes have been undertaken with the intention of strengthening the existing coping mechanism and building the skill sets of the stakeholders, government officers, fire officers and other representatives from government departments and municipal corporations in Rajkot, Vadodara, Junagarh, Ahmedabad, Surat, Bhavnagar, and Jamnagar. The training has developed the capability of the stakeholders in withstanding and reducing the impact of disasters.

Maharashtra

Gap between Disaster Management Plan and Implementation (from [Jyotsna Bapat](#), *Independent Consultant, New Delhi*)

The Mumbai storm water drain project intended to take care of flood water in the city. As a result, there was a proposal to prepare disaster management plan for the city. For this, specific public buildings were identified for relief and over night shelter, which however did not fructify due to the non-committance of the urban authorities and on the day of the deluge in 2005, no plan could be executed to help the people of the city.

USA

Lack of Coordination among Disaster Management Agencies (from [Anil Prasad](#), *Kerala State IT Mission, Thiruvananthapuram*)

In USA, the Federal government had created Department of Homeland Security after the 9/11 terror attacks, which is also mandated to serve the nation during disasters along with 22 other agencies. During Hurricane Katrina, the agency in charge of disaster related operations, Federal Emergency Management Authority was subdued before Department of Homeland Security and coordination was not possible, which affected post-disaster operations.

Related Resources

Recommended Documentation

From [Pradip Pradhan](#), *The Humanity, Bolangir*

National Disaster Management Act – An overview from a PRI perspective

<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr/res17020701.doc> (Size: 30.5 KB)

The study highlights the role of PRIs as envisaged under the National Disaster Management Act 2005, with reference to Orissa and avers that the role is not effective

Analysis of Orissa Relief Code, 1980 from PRI perspective

<http://www.solutionexchange-un.net.in/decn/cr/res17020702.doc> (Size: 28 KB)

The Code has put the responsibility of Disaster Management on official committees, which may or may not consult PR representatives on important decisions (vide Para-19).

The National Disaster Management Act 2005 (from [K. Rajasekharan](#), *KILA, Thrissur*)

<http://loksabha.nic.in/ls/bills/dm.pdf> (Size: 92 KB)

The Act stipulates establishment of National, State, and District disaster management authorities, prescribes governmental measures and outlines powers of local authorities.

From [Sampurnananda Mahapatra](#), UNDP Project Support Office, NDM III, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi

73rd Constitutional Amendment Act

<http://indiacode.nic.in/coiweb/amend/amend73.htm> (Size: 44.0 KB)

It provides for constitution, composition, power, authority, and responsibility of rural local governments (Panchayats), and constitution of SFC and State Election Commission.

74th Constitutional Amendment

[http://lawmin.nic.in/legislative/Art243-395%20\(89-184pp\).doc](http://lawmin.nic.in/legislative/Art243-395%20(89-184pp).doc) (Size: 357 KB)

It discusses constitution, composition, power, authority, responsibility, and taxation power of the urban local bodies in India.

Second Administrative Reforms Commission – Third Report

<http://www.arc.gov.in/3rdreport.pdf> (Size: 1,232 KB)

The report on 'Crisis Management – From Despair to Hope' discusses India's key hazards, risk reduction, vulnerabilities, legal-institutional framework, and emergency response.

The Orissa Panchayat Samiti Act, 1999 (from [Gyana Das](#), DRM Programme, UNDP, Orissa, Bhubaneswar)

<http://www.orissa.gov.in/panchayat/panchayatsamitiact.pdf> (Size: 261 KB)

Besides discussing the preliminary provisions in the act, it stipulates the constitution, function, powers and fund management by the panchayat bodies in Orissa.

Gujarat State Disaster Management Policy (from [Chaitali Dave](#), Project Officer, Disaster Management Programme, UNDP, New Delhi)

<http://www.gujaratindia.com/policies/policy2.pdf> (Size: 105 KB)

It aims to establish necessary systems, structures, programmes, resources, capabilities and guiding principles for reducing disaster risks in the state of Gujarat.

From [Alok Srivastava](#), UNDP, New Delhi

Hazards, Disasters and Your Community: A Primer for Parliamentarians, Version 1.0, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India

<http://www.ndmindia.nic.in/WCDRDOCS/Primer%20for%20Parliamentarians.pdf> (Size: 2.5 MB)

Handbook for parliamentarians on different natural hazards and disasters, effects of hazards on economy and role of policy makers in disaster risk reduction.

Disaster Management: The Development Perspective, An Extract of the Chapter in the Tenth Five Year Plan Document, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India

<http://data.undp.org.in/dmweb/pub/DM-The%20Development%20Perspective.pdf> (Size: 252 KB)

Gives brief understanding on disaster management in global context, talks of Indian experience, and outlines institutional and financial arrangements for disaster mitigation.

Local Level Risk Management: Indian Experience, Series 1, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India

<http://data.undp.org.in/dmweb/pub/LLRM.pdf> (Size: 1.82 MB)

Discusses disaster issues in India, components of Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP) and outlines the criteria for preparation of CBDP plan.

Recommended Organizations

Orissa State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA), Bhubaneswar (from [Gyana Das](#), DRM Programme, UNDP Orissa, Bhubaneswar)

Rajiv Bhawan, 2nd & 9th floor, Unit-V, Bhubaneswar 751001, Tel: 0674-2395398, 240769, 2395379, Fax: 0674-2391871, 2396681, osdma@osdma.org, osdma@bbs.stpi.in
<http://www.osdma.org/>

An autonomous body devoted to disaster management, which promotes culture of preparedness and disaster mitigation including restoration and reconstruction.

Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority (GSDMA), Gandhinagar ((from [Chaitali Dave](#), Project Officer, Disaster Management Programme, UNDP, New Delhi)

Block No. 11, 5th Floor, Udyog Bhavan, Sector 11, Gandhinagar 382017, Tel: 079-23259220/9303/9246, Fax: 079-23259275/9302/9289, info@gsdma.org
<http://www.gsdma.org/>

Established in 2001 with the objective of providing relief to affected people, minimize impact, analyze and study the reasons of calamities and to utilise natural calamity funds.

Federal Emergency Management Authority (FEMA), Washington DC (from [Anil Prasad](#), Kerala State IT Mission, Thiruvananthapuram)

500 C Street SW, Washington, D.C. 20472 USA.
<http://www.fema.gov/>

Leads the effort to prepare the nation for all hazards, initiates proactive mitigation, trains first responders, and manages National Flood Insurance Programme.

Recommended Links/Websites

Disaster Risk Management Programme, UNDP (from [G. Padmanabhan](#), UNDP, New Delhi)

http://www.undp.org.in/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=80&Itemid=163

The link provides comprehensive information about the DRM programme of UNDP in India in collaboration with the Government of India.

Related Past Consolidated Replies

[Role of Panchayats and Municipal Bodies in Tsunami and Disaster Relief and Recovery \(Revised\)](#), from **A. Kalamani**, Centre for World Solidarity, Secunderabad (Experiences; Advice) Decentralization Community. Issued 7 February 2006

Examples and considerations on the mandated, actual and recommended roles for local bodies in the Tsunami (and disaster) relief and rehabilitation

[Food Insecurity during Natural Disasters](#), from **Rahul Mangaokar**, A.I.R. Society, Ahmedabad (Experiences). Cross posted with UNDP Crisis Prevention and Recovery Network and Food and Nutrition Community. Issued 16 February 2006

Presents dynamics of ensuring food security during disasters and ways to ensure early relief/ recovery and restoration of livelihoods through a multi-pronged effort at all levels.

[Women in Resettlement and Rehabilitation](#), from **Pradeep Jena**, UNDP, Bhubaneswar (Experiences). Gender Community. Issued 22 January 2007

Experiences through positive stories affecting displaced women and examples of gendered action plan and studies on resettlement and rehabilitation

[Integrating Gender in Disaster Management and Mitigation Measures](#), from V. R. Raghavan, Oxfam GB, Kolkata (Experiences; Advice). Gender Community. Issued 22 March 2007

Seeks to know the experiences and approach to recent disasters, practices addressing gender discrimination during relief and rehabilitation.

Responses in Full

[Amlan Biswas](#), Karnataka Government, Haveri

I think the query confuses disasters with development schemes. Disasters may be the Big Bang (or shall we say Big Crunch) type like floods or landslides or the trickle down type like most droughts and rain damage. These types though are not hermetically separate and the latter may flow into the former. Within these types, we may have scales and scopes. There also is the "silent hunger" of Amartya Sen, which essentially is a developmental problem and ideally the domain of democratic institutions. It is the prevention or mitigation of such creeping and constant human calamities under the veneer of progress, which should be the *raison d'être* of all democratic institutions. I may be wrong, but the prevention (when possible), mitigation and restoration in our regular disasters require dictators (strong centralised authority). The reasons for this politically incorrect assertion are laid out below:

1. The main mantra in disaster management should be to ensure a non-event. Democratic institutions on the contrary are in the business of making things happen.
2. If the disaster does occur, the mitigation and relief management need to be carried out with minimum fuss and through a single command line as human lives are at stake. A political constituency orientation in relief or restoration (which despite our blind faith in democracy is what often transpires at the grass-roots) would be to coin a term, a partnership for disaster.
3. Speaking of grass, the Swahilis believe, "When elephants fight, the grass gets trampled". Let me add to that, when elephants make love the grass also gets trampled. In brief, having political representation in disaster management task forces or emergency committees would spell a different kind of disaster where either way the grass is bound to be trampled.
4. PRIs and LBs are themselves often the site of disasters and would be the victims. To expect them to be involved fully in the management of their own crises is a little cruel particularly in case of major human disasters.
5. In states like Karnataka, MLAs, PRI members are already heading Calamity Task Forces, but this has hardly improved the preparedness and preventive aspects of disaster management. Everybody unfortunately loves a good drought/flood. And the joke goes that there are three crops in Karnataka, rabi, kharif and RELIEF. The bitter fact is that political representation in disaster management ensures that crop compensation, murrum road building, tank desilting, building repairs are taken up constituency wise and often without any genuine need. Prevention is never an issue because that would be contrary to the needs of the political masters.
6. The reason why disasters are preferred to normalcy in order to off-load such works is that, the procurement and technical norms are often waived during disasters and the scope for favouring specific contractors and suppliers or voters is huge. Indeed we live in interesting times.

My suggestions would be conservative:

1. LBs may be involved in providing manpower for relief activities.
 2. May be in consultative committees for planning prevention.
 3. LBs to be given a social audit role in restoration, not a selection role.
 4. At least 10% of LB funds to set aside for disaster management and kept unspent till Jan/Feb every year, and then to be spent on planned prevention activities/IEC/awareness.
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[Pradip Pradhan](#), The Humanity, Bolangir (*response 1*)

Many thanks to VR Raghavan for posting this subject for gathering more information. In fact last year, we had undertaken a study on Role of Panchayats and Disaster in Coastal Orissa. The study has made a very critical analysis of Orissa Relief Code and National Disaster Management Act from PRI perspective. I attach herewith this [study](#) for your reference.

