

# Orientation on Basics of Disaster Risk Management

**Training Dates: 20, 21, 22 October 2021**

The ongoing pandemic situation has changed our lives, our expectations, work prospects, livelihoods – in some instances, irreversibly. Today's environment is one not only of heightened risk, but of prolonged uncertainty. Since the entire world has been simultaneously exposed to the existing onslaught, the pandemic has embarked upon the need of complete overhaul of our conventional disaster risk management strategies where the spatial and temporal extent of any catastrophe was confined to a limited extent.

## **Disaster Risk Management**

Disaster Risk Management is perhaps one of those subjects which is unique in its own way. On one hand it has undergone a complete paradigm shift from mere management to risk reduction and risk management and on the other hand, countries and states, all over the world, are trying hard to mainstream disaster risk management in development planning. With global phenomenon like climate change looming large at the horizon, the consequences and aftermaths of any extreme event will be disastrous, if the risk which is posed by such events is not reduced or managed. And to this, everyone needs to contribute. The onus rests not only on the government and governing authorities but also on the citizens and residents.

The revised terminology of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) defines 'disaster' as: "*A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts.*" (UNISDR 2016)

The effect of the disaster can be immediate and localized but is open widespread, often persisting for long after the event. The effect may challenge or overwhelm the capacity of a community or society to cope using the resources immediately, and therefore may require assistance from external sources, which could include neighbouring jurisdictions, or those at the national or international levels. UNISDR considers disaster to be a result of the combination of many factors such as the exposure to hazards, the conditions of vulnerability that are present, and insufficient capacity or measures to reduce or cope with the potential negative consequences. Disaster impacts may include loss of life, injuries, disease and other negative effects on human physical, mental and social well-being, together with damage to property, destruction of assets, loss of services, social and economic disruption and environmental degradation.

The DM Act 2005 uses the following definition for disaster:

"Disaster" means a catastrophe, mishap, calamity or grave occurrence in any area, arising from natural or manmade 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."

### **Paradigm Shift**

The DM Act 2005 and the NPDM 2009 marks the institutionalization of paradigm shift in disaster management in India, from a relief-centric approach to one of proactive prevention, mitigation and preparedness. The NPDM notes that while it is not possible to avoid natural hazards, adequate mitigation and disaster risk reduction measures can prevent the hazards becoming major disasters. Disaster risk arises when hazards interact with physical, social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities. The NPDM suggests a multi-pronged approach for disaster risk reduction and mitigation consisting of the following:

- Integrating risk reduction measures into all development projects
- Initiating mitigation projects in identified high priority areas through joint efforts of the Central and State Governments
- Encouraging and assisting State level mitigation projects
- Paying attention to indigenous knowledge on disaster and coping mechanisms
- Giving due weightage to the protection of heritage structures.

In the terminology adopted by the UNISDR, the concept and practice of reducing disaster risks involve systematic efforts to analyse and manage the causal factors of disasters, including through reduced exposure to hazards, lessened vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improved preparedness for adverse events. While both the terms "Disaster Reduction" and "Disaster Risk Reduction" are widely used, the later provides a better recognition of the ongoing nature of disaster risks and the ongoing potential to reduce these risks. Mitigation consists of various measures required for lessening or limiting the adverse impacts of hazards and related disasters.

### **Three Post-2015 Global Frameworks—Disasters, Sustainable Development and Climate Change: Mutual Reinforcement and Coherence**

The adoption in 2015 of three landmark global agreements - the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR 2015a), Sustainable Development Goals (UN 2015) and COP21 Paris Agreement on Climate Change (UNFCCC 2015) has opened the significant opportunity to build coherence across DRR, sustainable development and response to climate change. The adoption of SDGs –

‘Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ is a global transformative plan of action that has poverty eradication as an overarching aim. It has, at its core, the integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. The Paris Agreement on global climate change points to the importance of averting, minimizing, and addressing loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including extreme weather events and slow onset events, and the role of sustainable development in reducing the risk of loss and damage. DRR and resilience are recurring common theme in the three global agreements. All three agreements share a common aim of making development sustainable. The most significant shift recognised in the Sendai Framework is a strong emphasis on disaster risk management in contrast to disaster management. These three agreements recognize the desired outcomes in DRR as a product of complex and interconnected social and economic processes, which overlap across the agendas of the three agreements. Intrinsic to sustainable development is DRR and the building of resilience to disasters. Further, effective disaster risk management contributes to sustainable development. Strong commitment to ambitious goals and accelerated implementation of these international agreements are global priority. Given the complementarities between the post-2015 agendas, synchronising and mutually reinforcing the actions in the three domains helps in better outcomes. Efforts must be made to ensure that each of them do not build in “policy risks” or, contradictory policies, that generate more - rather than less - risk in development. Promoting coherence and mutual reinforcement in all three agreements requires political recognition, monitoring, reporting and supporting partnerships at various levels.