

## **ABSTRACT**

Nowadays local, national, regional, international, continental and global cooperation and coordination are very important in disaster management. By working together, a proactive plan could be formulated for the future disaster management activities among the countries. Disaster management is the lynchpin on which effective cooperation and coordination depend. Moreover, sharing of experiences and exchange of views among the experts of different countries will definitely result into fruitful outcome which may be used for disaster prevention and mitigation all over the world. Scientific and disaster mitigation organizations should seek to develop working relationships based on mutual trust and the recognition of differing characteristics, goals and needs. Regular contact among the different groups, before, during, and after the disasters can greatly develop contacts. Disaster mitigation organizations should take advantage of opportunities to work together to provide relevant training for the emergency management personnel to enhance disaster mitigation/relief efforts and the timeliness, quality and accuracy of reporting about the disasters and results of our efforts to affect them.

**Key Words:** Cooperation, Management, Lynch-pin, Prevention, Mutual

# **SIGNIFICANCE OF COOPERATION AND COORDINATION IN INTERNATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

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## **1. Background:**

The losses of lives and physical properties due to the disasters are at rise mostly in developing countries, although Disaster risks are global in nature. In the same way, social and economic costs of disasters and global humanitarian challenges are also increasing in scope and complexity. This situation calls for the attention to the need for a solid coordination mechanism. Hence, coordination and cooperation among government authorities, international organizations and NGOs are fundamental for an effective disaster management. As the impact of a disaster in a particular country or region can have the effects in other countries or region - cooperation and coordination beyond local and national level to regional, international and global level are needed to cope with the disasters. Cooperation is the antithesis of competition, however. Many people or organizations consider cooperation as the ideal form of management of humanitarian activities. The act of cooperation and coordination is required for making different people or things work together to attain a specified objective or goal or effect.

## **2. Causes of Disasters:**

There are several natural and human induced disasters. However, the major causes of disasters are: (i) geo-physical structure of a country, (ii) climate, (iii) environmental degradation, (iv) mismanagement of natural resources, (v) widespread urban and rural poverty, (vi) unplanned and haphazard settlement, (vii) rapid urbanization, (viii) inefficient public policies, (ix) dealing disaster risk through response-focused civil defense-type structures, (x) leaving a serious underinvestment in hazard prevention and mitigation; and (ix) lagging and misguided investments in infrastructures.

## **3. Effects of Disasters:**

Disasters not only damage infrastructure but have long-term impacts on productivity, growth and economy. As mentioned earlier, the effects and impacts of disasters go beyond local and national level to global depending upon the extent of disasters. For example the adverse effect of climate change, global warming and green house effects are the major concerns for all the countries and people of the world and their impacts have to borne by millions of innocent people. In fact, climate change is already alerting the frequency, severity and intensity of hydro-meteorological hazards. It is to be noted that the vulnerability to disasters is determined by a complex set of physical, economic, social and political factors. From 1970s to 1990s, the number of affected population in the world tripled while the decadal economic cost increased by a factor of \$5 billion to more than \$600 billion. Recently, global climate change has become accepted as an additional incubator. In such a way, increases in frequency and intensity of climatic hazard impacts could aggravate trends in many vulnerable areas. More importantly, the impact of disaster is directly concerned with the life and death of human being. Therefore, helping each other saves precious human lives. Humanitarian assistance in need and in appropriate time is very essential to save the human lives.

## **4. Areas of Gaps:**

We are experiencing that the occurrences of disasters are increasing in both frequency and magnitude. Hence, disaster prevention and preparedness requires a wide range of measures, both long and short term, aimed at saving lives and limiting the amount of damage caused.

