

Executive Summary: Disaster Preparedness in India

Background

India is one of the most disaster prone countries in the world. In the major disasters, including earthquakes, tsunamis and river floods, during the years 2001 to 2011, the country suffered loss of 1.25 lakh human lives and 12.42 million people were affected. This is largely due to its Geo-climatic conditions combined with high population density and other socio-economic factors. Thus, both the natural as well as manmade factors are responsible for causing disasters. Realising the fact that with due care and proper preparation, the risk and its adverse effects can be mitigated, the national government responded with adoption of several measures for increasing preparedness for disaster management.

Audit Objectives

The objectives of the audit were to examine whether:

- National disaster preparedness strategy, actionable plans and policies had been prepared and reviewed periodically at all levels to counter the threat of disasters and mitigate their consequences;
- Various type of disasters, their extent of damage and requisite mitigation efforts had been identified and efforts had been made to make urban areas/cities disaster resilient;
- Early warning systems and mechanisms to predict the calamities were in place;
- Institutional, legal and coordination mechanism had been set-up and an integrated approach was being followed with regard to disaster preparedness; and
- Training and emergency exercises for disaster preparedness had been conceived, disseminated and conducted at all levels.

Audit Findings:

Major audit findings are as under:

- The national plan for disaster management was not prepared.
- There were no provisions to make the national guidelines issued by National Disaster Management Planning Authority (NDMA) binding on states in preparation of state

plans. Further, there was no follow-up by NDMA on the adherence to the guidelines by the states.

- No meeting of National Executive Committee (NEC) mandated to prepare national disaster management plan and its implementation, took place after May 2008, which affected evaluation of the disaster preparedness at all levels of Government.
- None of the major projects taken up by NDMA was completed. Due to improper planning either the projects were abandoned midway or were still incomplete after a lapse of a considerable period.
- NDMA had not started the work of systematic assessment of major national projects, to include structural requirements for disaster reduction.
- There were delays and mismanagement in respect of State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) in states. There were huge unspent balances under SDRF.
- National Disaster Mitigation Fund was not established. Most of the states also did not establish state and district level Disaster Mitigation Funds.
- National Database for Emergency Management which was to be completed by August 2011, was yet to be operationalised. Less than 10 percent of the flood prone areas of the country was covered to generate close contour and detailed topographic information.
- National Disaster Communication Network and National Disaster Management Informatics System projects of NDMA were still at the planning stage.
- Effectiveness of NDRF was hampered by shortage of trained man power and absence of required training facilities, infrastructure and equipment.

Recommendations

Major audit recommendations are as under:-

- NEC and Ministry of Home Affairs should ensure that a comprehensive National Plan for disaster management is developed at the earliest.
- NDMA should follow-up implementation of its guidelines by the ministries, departments and state governments.
- Regular meetings of NEC should be convened to perform its assigned role in the disaster management of the country.

- Roles and responsibilities of MHA, NEC and NDMA should be specified for clear demarcation of functions of these stakeholders.
- NDMA should start the work of assessment of major national projects to include structural requirements for disaster reduction.
- Department of Space should ensure that the National Database for Emergency Management is operationalised at the earliest.
- NDMA should ensure completion of National Disaster Communication Network and National Disaster Management Informatics System projects.