[K Rajasekharan](#), KILA, Thrissur (*response 1*)

Kerala government has constituted a Department for Disaster Management in 2005 itself. But we have not enacted any law or constituted any authority for the purpose so far. The Government has not taken any decision or action in involving local governments in the disaster management in response to the enactment of National Disaster Management Act 2005, as of now. In Kerala, the disaster management remains as a function vested with the Revenue Department of the Government. But the Kerala Panchayat Act 1994, in its third schedule, includes the following items as sectoral responsibilities of Gram Panchayats:-

Protection of Relief Centres

Conduct works relating to natural calamity. The work to compensate damages caused to the assets should be done by the respective Panchayats.

Kerala State didn't have to face any severe disasters in the past, except in Tsunami. Disaster management was not considered a key issue in the State till then.

Report indicates that Kerala Government is not seriously considering the paradigm shift in disaster management from the traditional State-centered management to local government/community-based management, even though there has been mention of involving local governments in disaster management, in some press statements of the Ministers.

The State Government has not passed any directives or orders to transfer disaster management to local governments so far except the press announcements made by Hon'ble Ministers in the past and some internal governmental actions.

In January 2005, the then Chief Minister said that a permanent mechanism will be set up to deal with exigencies such as natural calamities when they strike and to pass a Disaster Management Act.

In January 2006, Kerala Government announced that it had decided to bring a law and form a new department for disaster management and the Ministry for Revenue and Law had been asked to prepare the draft Bill.

In June 2006, after the new ministry assumed office, the Law Department had been asked to examine a draft Bill prepared by the previous UDF Government and suggested revisions in tune with the Central Act on disaster management. The Government was in the process of formulating the framework and mechanism for disaster management. The Government was examining the option of either enacting fresh legislation or issuing notifications based on the Central Act. A final decision has not been taken.

Press reports indicate that the thrust of the proposed strategy would be to rely on the official machinery to tackle the fallout of any natural calamity or man-made disaster. A decentralised framework stretching from the Government to the panchayat level may constitute the institutional mechanism. The district administration would be the focal point of disaster response and recovery. The local governments may not have much crucial role, it seems.

The Government two months ago reiterated its intention to set up a Kerala State Disaster Management Authority headed by Chief Minister soon. But nothing appears to have happened so far.

Adequate resources, authority and training should be provided to the local governments to build up their capacity to deal with natural disasters, including prevention. There should be clarity about the role to be played by the local governments.

Pradip Pradhan, The Humanity, Bolangir (Orissa) (response 2)

I share with you a brief [analysis](#) of Orissa Relief Code from PRI perspective. We made this analysis during our study on Role of Panchayat in Disaster undertaken in Orissa last year.

G. Padmanabhan, UNDP, New Delhi

The responses to Mr. Raghavan's query and earlier discussions in this group as well as in other groups clearly indicate the importance of involving elected representatives in various phases of disaster management. While its important to get them involved in post disaster scenario, I want to highlight the importance of getting them involved during pre-disaster scenario too, not necessarily as per the points highlighted by Mr. Raghavan.

This forum has been discussing about empowerment of elected representatives in taking a lead on deciding on development priorities as well as building their capacities in handling various aspects of implementation. Increasingly, communities, especially those living in vulnerable areas, have started realising that while hazards are beyond their control, there are several other actions that they can take to prevent these hazards from getting converted into disasters. Apart from creating awareness about the nature of activities that communities can undertake it's the responsibility of the Government and other development partners to provide the necessary capacity building as well as establishing systems to ensure action on ground that prevent disasters. When the DM Bill was tabled for discussions, the honourable elected representatives, voiced concern about the gap in the bill, and in response the Honourable Home Minister was of the view that the changes could be made as we go along without waiting for the perfect Act. I personally think that was a logical suggestion. Having established National Disaster Management Authority at the National level and in view of the provisions in the Act to establish similar

institutional mechanisms at other levels, now the Government should seek suggestions and amend the Act to make it more robust by providing formal role for elected representatives. While doing this there should be sufficient mechanisms to obtain suggestions from practitioners in the field.

Some of you may be aware of the GoI-UNDP Disaster Risk Management Programme, which was designed in 2002 and is currently being implemented in 176 districts in 17 states – details can be obtained from the website: http://www.undp.org.in/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=80&Itemid=163.

The programme, among other things, has a special emphasis on strengthening the capacities of the communities for disaster risk management. In order to sustain the capacities being developed under the project the state Governments have been involving and training PRIs. Some states, such as Orissa have issued DOs to make the PRIs responsible of preparing community based disaster preparedness plans and addressing mitigation issues. This is a welcome move and let us hope other states would also follow this soon.

Sampurnananda Mahapatra, UNDP Project Support Office, NDM-III, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi

Responding with Mr. V.R. Raghavan's query following point specific answers may please be referred.

Point (1). Examples and experiences of engaging Panchayat Raj Institutions and Nagarpalikas/Municipal Corporations in management of recent disasters and responses in the light of provisions of the National Disaster Management Act 2005.

Prior to citing examples of engaging PRIs and Nagarpalika/Municipal bodies in Disaster Management in the light of National Disaster Management Act- 2005, Definition of 'Local Authority' defined vide Section 2 (h) of the Act needs to be mentioned herewith. As per the Act, "*local authority includes Panchyati raj institutions, municipalities, a district board, cantonment board, town planning authority or Zilla Parishad or any other body or authority, by whatever name called, for the time being invested by law, for rendering essential services or, with the control and management of civic services, within a specified local area*". Further, taking local authority into the context, Section 31 (3) of NDM Act -2005 defines to prepare District Disaster Management Plan by the District Disaster Management Authority in consultation **with local authorities and municipalities**. Vide Section 30 (1) & (2), the District Authority has also been entrusted to review development plans prepared by the Statutory Authorities and Local Authorities with a view to make necessary provisions of disaster mitigation. Section 30 (1) & (2) together with Section 31 (3), which define role of District Authority and tasks under District DM Plan now clearly lays the responsibility of District Authority for preparation and execution of DM Plans of all levels in **close consultation with local authorities** for mitigation, preparedness, response, relief, restoration and reconstruction activities.

