

Competencies and Responsive Skills of Civil Defence Force during Disaster Management in India: A Case Study Approach

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Abstract:

India is considered as highly prone to various disaster and hazards due to its geological formations and risks of earthquakes, flood and droughts are extremely high. Natural disasters e.g. floods, landslides, droughts, snowstorms, hurricanes and cyclones have become frequently happening incidents in various parts of country. Thousands of lives get threatened by these hazards every year facing massive destruction and loss of human, financial, infrastructural and agricultural resources. This severely affects the pace and output of development activities. Disasters are either caused due to shift or change in natural formations or patterns. These are called natural disasters. While other type of disaster is happening due to uncontrolled and insensitive activities carried out by mankind where such activities and human intervention with nature is causing such disasters to happen. These are therefore called man-made disasters. Both types of disasters i.e. natural and man-made are taking place in the entire world but more so in India. In view of various types and nature of disasters, agencies and organizations responsible for disaster management look to find right kind of experts and professionals having specific skills and competencies with respect to knowledge, attitude and skills. Professionals with such specific skills and competencies may majorly contribute in formulation of better strategies for disaster risk reduction and disaster management. Civil Defence is one of the emergency support functionaries which is founded to protect the citizens of a state from natural disasters and military attacks in the country. It takes note of disaster management principles and concepts of prevention, mitigation, preparation, response mechanism or emergency evacuation and recovery. Among the varying kinds of disasters striking in Delhi, Lalita Park Building Collapse incident is one of the most tragic incidents in the disaster history of Delhi. The tragic incident led to loss of many lives and unsheltered many families and children with loss of livelihood. The present case discusses the competencies, roles and responsibilities most importantly the responsive skills of the civil defence volunteers in the plight of this disaster and recommends steps to escalate the competencies, responsive skills and coordination among Volunteers and Disaster Management Emergency Support Functionaries and further discuss the plan of action that may enhance the role, preparedness and capacity building of the civil defense during such an emergency situation.

Keywords: *Competencies, Responsive skills. Disaster Management, Emergency Support Functionaries, Roles and responsibilities, Volunteers.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Disaster Management Act enacted by parliament of India in 2005 defines disaster as a grave occurrence

arising from natural or man-made activity, accident or negligence resulting in significant loss of life or human suffering or damage or degradation of

environment and having nature or magnitude beyond the coping capacity of the community of the affected area. Thus, disaster is an event of higher magnitude than an emergency and which has the scope of disrupting the essential services of communications, housing, livelihood, transport, water, sanitation and health care. The victims of disasters require help of people outside the affected communities. The unpredictable striking of disasters, whether natural or man-made with high magnitude, makes the situations difficult and uncontrollable. Further, the devastating effects on lives of people and property also require a preventive management with collaborative efforts to prevent or minimize larger damages (Alexander D.E., 2003). Though, it is very difficult to control occurrence of certain natural and man-made disasters, efforts can be made to avoid these disasters and minimize their impact on lives of people. Thus, the role of civil defence volunteers in disaster preparedness and management are considered to be very important. No single agency, organization, department, division or entity can claim sole responsibility to meet varying challenges and crisis associated with disaster. However, expertise of civil defence volunteers is such that they are able to manage all phases of disaster management cycle but the same should be utilized judiciously in all stages of mitigation, prevention, response and recovery.

In all saturations, usually the civil defence volunteers play a significant role during disasters due to their specific skills. Most of the times, they are not only the first responders to disasters whether natural or man-made but also hold a community-based vision to implement disaster management plans, policies and guidelines and facilitate in conducting disaster response exercises, drills and training programs. Thus, they play an integral part in disaster management operations and command centers. Civil Defence Volunteers collaborate and coordinate with other Disaster Management functionaries including various departments, health sector and hospitals, relief centers, experts and others thus building local, regional, state and

national level integration towards disaster preparedness and response.

