



Charter of Inter Agency Group (IAG)

Himachal Pradesh

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF HAZARD PROFILE OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

Himachal Pradesh is prone to various hazards both natural and manmade. Main hazards consist of earthquakes, landslides, flash floods, snow storms and avalanches, draughts, dam failures, fires- domestic and wild, accidents- road, rail, air, stampedes, boat capsizing, biological, industrial and hazardous chemicals etc. However, the hazard which poses the biggest threat to the state is that of earthquakes. Another form of the natural hazards in the state is the frequent occurrences of landslides. The hills and mountains of Himachal Pradesh are liable to suffer landslides during monsoons and also in high intensity earthquakes.

Although widespread floods problems do not exist in the state because of topographical nature, the incidences of flash floods are increasing and causing large scale damage. Besides, with the increase of road connectivity and number of vehicles plying on these roads in the State, the number of road accidents and loss of precious human lives is increasing day by day. Another major disaster that affects the state is forest fire. Over the years the forest wealth of the State is being destroyed by the incidences of fire attributed to both anthropogenic and other reasons. The destruction of rich flora and fauna of the State due to forest fires will have serious repercussions on the ecological balance of the State.

The State is known as land of Gods. Every year, large numbers of devotees visit temples and religious sites for pilgrimage and religious purposes. Sometimes, especially during the days of religious festivities, human stampedes pose a great risk to the lives of the devotees and tourists. In one such notable accident at the temple of Naina Devi in district Bilaspur, 162 people died when a human stampede occurred on 3rd of August 2008. Possibility of such instances is always there if there is any laxity on the part of the management. Apart from the above-stated hazards, there are many instances when road accidents caused immense loss of lives. Boat-capsizing and Helicopter crash are some uncommon but not unprecedented types of anthropogenic disasters.

INSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The following 3 points contain the elements of the legal framework which endeavours to strengthen the GO-NGO coordination and highlights the role of NGOs in Disaster Management in India:

- 1)** The DM Act 2005 recognises that sometimes the development patterns that do not recognise disaster risk and vulnerability in the specific geographic areas may induce disasters. The proactive approach in the DM Act 2005 to address disaster risk and vulnerability through pre-disaster preparedness and mitigation activities also envisions accountability and multi stakeholder participation, including coordination of the activities of the NGOs at various levels. Sections 38 (2)(a), 22(2)(j) and 30(2)(xix) of the Act mandate every State Government, SEC of SDMA and DDMA respectively for collaboration with stakeholder agencies including NGOs for the purpose of improving the effectiveness of DM. Similarly the Act mandates NGOs to act in an equitable and non-discriminatory manner for the purpose of assisting or protecting the disaster affected communities or for providing relief to the affected communities or while dealing with any effects of threatening disaster situations and has fixed the responsibility to monitor this on SEC and DDMA of the State vide sections 24(j) and 34 (l) respectively. The above provisions ensure that the concerned DM interventions being addressed are supported and facilitated by the civil society organisations working at the grass roots and also takes care of the ground realities.
- 2)** Section 22 (2) (j) of the DM Act, 2005 mandates SEC to “advise, assist and coordinate the activities of the Departments of the Government of the State, District Authorities, statutory bodies and other governmental and non-governmental organisations engaged in disaster management” and Section 24 (j) of the Act states that the SEC shall “ensure that non-governmental organisations carry out their activities in an equitable and non-discriminatory manner.” Similarly Section 30 (2) (xix) of the Act stipulates that the DDMA shall “advise, assist and coordinate the activities of the Departments of the Government at the district level, statutory bodies and other governmental and non-governmental organisations in the district engaged in the disaster management” and Section 24 (l) lays down that the DDMA shall “ensure that the non-governmental organisations carry out their activities in an equitable and non-discriminatory manner”. The Act also directs the State Government under Section 38 (2) (a) to coordinate “actions of different departments of the Government of the State, the State Authority, District Authorities, local authority and other non-governmental organisations”.

3) Sections 35 and 38 specifically emphasise the coordination of actions with NGOs. The National Policy on Disaster Management (NPDM) also states the national vision for community mobilisation and participation in DM and aims to provide momentum and sustenance through the collective efforts of all government agencies and NGOs. There is emphasis on community based disaster management, including last mile integration of the policy, plans and execution and early warning dissemination. Promoting a productive partnership with NGOs is a prominent thrust area in the NPDM.

Apart from the legal framework, some institutional systems have been developed or are being developed by different Governmental as well as Non-Governmental agencies. Both NGOs and the Red Cross work by engaging volunteers and paid humanitarian professional staff. The international humanitarian organisations, UN Agencies and the international affiliates of the Red Cross have contributed significantly in the development of a large pool of skilled human resource in the country that are readily deployed in any disaster situation. Government agencies have often made use of this resource.

