



SRI LANKA NATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT POLICY

Towards a Safer Sri Lanka

Ministry of Disaster Management

Acronyms and Abbreviations

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| CBDM | Community based Disaster Management |
| CBDRM | Community based Disaster Risk Management |
| CBOs | Community Based Organizations |
| CBRN | Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Disasters |
| CEA | Central Environmental Authority |
| DIA | Disaster Impact Assessment |
| DM | Disaster Management |
| DMC | Disaster Management Centre |
| DPRPs | Disaster Preparedness and Response Plans |
| DRM | Disaster Risk Management |
| DRR | Disaster Risk Reduction |
| EIA | Environmental Impact Assessment |
| EOC | Emergency Operation Centre |
| EW | Early Warning |
| EWS | Early Warning System |
| GN | Grama Niladhari |
| ICS | Incident Command System |
| INGOs | International Non Government Organizations |
| LA | Local Authority |
| LUPPD | Land Use Policy Planning Division |
| M/DM&HR | Ministry for Disaster Management and Human Rights |
| NCDM | National Council for Disaster Management |
| NDMCC | National Disaster Management Coordination Committee |
| NDMP | National Disaster Management Plan |
| NEOP | National Emergency Operations Plan |
| NGOs | Non Government Organizations |
| NPPD | National Physical Planning Department |
| PCs | Provincial Councils |
| SAR | Search and Rescue |
| UDA | Urban Development Authority |
| RADA | Reconstruction and Development Agency |
| TDRM | Total Disaster Risk Management |
| WMD | Weapons of Mass Destruction |

Introduction to Disaster Management Policy

Sri Lanka is affected by different types of natural hazards. They include Floods, Landslides, Cyclones, Droughts, Rock Falls, Land Subsidence, Earth Tremours, Storm Surges, Coastal Floods, Coastal Erosion, Salinisation, Soil Erosion and Sedimentation, Salinity Intrusion in to Drinking Water Sources, Forest Fire, High Winds, Tornadoes etc., More localised hazards such as lightning strike, epidemic and hazards related to environmental pollution are also prevalent. The Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004 has also highlighted the vulnerability of Sri Lanka to such irregular and occasional high-impact events. Occasional non-destructive and destructive earthquakes have also been recorded over the past 400 years in various parts of the Island.

Frequency of occurrence of natural disasters is in an increasing trend, which may be attributed mainly to unplanned development, environmental degradation, human intervention and climatic changes. It is an accepted fact that human intervention can increase the frequency and severity of natural hazards and that human intervention can cause natural hazards where none existed before. This shows that even if people can do little or nothing to change the incidence of intensity of most natural phenomena, they have an important role to play to ensure that natural events are not converted in to disasters by their own actions. Some such human actions are undue land filling, deforestation, indiscriminate coral, sand and gem mining.

With increasing population combined with scarcity of lands which are not exposed to natural hazards, there is a strong tendency for people to occupy such lands which have a greater exposure to hazards. Unplanned development activities in such situations increase the vulnerability leading to greater overall risks. Due to this reason, it is mostly the urban and rural poor who are at risk to disasters as it is the poor who occupy such vulnerable lands. Optimising development and maintaining its sustainability will only be possible by safeguarding the environment, which in turn will help arrest triggering of hazards. This emphasises the fact that development, environment and disaster management are very closely linked.

In addition to natural hazards, the country is exposed to various human induced hazards such as industrial hazards, major industrial and occupational accidents, air and maritime hazards, urban fire, epidemics, explosions, air raids, civil or internal strife, chemical accidents (toxic, gas, fuel, other), radiological emergencies, inland and marine oil spills, major transportation accidents including hazardous materials and terrorism related disasters. Disasters resulting from ethnic conflicts and due to chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear disasters also must be taken into account.

Disasters are exceptional events with overwhelming loss of lives and property. Even if predicted, disasters may not be completely averted due to reasons beyond human control. There is always likely to be a degree of loss, human as well as material. In this context, managing disasters in the 21st century requires a unified and a national approach which is highly concerted and coordinated. With the overall objective of reducing the risk, it focuses on where possible preventing the occurrence of disasters, mitigating their impact and ensuring that there is adequate preparedness to guarantee an effective response.

It is required to assess the disaster risks and contributing factors for both natural and human induced disasters in different parts of the country, in order to make disaster risk reduction interventions and have preparedness plans to respond if they occur, ensuring recovery at the earliest possible instance. This emphasises the need for a national policy on disaster

management; a policy that will commit all organisations and communities to act in such a manner so that highest safety will be ensured for all citizens, property and infrastructure facilities.