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Particularly, to confront recurrent calamities is a stupendous task with all its attendant regulatory, institutional, resource and technological and managerial pre-requisites. Some of the more pertinent gaps that need to be addressed are highlighted below:

1. It is imperative that all countries should seriously take into account the impact of global warming, green house effect and climate change when planning a multi-hazard early warning system or network and formulating and implementing the policies on disaster management.
2. There needs to be a comprehensive and unified disaster management policy to reduce the social and economic costs to the community caused by disasters. The policy should properly address problems in urban/sub-urban areas and elsewhere. So policies suitable for the type of problems faced by urban and rural communities should be formulated.
3. The use of satellite, TETRA, GSM, WI-MAX, etc. and telemedicine needs to be considered as critical in saving lives when disasters strike. Health entities to include WHO and telecommunications experts such as ITU should provide such services in the post disaster situations.
4. The use of a Common Alert Protocol which will become an ITU Standard by mid-2007 should be encouraged as an effective way of ensuring that the media can efficiently and effectively pass on alerts.
5. The link between environment and environmental related management and telecommunications/ICT needs to be highlighted in order to mitigate disasters.
6. Share of experiences and exchange of ideas and mapping of strategies by stakeholders are also highly desirable to cope with the disasters.

To attain the above goals, cooperation and coordination at the national, regional and global level is needed.

##### **5. The Need and Importance of International Cooperation and Coordination**

In addition to the inter-country cooperation and coordination among disaster management stakeholders, there is the growing need of regional, international and global cooperation and coordination among the countries that have common problems, as a country's disaster situation may affect the others as well. For example, an earthquake disaster can have wide geographical coverage and where much of the region's transport and communications infrastructure crosses several borders, the need for regional-level services is obvious. Similarly, failure to apply disaster risk management in any one country can affect such infrastructure and, thus, the region as a whole. Regional and international cooperation is essential not only to cope with the impacts of disasters but also to help ensure that the region sustains economic growth. Moreover, enhanced regional and international cooperation and coordination in disaster risk management offers attractive opportunities to provide resources.

As a matter of fact, disaster preparedness has remained inadequate in many countries where at the national level, there are needs to up-date disaster legislation, enhance the national focal agency and strengthen inter-institutional and intergovernmental coordination. Many aspects of disaster management are trans-border. As a result, those countries could be economically and socially affected due to the serious natural disasters in a neighbouring country. A neighbor may be able to provide valuable help in evaluating risk, mitigating, forecasting, developing and communicating early warnings and responding to disasters. Moreover, regional planning and joint effort should be carried out to solve the disaster problems as the uncertainty of disasters are major concerns for all the countries. In addition such countries which have common goal and interest should share disaster data and information so as to reduce the impact of potential disasters. Similarly, to find more effective ways to forecast risk, to better manage the response

and develop organizational resilience to interruption and different types of crisis and disasters - international, continental and global cooperation and coordination have been very imperative. Besides the national, regional and international level cooperation and coordination there is also the need of enhanced cooperation and coordination at the UN level. Particularly, coordination needs to be improved between United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA), United Nations Human Settlements Program (UN-HABITAT), United Nations Disaster Relief Organization (UNDRO), United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), World Meteorological Organization (WMO), United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP), World Health Organization (WHO) and so on.

## **6. Way Forward:**

Disaster prone countries need to formulate and implement strategies and plans of actions and programs for disaster risk reduction. They should develop their institutional and technical capabilities in order to cope with the disasters. Preparedness and preventive measures are highly desirable to reduce the disaster losses. Effective and efficient response and rehabilitation capabilities and mechanisms are also equally important to minimize and redress the disaster losses and damages. Hence, the need and importance of cooperation and coordination among the national and international organizations and countries is pertinent particularly in the field of the development of humanitarian assistance. At the national level such cooperation and coordination may vary from community level to local, village, municipality, district/province and/or region. While at the international level it varies from regional to global.

In addition to the above, disasters must become a core development issue. Integrating disaster risk reduction into development policy, programs and practice is of great importance. It needs to be ensured that disaster risk reduction is included in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and development plans and programs. To give an example of the benefits of disaster risk reduction approach, the World Bank recently estimated that, on an average, countries can save \$7 in disaster recovery costs for every \$1 spent on risk reduction measures. On the other hand, better systems for the collection, analysis and dissemination on disaster impacts and links with climate change, health, livelihoods and governance by developing performance targets and indicators to assess progress in integrating disaster risk reduction into both humanitarian and development policies are also important.