During the period 2002 to 2007, in collaboration with MHA, Gol, a Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Project was implemented by UNDP in 176 districts in 21 states of the country. As a part of this project, training programmes and mock exercises were conducted at the national, state, district and sub-district levels, DM Plans were prepared at the district, block and village levels, task forces were set up at the village and gram Panchayat levels and DM Committees were established at the district level. Based on the lessons learnt from the DRM Project, UNDP has drawn up a DRR project, in collaboration with NDMA, MoUD and MHA, Gol for strengthening the institutional mechanisms for DM at the state and district levels and for addressing Urban Disaster Risk in the megacities and large cities.

Besides the mentioned legal and institutional frameworks, the electronic and print media can also play a very significant role in creating awareness and in disseminating information to the general public on DM related issues. Their role is also being viewed in broader context of Disaster Management. As another potential area of focus, private sector's engagement in post disaster situations, especially in distributing relief assistance to disaster affected communities as a part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is also being augmented with special emphasis on strengthening pre-disaster preparedness and mitigation in disaster-prone areas with the help of local NGOs.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Key challenges and opportunities in disaster management need to be identified and steps taken for building synergy among Government and Non-Governmental Organisations (GO-NGO).

- NGOs can play a very important role in mobilising communities and in linking ULBs with corporate sector entities for initiating DRR related activities.
- The strong linkages which NGOs have with grassroots communities can be effectively harnessed for creating greater public awareness on disaster risk and vulnerability, initiating appropriate strategies for strengthening the capacity of stakeholder groups to improve disaster preparedness, mitigation and improving the emergency response capacities of the stakeholders.
- In addressing the emerging concerns of climate change adaptation and mitigation, NGOs can play a very significant role in working with local communities and introducing innovative approaches based on the good practices followed in other countries.
- NGOs can bring in the financial resources from bi lateral and multilateral donors for implementing pragmatic and innovative approaches to deal with disaster risk and vulnerability, by effectively integrating and converging the various government programmes, schemes and projects to create the required synergy in transforming the lives of at-risk communities.

Considering the past experience at the time of responding to the disasters, the following challenges were faced in context of GO-NGO Coordination:

- i. **Weak Coordination:** Inadequate coordination among Government officials and Civil Society humanitarian personnel results in weak response and suboptimal performance, as well as differences in the quality of inputs provided by different NGOs.
- ii. **Brief time-spans for relief interventions:** Many NGOs provide relief in the first 15 to 60 days, shut down the operations and move away without any linkage to long term rehabilitation and recovery of the disaster-affected communities.
- iii. **Neglect of remote and inaccessible disaster-affected areas:** Inadequate physical access to the affected communities and officials hampers assessments, information coordination, convergence and sustained operations.

- iv. **Tendency to rush to the epicentre of disasters:** While the epicentres require special attention, it is also equally important to ensure that the peripheral areas impacted by disasters are not neglected or ignored while formulating intervention strategies.
- v. **Inadequate adherence to humanitarian standards and good practices:** In general, there is a growing realization that global instruments setting minimum standards in disaster response have not been contextualized to India.
- vi. **Inadequate transparency and accountability to donors and disaster affected communities:** The process of disaster relief is sometimes seen as a charitable humanitarian activity which does not require the practice of transparency and accountability towards donors and disaster-affected communities.
- vii. **Neglect of Rural-Urban Diversity and Primacy of Attention to Rural Areas:** The humanitarian assistance is still primarily targeted towards rural areas and the diverse needs of vulnerable urban poor are often not addressed adequately.
- viii. **Lack of clear exit strategy during transition:** Most often, the scope and timeline of the response is not defined. When an NGO withdraws from the area, the communities are left to fend for themselves.
- ix. **Advocacy Role of NGOs – “Do No Harm Approach”:** Developmental projects, if not formulated with a comprehension of disaster risk and vulnerability profiles at the local levels, can increase disaster risk and vulnerability of people, assets, environment and their livelihoods.

At the same time, there are numerous opportunities that are provided by the NGOs, as given below, which need to be optimally utilised:

- i. **Setting up a Functional GO-NGO Coordination Platform during non-emergency times** will ensure that appropriate coordination happens during response operations and development interventions.
- ii. **GO-NGO institutional arrangements** need to be made in order to collaborate in developing the roadmap for short, medium and long term operational strategies and plans.
- iii. **Common accessibility to disaster affected areas** can become a reality if GO-NGOs engage with local bodies, district and state level disaster management focal points right from developing DM planning and operational strategies.
- iv. **Focus on the most vulnerable** needs to be the approach for responding to disasters as well as reducing disaster risks. Updated information should be maintained to support this.