Referring above Para though it is now clear that the DM Act-05 provides a broader framework to empower local authorities for Disaster Management, the examples and experiences of involvement of PRIs in Disaster Management are yet to be noticed due to following reasons:

Disaster Management primarily being as a State subject, the State governments are presently in a consultative process with the Home Ministry (The nodal Ministry of DM) to enact and notify their DM Acts. A few States so far have notified their Act till date. Notification of Rules,

Regulations, Policies, Guidelines, Circulars pertaining to various sections of DM Acts for practicing of DM in its true spirit are under way both in Home Ministry and State governments.

After enactment of National DM Act on 23rd December 2005, the viability of the DM Acts and its cohesive spirit with local authorities to participate in DM are yet to be tested through any pre and post disaster situations, provided the State likely to face any natural calamity must have implemented its DM act.

Point (2). Has any state government passed directives or Government Orders (GOs) to involve Panchayati Raj institutions/ Municipalities in disaster response/relief/rehabilitation/mitigation measures and those initiated by state governments in transferring such powers to local bodies?

Responding with the question of Mr. Raghavan under point No. 2, the DM Acts of a few States may be compared herewith in the light of Power conferred to local authorities. Prior to comparison, it may also be cleared herewith that such State DM acts, which have been notified either before or after National DM Act are presently under a consultative process to accommodate the spirit of National Act in their State Acts. However, the meaning of 'local authority' defined in National Act is more or less similar in State Acts cited below for comparison. The following comparative table may please be referred to understand the involvement of PRIs in Disaster Management of States.

Role of Local Authorities in State DM Acts

Gujarat	Uttar Pradesh	Bihar	Uttarakhand
Subject to directions given by GSDMA and under the supervision of the Collector, local authorities shall: (a) carry out relief operations in the affected area subject to the directions of the Commissioner (b) carry out reconstruction and rehabilitation work in accordance with the guidelines framed by GSDMA (c) prepare a disaster management plan suitable for the local area, clearly defining the role and responsibilities of the local authority etc. [Sec. 25(1)]	Same as Gujarat Act (same section also)	Each Municipal Local Body and panchayat to prepare a Disaster Management Plan to meet adequately the requirements of the locality concerned in their respective jurisdiction. They shall be responsible for effective implementation of the plan drawn up by them in this behalf. [Sec. 8 (1) & (3)].	To assist the district magistrate in preparation of disaster management plan for the district [Sec. 22(1)]. In disaster affected areas, local authorities to assist the USDMA, the State Commissioner for Disaster Management and the District Magistrate. Also to provide training to the staff and ensure that all building in their local area comply with laid down specifications. [Sec. 21 (1)].

Point No. (3). What are the pre-requisites for making it possible to have partnership with PRIs, and what are the capacity building needs for panchayats in relation to disaster management?

The local Self-Govts of both rural and urban areas have emerged as important tiers of governance, after 73 rd and 74th Amendment to the constitution. For the people, they are also the nearest units of administration and are among the first responders to any crisis besides being closely knit with the communities. These units can thus play an important role in crisis management under the overall leadership of the District Administration. With the enactment of a central legislation on the subject and the possibility that more state level legislations will be forthcoming, State Governments would need to examine if enabling, provisions need to be introduced in disaster management legislations or even the municipal legislations to bring greater salience to the role of the municipal bodies in responding to disasters.

Hence to develop the partnership with PRIs in Disaster Management, provisions need to be introduced in State level DM legislations. In this regard the 2nd Administrative Reform Commission has further recommended that *State Govt may examine the need to incorporate provisions in the State Disaster Management Laws governing local bodies to provide for a well defined role to the municipal bodies and Panchayat Raj Institutions "* (page 44, Crisis Management- From Despair to Hope, <http://www.arc.gov.in/3rdreport.pdf>).

However, for large cities (with a population exceeding 2.5 million) the Administrative Reform Commission recommends that the Mayor, assisted by the Commissioner of Municipal Corporation and the Police Commissioner should be directly responsible for any crisis/disaster management.

For **capacity building of Panchayats in Disaster Management**, the communities of Panchayat along with the PRI members need to undertake a location specific training programme through Community Based Disaster Preparedness activities. Using participatory approach, they should primarily focus into identifying:

- The socio-economic & geographical status of their area
- Possible Hazards in their area
- Hazard specific local resource inventory
- Standard Operation Procedure with clear cut responsibilities among the communities and PRI members of the Panchayat
- Training of PRI members and communities in hazard specific search and rescue
- Periodic evaluation by Panchayat on the floor of Community based mock drills besides periodic updating the info base.

K Rajasekharan, Kerala Institute of Local Administration, Thrissur (response 2)

The Thatttekad boat tragedy that happened in Kerala last week that took away 18 lives all together during a school excursion trip once again brought to fore the need to have a better approach, new law, appropriate authorities and enhanced awareness in the area of disaster management in Kerala.

The disaster occurred as the boats were unfit, overloaded and operated by an unlicensed crew, beyond permitted hours, with less number of life buoys. Lack of preventive measures, ill-preparedness to handle such a disaster and our inability to bring the victims to safety within a few minutes are the reasons cited for the loss of lives in this preventable tragedy.

