

Background

Disaster risk governance is defined as “the way in which public authorities, civil servants, media, private sector, and civil society at community, national and regional levels cooperate in order to manage and reduce disaster risks.”¹ Risk governance implies not only institutional mechanism and processes but also ensuring capacity and resources to reduce risk. Risk governance also implies rules, regulations, procedures and mechanisms for people’s participation in decision making and exercising their legal rights and obligations.

The Sendai Framework states that disaster risk governance at different levels is of great importance for an effective and efficient management of disaster risk. It also requires clear vision, plans, competence, guidance, and coordination within and across sectors, as well as participation of relevant stakeholders. Strengthening disaster risk governance is necessary to foster collaboration and partnerships for the implementation of disaster risk reduction and sustainable development. Sendai Framework brings in a large number of activities such as mainstreaming DRR across all the sectors, rules, laws, regulations, strategies, plans, targets, indicators, urban planning, monitoring, implementation of building codes, awareness building and dissemination of risk sensitive information, empowering local bodies under this priority. In short, improved risk governance is the key to disaster risk reduction.

Disaster Risk Reduction in India: Legal and Institutional Mechanisms

Though the primary responsibility for disaster risk reduction is with the state governments in India and the role of the central government is supportive, the initiatives undertaken over a period of time since 2001 Gujarat earthquake has created appropriate institutions and legal frameworks at the national level to support DRR. While the overall coordination for Disaster Management is with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), nodal ministries for management and mitigation of different disasters have been notified. MHA is supported by Cabinet Committee on Security, National Crisis Management Committee and National Executive Committee depending on the nature and complexity of the disaster.

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is the lead agency responsible for policies, guidelines, approving the Plan and DM plans of the Central Ministries, other measures, as it may consider necessary, for the prevention, mitigation, preparedness and capacity building. National Institute of Disaster Management is the training and capacity building arm of Government of India. National Disaster Response Force at the central level is a specialist response force that can be deployed in a threatening disaster situation or disaster. State Disaster and District Disaster Management Authorities are the counterpart organizations for DRR in the states and districts. State Disaster Response Forces and Fire and Emergency Services are responsible for rescue and relief in the aftermath of disasters in their jurisdiction. Some states have also set up State Disaster Management Institutes.

The institutional mechanisms and arrangements for DRR flow from the legal instruments such as the National Disaster Management Act and State Acts, National Policy, various guidelines and notifications issued by Government and NDMA from time to time. Financing for disaster relief at the

national level is basically from the following two funds: National Disaster Response Fund and State Disaster Response Fund. Disaster Management Plans at the National, state and district levels are in place. Ministries and departments have either prepared the plan or in the process of preparing a plan.

Issues and Challenges

Acts, policies, new institutions in themselves will not guarantee effective Disaster Risk Reduction. Appropriate empowering of the institutions is also essential. The main challenge is to maintain the specialized nature of the special purpose vehicles set up. Building the capacity of the local actors is another important issue. As mitigation and response is essentially local, the local self-governments and panchayats, local urban bodies need to play an important role in DRR. But they do not have adequate financial, technical and human resources to undertake DRR measures. DRR tends to become increasingly top driven as more and more expectations and demands arise for expanding the role of central institutions. Bottom up approach and development of local capacities have remained as wish lists rather than realities. Hence building capacities at the local level and empowering the communities are key governance issues.

Disaster risk reduction cannot be an isolated activity. Mainstreaming DRR is essential not only for achieving Sendai targets but also for achieving Sustainable Development Goals. The real challenge is go beyond rhetoric and make it a reality. Another key challenge is supporting mitigation measures through appropriate funding. Regulation and enforcement of the techno-legal regime has been another important issue in India. While enacting rules and regulations is relatively easy in India, enforcement has been a challenge due to the plethora of actors involved and lack of political and bureaucratic will at the local levels. Involving communities not only in decision making but also in implementing risk reduction measures is another major governance issue. The second technical session on strengthening disaster risk governance will focus on the above challenges.

The Disaster Management Act calls for the establishment of State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs) and District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs). Depending on their own disaster risk context, needs, administrative culture and capacities, states have developed different kinds of institutional arrangements. There is a huge variation in the structure, scope of work and capacities of SDMAs. The formation and functioning of district level authorities is even more uneven. Though the State Disaster Management Plans and District Disaster Management Plans have been prepared, it remains to be seen whether these plans are able to address the entire spectrum of disaster risk management needs.

SESSION PLAN

Chair: *Mr. R.K.Jain, Member, NDMA*

Co-chair: *Shri. Vinod Kumar Pipersenia, Chief Secretary, Assam*

Opening Remarks – By Session Chairperson/Co-Chair. (5 minutes)

✓ Presentation on

Strengthening of state and district level institutions- Dr. Vyasji, VC, BSDMA- 15 Minutes

Building Local Capacities and role Civil Society Organizations- Ms. Sushma Iyengar, Abhiyan and Kutch Advisory Committee Member, NDMA- 15 Minutes

Compliance of Techno-legal Regime- Prof. Ravi Sinha, IIT, Mumbai- 15 Minutes

Open House (20 Minutes)

Closing Remarks – By Session Chairperson/Co-Chair. (5 minutes)

ⁱ UNDP (2015) Strengthening Disaster Risk Governance: UNDP Support during the HFA Implementation Period 2005-2015 (New York, 2015)