- v. **Setting and Committing to Minimum standards by GO-NGO:** Ready and user-friendly instruments for humanitarian standards need to be adopted and contextualized as a collective initiative, along with transparency and accountability principles to be institutionalized at all levels.
- vi. **Institutionalizing Knowledge Creation and Management:** Consolidation of institutional learning processes and creation of a public domain knowledge bank as well as educational programmes will support long term improvements in capacities.

HP-IAG CHARTER

MISSION STATEMENT

Within the state inter-agency mechanism, we are united and committed to address the humanitarian needs, ensure access to the most vulnerable communities, provide timely and effective service deliveries, and reduce the immediate and long term risks to lives and livelihoods.

OBJECTIVES OF THE HP-IAG

As a platform for coordination, the Himachal Pradesh Inter Agency Group (HP-IAG) aims at strengthening the existing systems and promoting synergetic actions for effective disaster risk reduction in the state. The specific objectives of the Himachal Pradesh IAG are as under:

- Promote and institutionalize unified response strategy in humanitarian crisis.
- Mainstreaming the emergency preparedness as in integrated development strategy.
- Systematize the emergency response mechanism and to bring in the culture of “working together” in emergencies and normalcy.
- To promote stakeholders' engagement in activities that will build their capacities to cope with calamities.
- To promote effective planning, coordination and execution over the issues pertaining to DRR in the state through a unified strategy over disaster preparedness and response.
- To promote sharing of best practices, tools & techniques and different types of resources among the stakeholder organizations for enhanced solution exchange.
- To undertake various capacity building measures for the professionals and volunteers of the member / non-member GOs and NGOs on various aspects of Disaster Management covering the Before Disaster, During Disaster and After Disaster situations.
- To develop the HP-IAG as a platform for advocating for a disaster-resilient state.

NON-NEGOTIABLE PRINCIPLES

- Respect the mandate and values of each member organization.
- Provide common platform of coordination amongst the stakeholders.
- Ensure rights and dignity of every organization and the community.
- Promote unified response and encourage team work.
- Share useful information and timely feedback for accurate decision making
- Provide scope for mutual learning for organizations and communities

MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA

The following criterion is proposed to become a member of the HP-IAG:

- a) State Level agencies working in emergency response and preparedness for minimum of five years.
- b) International and national funding agencies supporting emergency preparedness and community led risk reduction initiatives for a minimum period of three years.
- c) Academic and/or research institutions actively involved on disaster related knowledge management and practices.
- d) Membership claim may be scrutinised by a committee of the HP-IAG for authentication of the prospective member organisation.

STRUCTURE OF THE HP-IAG

There are 4 basic elements in the structure of the HP-IAG:

- **Secretariat**

The Secretariat of HP-IAG is the official place where the agency will perform its everyday works and the same shall be hosted by the Core Group member organizations in the HP-IAG on a rotational basis.

- **Core Group**

The Core Group of the HP-IAG shall be constituted by the elected /unanimously chosen members and this Core Group shall act as the executive body of the HP-IAG. The Core Group has the right to accept or reject the membership of an organization to the HP-IAG.

- **Convener to HP-IAG**

The Core Group shall be led by a Convener to facilitate the functioning of HP-IAG as an institution, to manage the resources, to coordinate with members and all stakeholders and to ensure timely follow up on decisions.

- **General Members, HP-IAG**

Any organization which fulfils the criterion for the HP-IAG membership, with the prior approval of the Core Group, can become a member of the HP-IAG.

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES OF THE HP-IAG

The HP-AIG shall prepare, review and modify (if or when needed), the standard operating procedures for the HP-IAG. The basic SOPs of the HP-IAG are as under:

- The HP-IAG shall function in consultation with the HPSDMA as well as the DM Cell, Revenue Department (HP Govt.) and shall maintain proper coordination with the government agencies. The HP-IAG shall provide to the HPSDMA the information and report of activities done by the HP-IAG on a regular basis.
 - At least one meeting of the Core-Group shall take place in each quarter in normal conditions. However, in special circumstances, additional meeting(s) of the HP-IAG can be called up by the convener and the frequency of the meeting may vary accordingly.
 - Core Group of the HP-IAG can replace a member if the member is found inactive or if it remains absent in the Core Group meetings consistently for 3 or more times.
 - At least one capacity building workshop or training shall be organized in each quarter for the selected master trainers of the member organizations.
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