Keeping in view the above facts and figures, the following should be the strategy of the national, regional and international disaster management stakeholders to mitigate disasters and enhance coordination and cooperation among them:

1. Explore possible national, regional and global cooperation mechanisms for sharing information, exchanging view and knowledge and replicate best practices required for the effective response and mitigation of disasters.
2. The national, regional and global level capacities and links should be further developed and strengthened by reinforcing links between preparedness and response, by seeking support for the work done in communities to reduce risk and prepare for disasters and in generating learning from that work.
3. Strategic partnerships, cooperation and coordination with the national and international key stakeholders within the humanitarian community (UN agencies, NGOs, INGOs, academic, corporate sectors etc.) should be strengthened to improve the support to national societies and their partners.
4. For an effective cooperation and coordination wide range of contacts among the stakeholders is needed.
5. The use and application of Disaster Management Information System (DMIS), information, best practices, guidelines, newsletters and other resource materials should be compiled, analyzed and synthesized and shared among the national and international stakeholders. While sharing of experiences, exchanging views and learning lessons from each other help to minimize losses and damages.

6. Public information, education and disaster awareness are crucial. Therefore, it is highly essential to raise disaster awareness and education on the behavior and impact of disasters among the vulnerable population.
7. Adequate funds and resources should be arranged to enhance national and international capacity in emergency preparedness and disaster mitigation and response.
8. Capacity building is necessary thorough trainings, seminars, workshops and exposure visits.
9. The use of remote sensing technique is essential in particular for earthquakes, fires, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis.
10. Hazard mapping of vulnerable areas are of utmost importance. Similarly, high risk areas should be identified and integrate with population distribution infrastructure and building stock databases by preparing new Tectonic maps of such areas.
11. Emphasis should be given to disaster risk mitigation.
12. More importantly, disaster resistance resilience communities are to be developed.
13. Establishment of early warning systems for natural and human induced multi-hazards is highly desirable.
14. It is to be realized that preparedness, response, rehabilitation and development are all part of a same process. Therefore, the holistic vision of this process must be reflected in the disaster risk management policy framework that should encompass existing policies.
15. While developing and implementing a development plan/project, its sustainability and proximity to disaster should be taken into account.
16. All the disaster management activities should meet the noble interest and good of the affected population by measuring the respect of agreed policies and standards such as Sphere and Code of Conduct.
17. It is also desirable to work on a new disaster risk management policy framework, which includes cross- cutting issues like gender equality and accountability and environment perspectives.
18. The most effective way to reduce losses from disasters is to integrate disaster risk into overall economic and development processes.
19. Mock exercises, drills and simulations should be carried out to sharpen the skills of the disaster managers.
20. Public participation and preparedness should be enhanced.

## **7. Conclusion:**

As disaster management is a multi-sectoral activity, it needs cooperation and coordination among stakeholders. This means a sharing of experiences, exchanging views and learning lessons help to minimize losses and damages. The overarching issue is to improve governance for disaster risk management. Risk considerations must be factored in into all aspects and levels of government and society. Disaster risk analysis should be undertaken for all new development plan, program and activities. Building relationships requires time and a wide range of contacts. Disaster risk reduction should be included in strategy papers and development plans. It is of interest to note that donors, governments and aid agencies prefer to invest in response rather than cost-effective disaster prevention and preparedness

The best coordinator must know that coordination is to build relationships over time. It needs wide range of contacts. Disaster risk reduction should be included in strategy papers and development plans and programs. It is to be noted that donors, governments and aid agencies prefer to invest in response rather than disaster prevention and preparedness. Though the costs of prevention have to be paid in the present, it repays in the long term though.

The Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015 also emphasizes on the efforts to reduce disasters through systematic integration of disaster risks by integrating them into policies, plans and programs for sustainable development and poverty reduction which must be supported through bilateral, regional and international cooperation. More importantly, humanitarian agenda should

be given high priority. It is also needed to further develop and maintain strategic partnership among the national and international stakeholders in order to fulfil the goal of alleviate the human sufferings.

Finally, cooperation and coordination mechanism in disaster management should be established at national, regional, international and global levels by identifying and developing disaster management units and resources to involve government authorities, United Nations Agencies and non-governmental organizations. The private sector also should be involved as it can be instrumental in this cooperation and coordination mechanism by availing resources.

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