1.0 Policy Framework

1.1 The Sri Lanka Disaster Management Act

In May 2005, the Sri Lanka Disaster Management Act No.13 of 2005 was enacted with legal provisions for instituting a disaster risk management system in the country. The Act provides for the establishment of the National Council for Disaster Management (NCDM), which is a high-level inter-ministerial body, that provides direction for disaster risk management work in the country, and also the establishment of Disaster Management Centre (DMC), that will be the lead agency on disaster risk management, which will play a considerable role in coordinating, facilitating and liaising. In January 2006 a separate Ministry for Disaster Management and Human Rights (M/DM&HR) was established with NCDM and DMC listed as organisations coming under the this ministry.

1.2 Hyogo Framework for Action

The policy is based on the Hyogo Framework for Action for achieving disaster resilience for vulnerable communities, which Government of Sri Lanka has ratified. The framework has identified five priority areas as follows.

- Ensure that disaster risk reduction is a national priority with a strong institutional basis for implementation
- Identify, assess and monitor disaster risks and enhance early warning
- Use knowledge, innovation and education to build a culture of safety and resilience at all levels
- Reduce the underlying risk factors
- Strengthen disaster preparedness for effective response

2.0 Objectives of the Policy

The main objective of the National Disaster Management Policy is to establish, strengthen and maintain the following in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders:

- Introduce sustainable mechanisms, structures, programmes to enhance capabilities for disaster risk management
- Ensure the establishment of national, regional and local level coordinating mechanisms for disaster risk management
- Guarantee the availability of resources for DRM activities through a special fund
- Minimise disruption of economic activity and damage to environment
- Mainstream and integrate disaster risk reduction into sectoral development programmes including resource allocation in order to achieve sustainable development
- Ensure use of appropriate procedures and guidelines for and responding to disasters and threats of disasters in Sri Lanka in order to save lives and property
- Adhere to higher standards than before in medium and long-term reconstruction and rehabilitation initiatives

- Ensure introduction of planning guidelines and building codes for construction in disaster prone areas
- Promote community based disaster management and micro insurance to improve the resilience of the vulnerable communities

3.0 Institutional Arrangements

Responsibility in dealing with disasters will rest with the National Government, Provincial Councils and Local Authorities and District level administrative system. DMC will play a role in coordinating, facilitating and liaising with relevant ministries, governmental and non-governmental organizations and other social and community organizations through coordinating committees at national, regional and village levels.

Special Technical and Advisory Committees will be appointed to advice on identified subject areas related to DRM having members representing different stakeholder agencies, academics and other relevant specialists from private and public sector.

4.0 Guiding Principles

The National Disaster Management Policy is guided by the following principles.

- During pre disaster phase the highest priority will be accorded to early warning, preparedness for response, mitigation, prevention, awareness and training
- Formulation and issuance of early warning will be done by the identified technical agencies and the dissemination will rest with DMC
- Highest priority during a disaster will be accorded to save and protect life and environment while meeting the immediate emergency needs of people, mitigating possible hazards that pose immediate threat to life
- Highest priority in post disaster phase will be accorded to provide basic needs of people, immediate recovery of essential services and medium and long-term rehabilitation and reconstruction to a higher standard than before.
- Maintain equity in resource distribution during a disaster based on the severity and in pre disaster phase based on the vulnerability
- Treat with equality all vulnerable and affected communities
- Encourage the participation of private sector in Disaster Risk Management activities as a corporate social responsibility
- Develop and adopt Code of Conduct for all stake holders actively engaged in DM sector

Articulating certain rights of the affected public in;

- Rights to information – Information on vulnerability assessment, on appropriate response and on post disaster response
- Right to participate – Participate in disaster related decision making as well as development related decision making in vulnerable area,
- Right to seek accountability – Particularly in disaster relief measures to seek accountability and redress by accessing the Divisional or District Secretary or a Committee appointed at the local level by the NCDM

5.0 Strategies

The following strategies will be adopted to achieve the policy objectives.

5.1 Disaster Mitigation

Disaster risks will be reduced by adopting suitable mitigation measures including hazard prevention or reduction, integration of disaster concerns in development planning process through coordination with technical agencies. In the mitigation process, protection of human lives, public utilities and infrastructure from impacts of disasters will be given high priority.

Multi-hazard mapping, vulnerability and risk assessment will be carried out to ensure that all information and hazard maps pertaining to the disaster situation in the country will be available in one place; and ensuring that technology transfer will be in one central location when collaborating in projects with the international agencies providing technical assistance.

5.2 Disaster Preparedness for Response

Disaster Preparedness Plans for Response will be developed at Provincial, District, Divisional, Local Authorities, Grama Niladari levels to establish an effective coordination mechanism through Disaster Management Coordination Committees to ensure an efficient management of all disasters. Encourage private sector to mainstream and integrate disaster management into their annual programmes as a corporate social responsibility

The protection of life of the community and environment from disasters and the maintenance and development of disaster affected areas encouraging Community Based Disaster Management

5.3 Multi-Hazard Early Warning Dissemination

Reliable and efficient early warning dissemination systems will be established and maintained in the country to disseminate forecasting and warning messages related to different hazards issued by national and international technical agencies as quick as possible to the vulnerable population living in high risk areas.

