

Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)

The National Disaster Management Authority is a Home Ministry Agency. The Government of India enacted the Disaster Management Act in 2005, which mandated the establishment of a National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) for coordinating response to disasters and for capacity building in crisis response and disaster resiliency.

The NDMA is headed by the Prime Minister(as ex-officio Chairman). While the State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMA) are headed by their respective Chief Ministers. The NDMA is created to drive and implement a holistic and integrated approach to Disaster Management in India.**29 September** is celebrated as the Foundation Day of the NDMA. Recently, on the 10th foundation day of the NDMA, the Home Minister has said that the National Disaster Management Authority will be revamped to make the functioning of the agency effective.

Evolution of NDMA:

Emergence of an organization is always through an evolutionary process. NDMA has also gone through the same stages. The Government of India (GOI), in recognition of the importance of Disaster Management as a national priority, set up a High-Powered Committee (HPC) in August 1999 and a National Committee after the Gujarat earthquake, for making recommendations on the preparation of Disaster Management plans and suggesting effective mitigation mechanisms. The Tenth Five-Year Plan

document also had, for the first time, a detailed chapter on Disaster Management. The Twelfth Finance Commission was also mandated to review the financial arrangements for Disaster Management.

On 23 December 2005, the Government of India enacted the Disaster Management Act, which envisaged the creation of National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), headed by the Prime Minister, and State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs) headed by respective Chief Ministers, to spearhead and implement a holistic and integrated approach to Disaster Management in India.

The National Disaster Management Authority was a brainchild of the two Committees- High Powered Committee setup in 1999(in recognition of the importance of Disaster Management as a national priority issue). Thereafter, A separate National Committee was setup after the Gujarat Earthquake.

These two Committees made recommendations on the preparation of disaster management plans and suggestion mitigation measures. Furthermore, in the Tenth Five-Year Plan contained a chapter on Disaster Management.

In pursuit of the recommendations made by these bodies, the government enacted the Disaster Management Act in December 2005.

Composition of National Disaster Management Authority(NDMA):

- The NDMA has a sanctioned strength of nine members.
- The Chairman is the Prime Minister of India, as the de-facto head.
- To oversee the day-to-day affairs of the NDMA, the Vice _chairman is appointed.
- Ever since its inception, the NDMA has been manned by non-experts who were politically affiliated to the Government.
- Recently, the Government has appointed three experts in the Disaster management Agency. These members are related to the field of Disaster Management, these esteemed members are:-
 - Shri.R.K.Jain
 - Dr. D.N. Sharma, Director, Health Safety and Environment Group, BARC
 - Shri Kamal Kishore, Programme Advisor at UNDP, New York
 - Lt. Gen. N.C. Marwah, PVSM, AVSM (Retd.)

Organisation of NDMA:

The National Disaster Management Authority is organised in following divisions for operational divisions:

1. Planning and Policy
2. Mitigation

3. Operations and Communication division
4. Administration division
5. Capacity Building Division
6. Finance Division

Objectives of National Disaster Management

Authority:

- The NDMA envisions a safer and disaster resilient India.
- The objectives of NDMA are to ensure a holistic, pro-active, technology driven and sustainable strategy which would involve all stakeholders.
- It tries to foster a culture of prevention, preparedness and mitigation.

Functions of National Disaster Management

Authority (NDMA):

The NDMA is mandated to lay down effective policies, plans and guidelines for Disaster Management. This is expected to ensure timely and effective response to disasters. To achieve this objective, the NDMA fulfills the following functions:

- Lays down policies for management of disasters.
- Approve the National Plan for Disaster Management
- Approve the plan prepared by the ministries/ Departments of the Government of India according to the National Plan.