The goals of disaster preparedness are to ensure that appropriate systems, procedures, plans and resources are in place to provide prompt and effective assistance to the disaster affected community thus facilitating disaster relief measures and rehabilitation of services (Thattai et al., 2017). Based on the previous discussion, it becomes important to critically examine the roles and responsibilities, level of preparedness, management of competencies and skills of coordination and cooperation demonstrated by Civil Defence.

Concept of Disaster Management

Disaster is a catastrophic and sudden event that causes a lot of damage. It also destructs and cripples the human life and property. Lin Moe and Pathranarakul (2006) asserts that the damage caused by these unfortunate events cannot be measured and its severity would depend totally on the location, climate, surface of the earth and degree of risk. This will have an impact on the political, social, economic and cultural state of the place that has been prone to disaster. The Disaster leads to the disruption to the society and results in the human, material and environmental loss.

Types of Disaster

There are primarily two types of disasters viz., natural and manmade. These disasters are further classified based on their severity as major or minor (Shaluf, 2007). Few classifications of the disasters are tabulated as below:

Table 1.1: Types of Disaster

Major Natural Disasters	Minor Natural Disasters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Flood ✓ Cyclone ✓ Drought ✓ Earthquake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Cold waves ✓ Heat waves ✓ Thunderstorm ✓ Mudslides ✓ Storms
Major Manmade Disasters	Major Manmade Disasters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Setting of Fires 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Road/train

✓ Epidemic	✓ accidents
✓ Deforestation	✓ Riots
✓ Pollution due to prawn cultivation	✓ Food poisoning
✓ Chemical pollution	✓ Industrial disaster/crisis
✓ Wars	✓ Environmental pollution

To manage the disaster, it should not start when there is a disaster, or it should end once the rescue operations are completed after the disaster. Ajay A., 2019 emphasizes that the disaster management should be a continuous process where the measures are to be taken to cut down the risk, respond briskly and give mitigations based on the lessons that were learnt in the past disaster

I. SIGNIFICANCE OF DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Huder (2012) would define about the disaster events which are like a pebble that is thrown in the water. Here, the pebble will hit the surface and throws the ripples on the surface of the water. When there is a natural disaster, it would have an impact on the whole community. The disaster is an unfortunate event that disrupts the human activities. According to Tomasini and Wassenhove (2004) there are many people who are exposed to different natural disasters throughout their life and majority of the disasters or the hazards that cannot be predicted and prevented. Disaster Management aims to reduce the occurrence of disasters and to diminish its impact. Disaster are inevitable and have huge impact on humans and environment. The Disaster Management aims to minimize the potential losses from the unexpected hazard and assures swift and appropriate assistance to the victims of the disasters and achieve a rapid and effective recovery (Sharangpani, H., 2019)

Expected Roles and importance of Civil Defence Volunteers during a Disaster/ Emergency

The Response mechanism structure should ensure to have professionals and other associated workforce with diverse professional disciplines and expertise,

cultural and societal backgrounds to make the response more harmonized, connected and delivered to all. In case of any disaster or emergency, before any support or government machinery responds or any outside support get galvanized, it is the volunteers from the affected community who are generally the first to act and respond. It is known fact that impact of these volunteers towards the disaster management can be tremendous, as to the extent of damage and is largely affected by the initial response to a disaster. Under Civil Defence Act 1968, Civil Defense means *any or all* measures, not amounting to actual combat, for affording protection to any person, property, place or thing in India or any part of the territory thereof against any hostile attack, whether from air, land, sea or other places, or, for depriving any such attack of the whole or part of its effect, whether such measures are taken before, during, at or after the time of such attack, or any measure taken for the purpose of Disaster Management, before during, at, or after any disaster.