The reported delay in rescue operation and the absence of a person or agency to coordinate the activities in the governmental system once again brought into sharp focus our weaknesses in disaster management. The proposed system for disaster management in Kerala State should look into those lapses and address the resultant issues.

The last phase in disaster management in a tragedy like this is to provide the family members of the victims a helping hand to resolve their grief and to accept the realities of life. The measures needed to involve the community – the people around - in the grief resolution should also be there in our disaster management plan even though it is easier said than done.

Dipti Ranjan Gantayat, DRM Programme, Nuapada

I am staying at Nuapada District headquarter working as District Project Officer. Let me attempt to answer the query.

1. You have asked about mentioning any example/experience of engaging PRIs in any recent disaster. As you might know Nuapada is a drought prone area and last rainy season no such casualties or epidemics happened to this District due to floods.

2. Regarding government directives, you have desired to know of involvement of PRIs. I would like to say PRIs have an important role when we talk about the Disaster Management Committees at all levels. Starting from the village where ward members are members of VDMC they get involved in taking all sort of major decisions related to disaster, whether it is the Community Based Disaster Preparedness Plan (CBDP plan) preparation to respond during the disaster. I mean to say that they are important identities in the village representing the community. Similarly in GP the role of sarpanch is there and similarly in case of blocks as well as the district. Here in Orissa we have 3 tier Panchayat Raj Institutions so more power is entrusted to PRI members. So for any sort of developmental or disaster management activities their suggestions and role cannot be ignored.

Regarding capacity building in all the DRM Project districts in Orissa – we will orient the PRI members in a phased manner. The plan is on anvil stage at Nuapada District.

Sachidananda Pati, DRM Programme, Balasore

I am sending [details](#) of the programmes and activities undertaken in Balasore district of Orissa under the DRM programme for information.

Susanta Kumar Sahoo, DRM Programme, Khordha

In response to the attached mail of V R Raghavan, related to the Role of PRIs in Disaster Management, I would like to highlight some of the best practices in Orissa under the GoI-UNDP Disaster Risk Management Programme.

1. In Orissa, Panchayats were working in the 3 tier Panchayat Raj System and at the Gram panchayat Level, they are the decision making bodies of all development activities. Disaster Management is one of the activities which is being carried out by a Gram panchayat Level Disaster Management Committee (GPDMC) headed by the Sarpanch. The Disaster Management Act speaks about local level Management Committees and this GPDMC and their activities from Planning to Execution in Disaster Management is the best example in field.

2. In a similar Pattern, starting from Village to District Level, there were Disaster Management Committees, chaired by the elected representatives like the Ward Members at Village level, Panchayat Samiti Chairperson at Block Level and Zilla Parishad President as co-chairman at the District Level.

3. In past disasters like Floods in 2003 and 2006, these Disaster Management Committees has worked and supervised during the relief to recovery phases.
4. DM Committees were taking assistance from local NGOs, CBOs and Women Self Help Groups in preparing the Disaster Management Plans and chalking out actions for their respective areas.
5. Regarding Capacity Building activities, PRIs were well trained to carry out some of the disaster preparedness activities and how to prepare the Annual Development Action Plans looking from disaster mitigation point of view. The best example is the practice of Making Concrete Roads instead of traditional black top roads in disaster prone areas through different Government schemes.

Satyendra Sahoo, DRM Programme, Sambalpur

I am giving some points relating to DRM that may be useful to members.

- In the last floods in Sambalpur Town the Chairman and Councillors of the Sambalpur Municipality were involved actively during the relief operation and damage assessment too. The Executive Officer always takes the views of the Chairman in the implementation of the UEVR project. At the Block Level the Block Development Officer also takes the views of the Sarpanch during any activities related to Disaster Management.
- The Panchayat Raj Department, Govt. of Orissa in office letter No. II-Dev-51/06-9148(60)/PR dated 11.08.06 has intimated to all Collectors for formation of District Disaster Management Authority by involving the PRIs. They have also intimated that the Panchayat should be involved during preparation and implementation of Disaster Management Plans. Under DRM programme at all level the PRIs have been involved and playing an important/vital role during preparation and implementation of Disaster Management Plans and organizing different types of training programme.
- More awareness among the PRIs needs to be created about their role and responsibilities during any disaster/crisis period.

Gyana Das, DRM Programme, UNDP Orissa, Bhubaneswar

The PRIs have been involved in the process of disaster management in many ways. Some of these are given below.

1. As per the notification of the Government of Orissa, District Natural Calamity Committees have been formed in all the 30 districts (prior to Super Cyclone in 1999) under the chairmanship of the Collectors. All MPs, all MLAs and all District Level Officers of different departments are members of this Committee. This is the apex Committee at the district level dealing with disaster management. President, Zilla Parishad is an important member of the Committee. This committee deliberates on preparation of Disaster Management Plans (both DRM and Non-DRM Districts). Even the Chairpersons of the Panchayat Samitis (read block) are also invited to participate in the deliberation of the Committee.
2. Under the DRM Programme, District Disaster Management Committees have been formed. The President, Zilla Parishad is a key member of the Committee.

