

## **COURSE : DISASTER MANAGEMENT (MA/MSc PART I)**

### **Paper : VIII**

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### **Topic : Role of NGOs in Disaster Management**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Non-governmental organizations and private sector undertakings have been contributing significantly to various disaster management programmes at the local level. Be it an organisation serving within a country or an international association, all NGOs follow a single objective of providing specialised and professional aid to needy people whenever required. It is important to note that the nature of an NGO can vary depending on how they are functioning. This is because there are various kinds of not-for-profit organisations, including international, regional, local and national. While the global ones act like advocates or donors, the others receive the offered assistance in order to deliver help to individuals who are in urgent need of it.

#### **ROLE OF NGOs**

NGOs are organizations registered under various Indian laws such as the Societies Registration Act, 1860, Section 25(1) of Companies Act, 1956 meant for non-profit companies, or State-specific Public Charitable Trust Acts. NGOs work on a variety of areas like humanitarian assistance, sectorial development interventions and sustainable development. NGOs play important roles in different stages of the Disaster Management Cycle.

Volunteerism and social service has deep roots in India, since time immemorial, even though it received special significance during the freedom struggle through the Gandhian concept of Shramdaan, implying the offering of free labour for some noble cause like rural development, construction of social assets and public infrastructure and amenities, etc. In post-Independent India, the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have been providing support in critical sectors like health, education, water supply and sanitation, shelter and infrastructure, restoration of livelihoods, food security and nutrition, environment, etc. Given India's multi-hazard risk and vulnerability to natural and man-made disasters, NGOs have been playing a significant role in providing humanitarian assistance to disaster-affected people in most of the severe disasters like the Latur earthquake in 1993, Orissa super cyclone in 1999, Bhuj earthquake in 2001, Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, Kashmir earthquake in 2005, Barmer floods in 2006, Kosi floods in 2008, cyclones Aila and Laila and the more recent cloud burst in Leh in August 2010, apart from participating in providing relief to disaster affected communities in various other localised disasters.

When it comes to disaster management, every NGO has a different role to play. Each body either focuses on preparing for a disaster in its own way or follows in the footsteps of others around them. This is vital because a calamity, be it natural or artificial, can victimise anybody, be it in private sector or public service. As such, NGOs rather function as keep players who create public awareness when a disaster is about to strike. They also spread information about how it can be prevented and what should be done if it occurs.

Besides generating awareness, NGOs also provide advocacy for disaster management. In fact, these organisations often receive accreditation for serving as partners of advocacy at different levels. Mostly, they engage governments for reviewing different policies in order to address concerns pertaining to disaster management. They can also develop in establishing an advocacy roadmap which predicts opportunities that are available for a group or country in order to invest in preparation. They invite participation of other partners as well to collect funds and use it for creating interventions for the disaster. Such a form of advocacy is very important as it improves strategy development, policy formulation, and drafting of disaster management programmes at different levels.

In addition to preparedness, non government organisations partake in assessment procedures as well. Here, they analyse the susceptibility & levels of risk exposure in operational areas. Moreover, this process aims to determine how people can respond to the disaster so far as available capacities and resources are taken into account. But no matter what action is planned to be implemented, it is vital to engage other stakeholders as well as the government in this very level, for support and funding.

However, when capacity building of all levels is taken into account, NGOs remain the main players of disaster management across the globe.

In the recent past, the role of NGOs in disaster management (DM) has started changing from providing post-disaster relief to strengthening pre-disaster preparedness and mitigation through capacity building, public awareness campaigns, mock exercises, workshops and conferences, etc. NGOs have also started to collaborate with corporate entities in Public-Private Partnership (PPP) projects and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives in the field of DM at State, District and Sub-district levels. Till recently, the work of NGOs in the field of DM has been mostly sporadic, reactive, responsive and driven by local level compulsions in the geographic areas where they are implementing development projects and very often they faced enormous challenges in coordinating with the government machinery and even among NGOs themselves.

### **NGOs as First Responders**

Thousands of NGOs quickly respond to disasters. Disaster-focused NGOs often provide an assessment report—a situational report that explains what is going on, how many people are affected, what food and non-food items are needed by the survivors, and what actions need to be taken by whom and where. Such activities are often crucial. However, being on the ground rapidly after a disaster strikes is what NGOs are best at for a very long time. The recent push for international NGOs to focus the capacity building of local NGOs and grassroots communities is fundamentally necessary. Training first responders and local grassroots organizations for local disaster preparedness should be a long-term focus of NGOs.

### **NGOs as DRR Policy Drafters and Queasy Parliamentarians**

Both the Hyogo Framework for Action and the Sendai Framework for Action consider country- and local-level disaster legislation as a foundation that provides a strong basis for disaster planning and directing of the whole spectrum of disaster risk reduction at different levels. Politicians should also play roles not only for DRR policy drafting and budgeting but also for monitoring the implementation of DRR. In the developing world, the capacity of local politicians is often limited. Policy drafting often relies on expert knowledge.

