Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

National Policy on Disaster Management

National Council for Disaster Management

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NATIONAL POLICY ON DISASTER MANAGEMENT

Preamble

1. The National Policy on Disaster Management (the 'Policy') is a core component of Sri Lanka's national regime for disaster management. It articulates agreed overarching principles and preferred outcomes for disaster management in Sri Lanka. It also provides policy directives to address the issues such as inadequate coordination among stakeholders agencies, duplication of efforts and insufficient policy directives to reduce the human and economic impacts of disasters which were identified in the aftermath of the 2004 Tsunami and the other recent disaster situations.

2. The 2005 *Parliament Select Committee on Natural Disasters* recommended formulation of a national policy to manage disasters after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. The *Disaster Management Act, No. 13 of 2005* (the 'Act') provides that the National Council for Disaster Management (the 'Council') shall formulate such a policy.[1] Its preparation was the first listed of 60 outcomes for the period 2006-2016 under the document *Towards a Safer Sri Lanka: A Road Map for Disaster Management* ('the Road Map'). In accordance with the Road Map, the Ministry of Disaster Management, as Secretariat of the Council, led a consultative process to formulate the Policy with input and guidance from relevant agencies and stakeholders.

3. The Council approved the Policy on 28.12.2010.

4. The legal basis for the Policy, and all other core elements of Sri Lanka's disaster management regime, is the Act. The Policy is intended to complement the other core elements. These include: the National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP); National Emergency Operations Plan; Disaster Management Plans for every Ministry, Government Department and public corporation; and other plans, programs and guidelines. Laws, policies and undertakings on other topics, such as land use planning and local government, also contribute directly and indirectly to disaster management outcomes in Sri Lanka.

5. The Policy is intended to be a high-level statement of 'how things should be' for Sri Lanka to be as resilient and safe as possible from disaster risks. Some components are already in place. Others will need further time and effort. The NDMP, in particular, establishes detailed management arrangements, mechanisms, responsibilities and timeframes for actions to give effect to the Policy.

6. The Policy aligns with the Government of Sri Lanka 2010 Development Policy Framework, *Mahinda Chintana: Vision for the Future.* It calls for creation of a culture of safety of the nation through systematic management of disaster risks. It also calls for strengthened relevant laws; reduced land degradation; and reduced disaster losses through training and awareness for the public.[2] In addition, the Policy is informed by international best practice, including the *Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the resilience of nations and communities to disasters,* as endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly.

Vision and Objective

7. The vision of the Policy is a Sri Lanka safe from disaster.

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[1] Sri Lanka Disaster Management Act, No. 13 of 2005, Section 4

[2] Mahinda Chintana Vision for the Future, 2010, Chapter 7, Section 7.1

8. The objective, in line with the Act, is to protect Sri Lanka's people, property and environment from disaster.

Legal basis

9. Under the Act,[1] the national policy and program on disaster management shall provide for:

   a. the protection of life of the community, property and environment from disasters and development and maintenance of disaster resilient infrastructure and economic development activities in disaster prone areas;

   b. the effective use of resources for preparedness, prevention, response, relief, reconstruction and rehabilitation;

   c. the enhancement of public awareness and training to help people to protect themselves from disasters;

   d. capacity building, among persons living in areas vulnerable to disaster, in relation to risk management and the application of disaster management and mitigation practices; and

   e. pre-disaster planning, preparedness and mitigation while sustaining and further improving post-disaster relief, recovery and rehabilitation capabilities.

Cross-cutting principles

10. Low disaster risk means low vulnerability—high resilience—to disaster. To achieve this requires a systematic approach with consideration of the following cross-cutting principles.

Multi-dimensional.

11. Disaster management should take into account several, intersecting dimensions, which include:

   a. 'multi-hazards' consideration of all kinds of natural, human-induced, and technological events
   i. Natural hazard: Natural event beyond the control of human being threatening life, property and environment

   ii. Human induced hazardous – situation created by the intervention of people in natural environment or technology or combination of both.

   iii. Technological hazards; dangerous situation created by the failure of equipment in the system with or without human interventions;

   b. 'multi-phases' before, during and after disasters (prevention, reduction, mitigation, preparedness, emergency operations, relief, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction and review);

   c. 'multi-sectors' integration across, inter alia, emergency services, meteorology, human and social services, infrastructure, education and training, health, agricultural, defense, water management, environment, climate change, urban management and others;

d. 'multi-stakeholders' engagement of national public agencies, the private sector, civil society, the international community and the general public;

e. 'multi-locality' covering international, regional and national perspectives through to provinces, districts and Grama Niladhari (local communities) across Sri Lanka's entire territory — land, sea and air; and

f. 'multi-temporal' planning and decision-making for the short, medium and long term.