Saini et al (2012) emphasize that civil defence in India is a Government program that provides guidance and assistance in preparing for, responding to and recovering from public emergencies that results from conflict or natural disasters. The civil defence plays a very important role during any emergency situation. It has a list of proposed roles during the three critical phases of disaster; namely Pre; during and Post Disaster Phases. During Pre Disaster phase, their role is of creating awareness and capacity building and training of the community to respond to any disastrous situation whereas during disaster phase role is completely different which is actually search and rescue, response and relief, provide support and facilitate the other government functionaries, district administration, coordination with different stakeholders. In the post disaster phase, civil defence helps to rehabilitate the victims and to bring back the life to normalcy, facilitate in increasing the resiliency of the affected area, this is as per the provisions of the Civil Defence Act, 1968. This approach of response makes Civil defence as an important and effective tool in the Disaster

Management framework at the grass root level. As per the provisions of Disaster Management Act, 2005, civil defence is required to promote general education and related to disaster management awareness in the community.

A. Case Study: Lalita Park Building Collapse incident

Lalita Park Building Collapse incident is one of the most tragic incidents of disaster history of Delhi. This tragic incident led to loss of many lives. Though the disasters always struck suddenly and destruct the life, property and hopes in seconds but the Lalita Park incident is a perfect case for study as this happened in a high population density area and in most congested part of the city and was well managed effectively and efficiently. A five storied building, at Lalita Park, New Delhi, which was constructed on 100x10 Sq. yards plot about 20 years back and was fully occupied with residents, collapses suddenly resulting in a massive toll and destruction of life and property i.e., about 69 deaths and injury to 66 persons. The information regarding the incident was received at East District Control Room, Emergency Operation Centre (EOC) from Delhi Disaster Management Cell (1077), which was in turn informed by a local citizen cum Civil Defence Volunteers. The message was immediately passed on to all the concerned Emergency Support Functionaries in East District.

Civil Defence Volunteers staying nearby; residents of the area; Police and Fire Officials reached the site and started rescue work followed by the District Administration Officials other crucial Emergency Support Functionaries (ESFs) of East District of Delhi including Delhi Police, Traffic Police, Delhi Fire Services, Municipal Corporation of Delhi, National Disaster Response Force, Mahanagar Telephone Nigam Ltd., Bombay Suburban Electric Supply, Health Services, Media and Non Govt. Organizations (NGOs) with their available resources and staff. Disaster Management Plan of the district East was put into action and Emergency Command Post was immediately established by the office of

District Collector. All ESFs acted in accordance with the chalked out District Disaster Management Plan, assigned roles and responsibilities as defined under the act of Disaster Management Act, 2005.

B. Role played by Civil Defence volunteers during the massive building collapse incident:

Followings are considered as core strategies for disaster and emergency situation management.

1. Response, Rescue and Relief
2. Casualty Management
3. Rehabilitation

The initial and immediate response was carried out by the civil defence from the local community in the neighborhood which was then strengthened by the civil administration, Delhi Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) and other Emergency Support Functionaries. DDMA Cell activated the disaster management system and disaster management plan immediately. Although the search and rescue operation was started immediately by the civil defence manually and first aid to the victims, at initial level, was too be provided by the respondents from civil defence. The victims were then transported to the nearby Government/private hospitals by the PCR vans and hospital ambulances. The debris of the collapsed structure was removed manually by the civil defence which was majorly supported by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, National Disaster Response Force, Delhi Fire Service later on. The surrounding area was cordoned off by the Delhi Police and local Civil Defence. The complete management of the incident demonstrated a significant role played by Civil Defence in coordination, facilitation, support and relief.

The incident took several days to gain normalcy. Trained Disaster Management Volunteers Force of DDMA (East) consisting of Civil Defence Volunteers, National Cadet Corps (NCC) and National Service Scheme (NSS) found to be actively involved in Search and Rescue work on the night of incident and thereafter in supporting, arranging and providing required logistics and other services to all the ESFs present at the incident site. The civil

defence also played a major role in facilitating and transporting the people /victims having lost their homes to the relief centres (provided by the local administration). They supported the District Administration in providing essential supplies, food, and water and sanitation facilities to the victims at relief centre. Thus, the NGOs, RWAs, Volunteers and Locals who as first responders to the incident started the rescue and relief work displays a crucial participative role of society in managing disasters.

Emergency Command Post was raised by the Office of the District Collector immediately after the incident which was too supported by Civil defence deployed at Emergency Operation Centre, Delhi Disaster Management Authority (East).