Any recognised organisations at present involved in coordinating, monitoring or issuing warnings on specific hazards, but not having legal mandate to do so, will be strengthened with the necessary legal mandates. The shortcomings such as inadequate institutional capacity and information communication systems will be improved.

5.4 Emergency Operations and Response

National and Sub-National Level Emergency Operation Centres and a National Level Call Centre will be established and operated on 24/7 basis to encompass response activities with respect to natural and man-made hazards prevalent in different areas of the country.

In respect of speedy recovery of the disrupted livelihoods of the affected communities, maximum possible assistance will be provided to them within the minimum time, in coordination with relevant ministries, government agencies and NGOs, adhering to social justice, neutrality, impartiality, values and culture of affected persons.

5.5 Relief and Temporary Shelter Management

The affected population from any disaster those who are in IDP camps will be provided with safe housing (temporary or permanent) as early as possible, if relocation is required.

Emergency Relief and Temporary Shelter Management related activities will be implemented by the PC and LA levels; and district, divisional and GN levels of administration as specified in the Preparedness and Response Plans coordinating with government and private sector agencies; and NGOs, business communities, Community Based Organizations (CBOs) for getting their assistance and resources available. In carrying out these activities strict adherence will be ensured to social justice, equitable distribution of relief, neutrality and impartiality in the provision of assistance and respect for the dignity, values and culture of affected persons.

Establish permanent infrastructure in strategic locations in the country that could be called upon to temporarily house affected persons, until land is identified and prepared to be given to victims permanently, should the need arise.

DMC will coordinate as relevant with different levels of administration for organising additional resource requirements for the affected areas from unaffected areas.

Ministry of Disaster Relief Services will implement relief measures. Overall coordination and management of such relief activities will be by the M/DM&HR as identified in the Gazette Extraordinary of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka – 29.01.2007.

5.6 Relocation of affected persons

Relocation of persons could be as result of vulnerability or occurrence of a disaster. Important and concrete measures pertaining to development related resettlement laid down in the National Involuntary Settlement Policy will be applicable in this regard.

- i. Develop guidelines for the identification of land for settlement of people living in vulnerable locations, subdivision of lands and mitigation measures to minimize occurrence of further disaster
- ii. Develop mechanism for the active involvement of communities affected in all stages of settlement process

NCDM to appoint a Committee chaired by the District or Divisional Secretary, setting out the decision making protocol during or in the post disaster scenario to take action for the assessment of the risks and vulnerabilities associated with various disasters and communities vulnerable to such disasters; including risks due to climate change; possible reduction of coastal land due to sea level rise and identify strategic measures;

5.7 Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction

National, Provincial/LA and District/Division level units of service providing agencies will take immediate action to revive the affected public utilities to provide essential services in affected areas. LAs will immediately attend to all services within their purview. Where services are affected severely, action will be taken to take temporary measures for providing such services immediately.

5.8 Training and Public Awareness

DMC will work out programmes on Training, Public Awareness and Education by carrying out different activities as appropriate and collaborate with relevant ministries, agencies and administrations at different levels.

The capacity of vulnerable communities will be enhanced to protect themselves from disasters and make them resilient to disasters through Community Based Disaster Risk Management.

Liaising with relevant agencies for integrating of DM in school curriculum and for school awareness as appropriate in accordance with the programmes of the education sector including teacher training

Liaising with relevant agencies for incorporating Disaster Management in Tertiary Educational Curricula – University and Other Tertiary Educational Establishments, including General DM awareness and Specific content to match the subject area of the courses

M/DM&HR and DMC will recognise the role of Media; create awareness among media emphasizing on their responsibilities towards the general public on issuing correct and timely information.

6.0 Coordination mechanism for implementation of DM activities

This National Disaster Management Policy will put in place a widely accepted mechanism for risk management in the country and to provide for,

- Coordination at National level with all stakeholders to manage disasters more effectively through clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of individual stakeholder
- Avoid overlaps ensuring the optimal utilization of scarce resources in all DM activities through inter-ministerial, inter-sectoral and inter-agency coordinating mechanism.
- Develop a database and engage the NGOs/INGOs/CBOs for the implementation of nationally identified DRM programmes considering their geographical presence, area of specialization and available resources

7.0 Monitoring and Review

The responsibility for monitoring and review of the policy will be with the M/DM&HR in consultation with Disaster Management Centre. The policy may be reviewed from time to time to accommodate the needs identified after a major disaster and requirements for effective implementation.

8.0 Funds for Disaster Management

All funds received through all lawful sources what so ever, nationally or internationally will be utilised by DMC in a transparent manner to the satisfaction of all concerned.

Establishment of a disaster response fund in the annual budget of relevant stakeholder organizations including PCs / LAs / District and Divisional Secretariats for response activities. .

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