3. The Government of Orissa (Panchayati Raj Department) has issued instructions to all the districts to make the President, Zilla Parishad as the co-chairperson of the District Disaster Management Authority to be formed as the DM Act.
4. The Chairperson, Panchayat Samiti (block) is the chairperson of the Block Disaster Management Committee. The Vice-chairperson, two Sarpanch and two Panchayat Samiti members are also members of the BDMC.
5. As per the Orissa Panchayat Samiti Act, there is a Sub-Committee to deal with management of disasters (both DRM and non-DRM blocks).
6. The Panchayat Samiti reviews action plans of block level officers of different departments for management of flood/cyclone/drought etc.
7. The Panchayat Samitis in Orissa have constructed go-downs at block level for storage of food grains for use during disasters.
8. The funds of Panchayat Samitis are used for management of disasters pending receipt of grants/allotments.
9. Grains available with Panchayat Samitis under different schemes are allowed to be distributed as relief grain during the disasters.
10. The Block Development Officers (the Executive Officers of the Panchayat Samitis) have been empowered by the Government to distribute relief to destitute families for a period of 30 days to prevent starvation death during disaster and non-disaster period, when no other assistance is available.
11. The Sarpanch is the chairperson of the Gram Panchayat Disaster Management Committee. They are actively involved in all the phases of disaster management including distribution of relief, assessment of damages and payment of compensation.
12. The Government of Orissa has authorised the Sarpanch to distribute relief to destitutes upto a period of ten days to prevent starvation death during disaster and non-disaster period.
13. The Panchayat have used its funds for construction of go-downs at GP level and construction of concrete roads since roads are frequently washed away by floods and heavy rains.
14. They utilise GP funds for opening of *Jala Chhatras* (water distribution points) at markets during summer season.
15. OSDMA has constructed 97 Multi-purpose Cyclone Shelters in coastal districts within 10 kms of the sea coast. Such shelters have been handed over to communities for maintenance and management. The Panchayat Samitis and Gram panchayats have been involved in the process of selection of the sites for construction of these shelters and its maintenance and management. Recently, OSDMA placed funds with the Panchayat Samitis for repair of these shelter buildings instead of engaging Contractors.
16. A series of training programmes have been taken up at state, district, block and GP level for training and orientation of PRIs on disaster management. The State Institute of Rural Development has included sessions on disaster management in different training programmes undertaken by them.
17. Orissa State Disaster Management Authority has brought out a training manual for the PRIs.
18. The DRM Programme is being implemented in 58 ULBs of Orissa. The Chairperson of the ULB is the chairperson of the ULB level DM Committee. The ULBs carry out relief activities though specific provisions have not been made in Orissa Relief Code.
19. The Govt is considering amendment of Orissa Relief Code to insert paragraphs on proactive role of PRIs and ULBs.

Chaitali Dave, Disaster Management Programme, UNDP, New Delhi

As per my understanding and knowledge, with respect to State Disaster Management Act (wherever in India they have enacted and notified) at least in Gujarat State Disaster Management Act (GSDMA) they have mentioned the about the ULBs and other stakeholders.

And the roles and responsibilities of ULB (Urban Local Bodies), PRIs and other Civil Society organizations are mentioned in the policy (Kindly refer the Gujarat State Disaster Management Policy <http://www.gujaratindia.com/policies/policy2.pdf>)

I was associated as a National United Nations Volunteer with the Rajkot Municipal Corporation and had facilitated and worked very closely during many situations of heavy rainfall, floods, large scale fire, train accidents etc in Rajkot and many a times in nearby towns, cities. The trained Search and Rescue and First Aid Team of ULBs and Disaster Management Teams (DMTs) and Disaster Task Force members had played remarkable role and saved many lives and also had extended help to nearby villages, towns and cities. In all the seven Municipal Corporations in Gujarat efforts are being made for preparation of City Disaster Risk Management Plans (CDMPs) and Ward Disaster Management Plans (WDMPs) rather than the previously stipulated Contingency Plans.

On a regular basis many capacity building programmes and various trainings on Disaster Risk Management, Search and Rescue and First Aid were conducted for all the departments of ULBs. Later after conducting TOT (Training of Trainers) the trained staff used to impart the trainings to the personnel of nearby municipalities as per regional centres on regular basis.

Under the GOI UNDP Urban Earthquake Vulnerability Reduction Project-Disaster Risk Management Programme (UEVRP-DRMP), a series of capacity building and training programmes have been undertaken with the intention of strengthening the existing coping mechanism and building the skill sets of the Stakeholders, government officers, Urban Local Body (ULBs) fire officers and fire men and other representatives from other departments of Municipal corporations in all the seven Municipal Corporations of seven cities of Gujarat namely Rajkot, Vadodara, Junagadh, Ahmedabad, Surat, Bhavnagar and Jamnagar (Tales of Seven Cities under UEVRP) and also for the community (the first responders) so that they could withstand any disaster and could reduce the impact of disaster.

Also Gujarat State Disaster Management Authority had successfully conducted series of regular trainings for all the government officials in GSDMI (Gujarat State Disaster Management Institute). Similarly a series of sensitizing, capacity building and training programmes have been conducted on regular basis in regional centres of Administrative Training Institutions for class II, III and IV government employees and urban local bodies (ULBs). [As per central government and state orders]

I have felt, closely observed and heard from my colleagues about the commendable involvement and commitment of Municipal corporations and municipalities in many situations like floods, train accidents, major fire incidents in Rajkot, Junagadh, Ahmedabad, Bhavnagar, Vadodara, Jamnagar, Surendranagar and Surat.

Though much more is needed to be done and followed up for the proper implementation of various acts and policies framed but with the good start and pace things are together towards the safer India.

Hrushikesh Mahapatra, DRM Programme, Koraput

Koraput district experienced floods and landslide during July and August 2006 (3rd July and 4th August) due to heavy rainfall in the district causing flood in Indravati and Kolab river. In the said disaster PRI members played a vital role in flood management and relief operation. At village level DMTs under panchayats have spontaneously responded towards flood management,

relief operation, search and rescue etc. DMTs have rescued the villagers of Durgabhatta village of Jeypore block from marooned area. Further immediately after the flood, DMC meetings had been convened at all level (District, Block and GP) to manage the post flood situation and PRIs have played a praiseworthy role to manage the post flood situation in the district.

