

20.3 Natural Disaster Management: NPC Nepal

1. Background

Man made and natural disasters are on the increase every day in Nepal owing to her specific geographical and geological formation as well as unmanaged settlements, increasing population, economic backwardness, lack of education and ignorance. On the one hand, natural disasters like floods and landslide are creating the destruction of development infrastructures like road, electricity irrigation, etc. resulting in the possibility of the wastage of investment. In addition to this, thousands of people have lost their lives and countless cattle have been destroyed, lots of agricultural land and crops have been damaged. In order to minimize the damages caused by earthquake and other natural disasters in a country like ours lying in the earthquake zone, it is necessary for us to prepare a comprehensive plan beforehand.

The main challenges to disaster management are the absence of adequate co-ordination among agencies involved in it; the reactive, not proactive nature of disaster management efforts, the absence of a modern technology to give prior information and warn us of disasters and the absence of making the maps of disaster prone areas. Similarly the lack of disaster evaluation at the time of project selection, absence of sufficient co-operation and rehabilitation programmes and non-compliance with building code at the time of constructing high rise buildings are some important disaster management problems.

a. Objective

The objective of the 10th Plan is to make disaster management more systematic and effective so as to contribute to making the construction and development projects of the country durable, sustainable and highly result-oriented.

b. Strategies

1. Emphasis will be given to the use and development technology that reduces the effects of natural disaster and its environmental impacts to the minimum level at the time of formulating plans and policies relating to disaster management.
2. The rescue and relief to be provided by the state to the families suffering from natural disaster will be made transparent.
3. A hazard map of earthquakes, floods and landslides will be prepared.
4. The seismic record centers of the country will be strengthened and used to monitor earthquakes regularly.
5. Timely reforms will be introduced in the existing law and organizational structure relating to disaster management.

c. Policy:

1. A long term disaster management action plan will be made, co-ordination between donors, the government, NOGs and the private sector will be established and the formulation and implementation of sectoral programmes based on the action plan will be made more effective.
2. The study of environmental impact and disaster evaluation study of infrastructure construction projects will be made compulsory.
3. Public awareness programmes will be launched to increase people's participation in the management of natural disasters including floods, landslides and earthquakes.
4. The institutional strengthening of organizations involved in disaster management will be emphasized and Disaster Management Department will be developed as the central co-ordinating unit.
5. On the basis of the evaluation of the past earthquake management and their effects, programmes like the mapping of earthquake prone zones, regular monitoring, early preparedness for and management of earthquakes, as well as the increase in awareness programmes of people living in such areas will be launched with a view to reducing the destructive effects of such earthquakes in the future.
6. In order to manage water induced disaster and to enhance the capacity of organizations involved in the formulation of its policy action plan and programme, the participation of the people in watershed management and river control will be enlisted.
7. A hazard map of flood, landslide, silt flow and glaciers will be prepared through the collection, exchange, storage and flow of information relating to water induced disaster and disaster prone areas will be classified.

d. Programme

1. Co-ordination will be established between different agencies involved in disaster management at national and international disaster management through the development of an integrated information system.
2. In order to increase people's awareness of disaster management, different types of awareness programmes including the inclusion of such reading materials in the curricula of classes up to the secondary school level will be launched.
3. A central Information Unit will be set up at the centre and District Information Unit at the district level will be established in a phased manner on the basis of the database system and the hazard map of disasters like earthquake, flood, landslide etc.
4. An inventory the existing institutional capacity for pre-disaster preparedness will be developed and the rescue and relief materials will be stored in the storage centres of all the five development regions.
5. The fire brigade services of the Kathmandu valley will be extended in the process of increasing the fire fighting capacity and the physical facilities for it will be made available; a bill relating to fire fighting service will be drafted and a national fire code will be prepared.
6. The development of mines and geology will be made to prepare a geological map of Nepal to explore mines to identify the potential areas of damage from disasters like floods, landslides, soil erosions and earthquakes, to prepare an inventory of landslides, and to give continuity to the task of making an epicentre map on the basis of the earthquake records of the past.
7. The task of collecting statistics, updating catalogues and informing the public about earthquakes above 4 richters scale after recording the earthquakes measured by 21 seismic stations established under national earthquake measurement centre will be made systematic.
8. Public awareness programmes to increase people's information about the damage from water induced disaster and its management will be launched.
9. A hazard map, geo-engineering map and geo-environment map of increasing urbanization, unmanaged settlement and unsuitable land use in city areas will be prepared and such maps will be utilized in urban area and infrastructure development as well as in natural resource management.

3. Expected Outcomes

1. Co-ordination will be established with different international agencies involved in disaster management, such information will be exchanged and the task of minimizing the effects of disaster will be made effective.
2. Such hazard map of disaster prone areas will help reduce the loss of life and property.
3. The system of storing relief materials at regional centres with the intention of making them available to the victims at a short notice according to their needs will make instant relief possible and contribute to the rehabilitation programme.

20.3.5. Probable Problems and Risks in Implementation and Achievements:

The limited budget is likely to be the main obstacle to achieve the objective. The practice of the release of the sanctioned budget only at the end of the fiscal year is likely to stand in the way of realizing the expected goal. If the concerned organization is not able to fulfil the need for necessary trained manpower in time it is also going to present many hurdles. Another main problem is the difficulty in collecting information owing to geographical remoteness.