C. Suggested Outcomes:

During any emergency and disaster situation, responding civil defence volunteers have a common objective of reducing the deteriorating effects of these disastrous circumstances on the victims. Premised on this basic objective, they act unified, collaborating and contributing whatever specialization they possess for the attainment of such common objective (Bella et.al, 2011). Hence, their roles, responsibilities, preparedness and management get converged towards a single positive direction. It is expected from all Civil Defence Volunteers to get prepared to report to work at the onset of any emergency situation.

Unpredictable occurrence of disasters with devastating impact on human lives and property requires preventive and collaborative efforts to prevent or minimize losses. In this context, efforts are constantly made to avoid disasters and alleviate their impacts on human lives. Though, Civil Defence Volunteers during the management of massive building collapse incident at Lalita Park, Delhi, have displayed and demonstrated their best of skills, diligently and dedicatedly in performing assigned roles and responsibilities, managing by providing help in preparing for, responding to and recovery from the devastating effect of such man made incident. However, Civil Defence Volunteers still

needs to manifest a high sense of awareness to their roles before, during and after disasters and be prepared to respond during critical situation and deal with the community, Emergency Support Functionaries and district administration.

All Civil Defence Volunteers need to be readily available with all required equipments and necessary on hand skills, in times of disasters and emergencies so that they could be of greater help to the community. The preparatory, responsive and management skills of Civil Defence Volunteers need to be strengthened and updated on regular basis which in turn will help in to strengthen the overall capacity of the nation to manage all types of disasters & mishaps efficiently and effectively. Civil Defence Volunteers are the integral members in disaster operations and command centre, hence measures need to be designed more professionally in restoring vital services and facilities that have been damaged and destroyed in disasters.

II. CONCLUSION

Disasters have been the natural part of the human history probably to test the patience, surviving practices and recovery skills of human clan. Hence the Disaster management (DM) has now become a very critical and important field and been considered essential element of development strategies. Our country has been prone to many disasters year after year. Continuous increase in population and further increase in urbanization has substantially increased the demand for natural resources. This has altered the various ecological and geological balance and added to the risk of getting prone to the unfortunate events arising out of natural and manmade disasters (Krishnan and Patnaik, 2018). Due to poor infrastructure resulting out of improper planning and subsequent haphazard implementation with no or less consideration for impact of disasters and rehabilitation measures, the loss of humans, economic and physical resources are increasing during and after the disaster.

It is utmost important that all those involved in planning and infrastructure development sectors

acknowledge the unjust, improper, irregular and haphazard development activities and their severe impact on resources, community and country as a whole. It is need of the hour to learn from past and come up with the proper measures to keep losses minimum due to any sort of disaster. Apart from accountability that is much warranted at all points of time, the sense of mutual responsibility, caring and truthfulness in carrying out emergency operations to all sections of community is equally important. As the people belonging to influential sections of society or having good backing of finances are resilient and even get back to their normalcy quickly after any disaster, but society that belongs to weak strata is vulnerable. It usually becomes tough for them to get back on the feet during and after the disasters. The measures taken should ensure that the affected communities specially the weaker are recovering briskly after the disaster. To carry out disaster management effectively, the field workers or the volunteers have to play the most important role as they are the faces of the holistic disaster management approach. Their actions and responses during the incidents communicate the effectiveness of the strategies and planning of the entire disaster management approach.

As the important human resources of this domain, civil defence volunteers carry with them certain skills and competencies. It is very pertinent to regularly evaluate these in order to effectively chalk out the correct strategies to nurture them for future. Disaster management incidents always put the new challenges and tests to examine the competencies of these volunteers. These also provide the new opportunities to the dedicated volunteers to put some extra efforts in implementing the Disaster Management strategies and saving more lives. Thus, strategizing, proper planning, its execution and also consolidating the best efforts put in by the various stakeholders including the vast workforce of civil defence working for disaster management and emergency preparedness will provide assistance and an understanding in carrying out emergency and

rescue operations efficiently with minimum loss of human life.

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