The Panchayat raj Department, Govt of Orissa has directed all the District Collectors for formation of Disaster Management Authority by involving PRIs vide letter no 11-Dev 51/06-9148 (60)/PR dated 11.8.2006. Further as per order of Panchayat raj Department, President Zilla Parishad has become the co- chairman of Disaster Management Committee at district level. Similar the case of Block Chairman at Block level DMCs. Similarly Gram Panchayat plays a crucial role in association with village level Government functionaries and higher authorities in disaster management. The DMCs function under the overall supervision of the Gram Panchayat in all matters relating to Disaster Management. It also co-ordinates activities with all other government and non governmental organizations. In each village under the Gram panchayat a group of youth has been organized (VDMC & DMTs) to undertake various activities related to disaster management which are crucial in first 24 hours, following the occurrence of a disaster. Similarly activities at sub-district level (Panchayat Samiti) and district level (Zilla Parishad) include the consolidation of village plan at the higher level PRIs to provide an organic linkage between and among the institutions. Similarly Zilla Parishad under the joint chairmanship of Collector and President Zilla Parishad sit every year for Disaster Preparedness and for conducting drills. Similar is the case of PRI members at ULB level.

Every month, there are two nodal meetings among the PRI members at GP, Samiti and district level. Disaster management is a regular topic of discussion in the said meetings, based on local disaster prone areas so that PRI members get a greater chance to involve themselves in management of disaster should one occur. Financial expenditure limit may be allotted to sarpanches to meet the immediate and urgent emergency need relating to man made and natural disasters so that involvement of sarpanches become prominent and affected people get immediate relief. Accountability should be fixed on PRI members for this purpose so that their involvement can be ensured.

Further, GP level nodal NGOs may be identified who will be in constant touch with the sarpanches and provide necessary assistance as and when required, so that greater involvement of PRIs in the process will be ensured. Similarly, capacity building of PRIs at regular interval is required for involvement in the process of Disaster Management. In this regard all PRIs have been trained on various facets of Disaster Management and their role in it. In Koraput district, after the panchayat elections recently, it has been planned to reorient all the newly elected PRI members. All the PRI members have to be oriented towards the Disaster Management Act to make their involvement more meaningful. In tribal areas PRI members should be trained/oriented at regular intervals to make their participation in disaster management more effective, and the orientation component should be as per local disaster priorities. Further, it is important to train the PRI members of tribal areas on first aid techniques so that they can influence others to follow the process instead of following traditional and superstitious methods of treatment. Finally the role of PRIs (local government, particularly the Panchayati Raj institutions) need not be emphasized as they are the most appropriate institutions having an organic link from village to the district, to make people prepared for countering natural disaster as well as involving them in all possible preventive and protective activities so that the impact of disaster is mitigated and people are able to save their lives and property.

[Partha Das](#), UNDP, Bhubaneswar

I am responding to the third part of the query only.

Devolution of functions, functionaries and funds is still a distant reality after more than a decade of the enactment of 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act. Activity mapping done in several states have clearly indicated the gaps. This is the MOST IMPORTANT pre-requisite to for making it possible and make these institutions capable to undertake the necessary activities.

The District Planning Committee is little biased in favour of PRIs in many states and the extent of incorporation of plans of Urban Local Bodies needs to be reviewed. This is because of our history of focus on rural economy. The recognition of Urban centres as growth engines of economy is a recent phenomena. Urban planning has largely been the domain of professional planners. The citizen engagement needs to be built up now. Vulnerability reduction should be the cross cutting agenda in disaster management.

[Nalini Juneja](#) , NUEPA, New Delhi

I really thank Solution Exchange for the opportunity it affords people like me to learn - for example I was not aware of the recent law - the National Disaster Management Act 2005. On reading through the answers and the query - I realise that it's true that we don't have anything for urban areas - and the so called 'Welfare' Associations' (RWAs) are more concerned with 'territorial supremacy' rather than anyone's welfare. For example a common phenomenon in Delhi is for colonies to build and guard iron gates across public roads that leading to the colony. From the point of view of disaster management such gates are dangerous.

- In case of fire for example - they prevent Fire engines from reaching the house from the quickest route. Same for for all other amenities.
- They prevent mass escape from the quickest route in times of explosion, fire, flash flood etc.
- Gates give a false sense of ownership and control over territory- residents argue for the right to segregate themselves
- They foster divisive tendencies between the 'haves' and the 'have nots'
- Children grow up believing that this is the way things 'should be' - that we not only practice economic apartheid - but that it is right and proper to do so
- Children grow up believing in and sensitised to separate and unequal living

In Delhi - we all remember the disaster in a certain cinema hall. The guards locked the cinema gates after the show started and went off - by the time they realised and came running back- the fire had taken its toll.

I will certainly try to learn more about the Disaster Act. Although I would demand the involvement of urban representatives- mere involvement alone will not be enough. As seen from the case of the RWAs in Delhi their involvement can add to the danger of occurrence of disaster. I would like to address also their lack of education/ sensitisation/ enforcement of the Constitutional and legal rights of all as equal citizens among the RWAs (as is evidenced in such matters as the blocking of public access for the practice of private / sectarian gains.)

[Pranay K Swain](#), Microsoft Winclient Research Extension Team, Bangalore

I beg to differ from what Mr Gyana Das had just jotted down on many accounts. My experience with UNDP dates back to 2002. And some water, I hope, may have flown in between.