- It lays down guidelines for integrating the measures for prevention of disaster by different Ministries/Departments of Government of India.
- It also issues guidelines for mitigation of the effects of disaster in the development plans of these Ministries/Departments.
- The NDMA lays down guidelines that are to be followed by the State Authorities in drawing up the State Plan.
- The NDMA coordinates the enforcement and implementation of the plans and policies for disaster management.
- It recommends the provisions of funds for mitigation of disasters.
- The NDMA provides support to other nations that are affected by major disasters, this is determined by the Central Government.
- The National Disaster Management Authority also takes measures for prevention of disasters, their mitigation, preparedness and capacity building for dealing with threatening disasters or disaster situations.

NDMA lays down wide policies and guidelines that may be required for the functioning of the National Institute of Disaster Management .

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.

For example, disasters caused by floods, droughts, tidal waves and earth tremors are generally considered “natural disasters.” Disasters caused by chemical or industrial accidents, environmental pollution, transport accidents and political unrest are classified as “human-made” or “human-induced” disasters since they are the direct result of human action.

A more modern and social understanding of disasters, however, views this distinction as artificial since most disasters result from the action or inaction of people and their social and economic structures. This happens by people living in ways that degrade their environment, developing and overpopulating urban centres, or creating and perpetuating social and economic systems. Communities and population settled in areas susceptible to the impact of a raging river or the violent tremors of the earth are placed in situations of high vulnerability because of their socio-economic conditions. This is compounded by every aspect of nature being subject to seasonal, annual and sudden fluctuations and also due to the unpredictability of the timing, frequency and magnitude of occurrence of the disasters.

Etymology

The word ‘Disaster’ derives from Middle French *desastre*¹ and that from Old Italian *disastro*, which in turn comes from the Greek pejorative prefix *δυσ-*, (*dus-*) “bad”+ *αστήρ* (*aster*), “star”. The root of the word *disaster*² (“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.

Definition

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”.

The Disaster Management Act, 2005 defines disaster as “a catastrophe, mishap, calamity or grave occurrence in any area, arising from natural or man made causes, or by accident or negligence which results in substantial loss of life or human suffering or damage to, and destruction of, property, or damage to, or degradation of, environment, and is of such a nature or magnitude as to be beyond the coping capacity of the community of the affected area”.The United Nations defines disaster as “the occurrence of sudden or major misfortune which disrupts the basic fabric and normal functioning of the society or community”.

Disasters not new to Mankind

Disasters are not new to mankind. They have been the constant, though inconvenient, companions of the human beings since time immemorial. Disasters can be natural or humanmade. Earthquake, cyclone, hailstorm, cloud-burst, landslide, soil erosion, snow avalanche, flood etc. are the examples of natural disasters while fire, epidemics, road, air, rail accidents and leakages of chemicals/ nuclear installations etc. fall under the category

of human-made disasters. The High Power Committee on Disaster Management, constituted in 1999, has identified 31 various disasters categorized into five major sub-groups which are given below

List of various Disasters

i. Water and climate related disasters

- a) Floods and drainage management
- b) Cyclones
- c) Tornadoes and hurricanes
- d) Hailstorm
- e) Cloud burst
- f) Heat wave and cold wave
- g) Snow avalanches
- h) Droughts
- i) Sea erosion
- j) Thunder and lightening
- k) Tsunami

ii. Geological related disasters

- a) Landslides and mudflows
- b) Earthquakes
- c) Dam failures/ Dam bursts
- d) Minor fires

iii. Chemical, industrial and nuclear related disasters

- a) Chemical and industrial disasters
- b) Nuclear disasters

- iv. Accident related disasters
 - a) Forest fires
 - b) Urban fires
 - c) Mine flooding
 - d) Oil spills
 - e) Major building collapse
 - f) Serial bomb blasts
 - g) Festival related disasters
 - h) Electrical disasters and fires
 - i) Air, road and rail accidents
 - j) Boat capsizing
 - k) Village fire
- v. Biological related disasters
 - a) Biological disasters and epidemics
 - b) Pest attacks
 - c) Cattle epidemics
 - d) Food poisoning

Source: High Powered Committee Report-1999

Note: After 2004, Tsunami has also been included in the list of disasters.