Merely putting the protocols and notifications in place does not do any wonder. To be honest, I have personally experienced the magnitude and nature of involvement of govt machineries in the initiatives, at every level. And its not too encouraging, I must say. Getting the public

representatives into the fold of any committee is sometimes just cosmetic – especially if there is little motivation from their sides and no real in-depth involvement. I can rather feel good about the participation of PRIs at the bottom level. These people don't really have many things to do or control.. But their enthusiasm is highly appreciated. My urge would be, get out of the normative lines and be innovative in making a difference. Show the local governments the vision and make them participate with accountability rather than having them calling the shots and taking the dev actors for a ride.

Jyotsna Bapat, Independent Consultant, New Delhi

Reading through the detailed response of G Padmanabhan I could not but help share my experience in gap between Disaster Management Plan on paper and the implementation on ground. The Mumbai storm water drain project funded by a bilateral agency was to take care of monsoon floods in Mumbai city. After the creation of the infrastructure the next step was taken to prepare a disaster management plan for the city. Specific public buildings were identified for relief over night shelters etc. But when on that same day it 'poured' the management plans remained on paper. Therefore while Institutional administrative support is a necessary condition for disaster management, it is not a sufficient condition. A lot more efforts in co ordination and operationalising these plans and ensuring that they work through a lot of practice is what is much needed and often neglected efforts. This is where Administrative institutions like PRI need to work with NGO and corporates together to make mitigation and R and R work in disaster management.

Vinay Gupta, Independent Consultant, Gurgaon

I am living in Gurgaon (Delhi NCR) and today with India crossing 200+ million telephones and 160+ million of those having mobiles; one would think ability to reach information and call people who can help would be amazingly more than it was ten years back. I have three kinds of mobile phones and from all of them on dialling basic Emergency numbers like 100,101,102 the call does not go through. These numbers are reachable from BSNL land lines. These numbers work from these mobiles well in Delhi itself but not Gurgaon. In last one year I have contacted various authorities, companies, media but no one has either time to look into this, nor even felt the need to inform public that in case of emergency do not use mobiles but look for BSNL landline to reach required emergency number or dial some other 8 digit emergency numbers instead of 3 digits. If this is situation in NCR, it is hard to imagine what would be the case in rural areas and remote areas.

The concerned authorities need to look into this. Are there any suggestions how this can be fixed?

Susanta Kumar Sahoo, DRM Programme, Sambalpur

The process of using dedicated Telephone line for Emergency Purposes since 2004 has already started. In Orissa, every district is having a Emergency Operation Centre , which is manned round the clock and there is dedicated line with a Toll Free Number 1077 and 1070 at the State Level Emergency Operation Centre. These telephone numbers were very effective during natural disasters as well as major accidents affecting the rural community. In a similar fashion there are dedicated toll free telephone numbers in Agriculture, Transport, Health departments in Orissa. These numbers are accessible from landlines as toll free but in case of mobile phones it is like a local call. The point regarding contacting authorities, i think you can discuss with the Ministry of

Home , Disaster Management cell as well as Telecommunication dept who can give you the information.

Anil Prasad, Kerala State IT Mission, Thiruvananthapuram

Effective Disaster Management means effective coordination to bring different wings of Government, accessible resources of private parties, and manpower to manage a disaster in the best systematic and scientific way possible.

A disaster can be uncontrollable outbreak of an epidemic to most deadly events like tremor and tsunami. Different strategies required to handle different kinds of disasters. It also highly depends on the time and place of occurrence.

Existence of a department or authority may not necessarily be a guarantee for expected services in a disaster. It was what happened in developed countries like USA. Consequent to the terror attacks on the world trade center, USA has formed a Department of Homeland Security with the aim to bring around 22 agencies together to serve the nation while in disasters. But during Hurricane Katrina, as per the press reports then, expected coordination did not happen. In fact, lack of coordination between FEMA and new Department of Homeland Security was one of the topics most discussed then. It was also seen reported that, since Governmental attention was chiefly on Department of Homeland Security, it adversely reflected on the efficiency of FEMA

These are the lessons that we should carefully study while formulating new setups for Disaster Management. On close verification, we can amazingly identify that, irrespective of geographical, social and cultural variations, the crux of the government setup is more or less similar every where in the world in its departmental sentiments, interests of hierarchy etc. etc. It is a very complex situation to solve. Total undoing of these features are not possible, and even if possible – not advisable as some peak performances of the departments during normality may be depending highly on such characteristics.

Here the need is very clear – in a disaster we want to get all the departments, local governments, private agencies and citizens function as one organization, only then individual capacity of each of the component can be effectively utilized. But the way for it required to be framed very carefully addressing the issues like

1. What are the kinds of disasters?
2. What are the categorizations of disasters depending on seriousness of concurrence?
3. Who will ultimately receive all warnings, call for requests etc ?
4. Who will decide the category on receipt of a call?
5. Who will provide field information to categorization?
6. What is the ready network for field information?
7. Which agency should take lead in a specific kind and category of disaster?
8. What kind of reporting relation ship will be automatically enacted among other departments?
9. What are the minimum requirements of manpower anticipated for each kind and category of disaster?
10. What are the minimum kinds, and quantity of equipments required for each kind and category of disaster?
11. What are the sources of manpower?
12. What are the sources of equipments?
13. What kind of database will be kept in respect of departments, able private parties, manpower, equipment etc for immediate call?
14. What should be the broad norms for availing accessible private service?

15. What are the things that should be enacted mandatory in each kind of situation?

Many thanks to all who contributed to this query!

If you have further information to share on this topic, please send it to Solution Exchange for the Decentralization Community in India at se-decn@solutionexchange-un.net.in with the subject reading "Re: [se-decn] Query: Local Bodies and the Disaster Management Act 2005 - Examples; Experiences. Additional Reply."

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