Collective responsibility

12. The intrinsic nature of hazards means that all concerned, not just a single organization, have a role to play to reduce disaster risk and create a culture of safety. In particular:

a. Government, non-government, private sector, academic, media, religious and other organizations and individuals have a collective responsibility for disaster management. This includes a responsibility to coordinate and consult with each other, while complying with national security and policy directives.

b. Government and non-government organizations, private sector, media and religious organizations and communities should form the basis of efforts to reduce disaster risk and immediately recover from disaster.

c. Private Sector, Non-governmental and Civil Society organizations should plan and implement Disaster Management related programmes in a transparent manner, in close coordination with relevant government agencies at national and sub national levels, prioritizing the high risk areas.

d. Interventions should encourage a culture of safety and attitudes of self – recovery.

e. Public-private partnerships are important.

13. *Equality, diversity and inclusion*

a. Agencies should target resources based on severity of, and vulnerability to, potential hazards and disasters.

b. All people affected by disaster have equal rights to receive assistance and information regardless of ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs, ability or other personal attributes.

c. Disaster management should give special consideration to marginalized groups and those with special needs or otherwise vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, senior citizens, the sick, pregnant women, children and displaced persons.

d. Disaster management should ensure gender equality and in particular the empowerment of girls and women.

e. Special effort should be taken to prevent violence unlawful engagements against entire community during disaster situations.

14. *Transparency and accountability*

    a.Ministry of Disaster Management and agencies under the Ministry should be made accountable to develop programmes to create awareness on specific hazards. Disaster Management Centre should identify the needs at national and subnational levels and facilitate such awareness programmes.

    b.Disaster management should involve participatory, transparent, and accountable decision-making at all levels. Public institutions must remain transparent and accountable at all times. This includes with respect to identifying needs, mobilizing resources, managing funds and delivering equitable services.

    c.Disaster-prone communities have the right to participate and contribute in planning, decision-making, implementation and monitoring processes related to disaster management. In particular, public institutions should provide information to and engage communities and stakeholders in decision-making processes that affect them.

    d.The public, and in particular disaster-prone communities, have a right to receive information on disaster risks prior to any disaster, and on services and facilities available to re-establish their lives after a disaster event. This includes, for example, documentation and insurance services.

    e.Disaster related information and guidelines should be timely and easy to understand.

    f.Multi-hazard maps, risk profiles, modern tools and methods should be shared with stakeholders and communities.

15. *Best fit of best practice*

    a. Disaster management should align with international initiatives, standards and agreements in a manner suited to Sri Lanka's national circumstances.

    b. Disaster management tools and methods should be modern and state-of-the-art.

    c. Disaster risk management should also promote indigenous knowledge and traditional methods where appropriate.

    d. Disaster risk management approaches should be economically optimal and socially acceptable.

Policy statements

Preparedness and response

16. In case of a known or predicated emergency, a single designated agency should disseminate clear, concise and early warning messages at national, sub-national and community levels.

g. Early-warning and emergency response systems must be operational and regularly tested at national, regional, local and community level.

h. The early warning system must be integrated into regional and global networks and service providers.

i. In the event of tsunami threat, a Technical Advisory Committee should take the decision to evacuate people.

17. A Disaster Management Plan should be in place for all public and private sector organizations, institutions and communities to ensure continuity of business, services and livelihoods during and after a disaster.

18. The government should put in place mechanisms to enable the general public to have emergency services available at national and sub-national levels on a 24/7 basis through Emergency Operations Centers, Emergency Call Centers and other mechanisms.

19. Civil society, private sector and voluntary organizations should be prepared to involve themselves in mitigation, relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities, with the consent of the relevant line ministry prior to engaging in such activities.

a. Relevant ministries/ government agencies must endorse service delivery agencies before they provide services of a highly technical or sensitive nature, or which involve vulnerable or disaster-affected people.

20. Relevant agencies and organizations should have in place emergency response systems, plans and programs to undertake followings under the guidance and facilitation of the Ministry of Disaster Management and its agencies.

a. assess and manage information on the number, identity and needs of individuals affected by disaster;

b. mobilize a volunteer network of recognized, authorized agencies for disaster response.

c. provide immediate food, water & sanitation, medical, counseling assistance, shelter, clothing and other needs to affected people in an adequate, appropriate and timely manner;

d. expedite receipt of international assistance, including receipt of goods and services at international border points, while ensuring national security and quality of goods and services;

e. restore public utilities and essential services that are damaged or destroyed due to disasters;

f. prevent post-disaster health hazards;

g. provide information on victims of disaster, internally displaced, missing persons, damaged and lost properties and to restore family links;

h. identify and properly treat casualties, including mass casualties;

21. In responding to disasters:

    a. children affected by disaster should have access to continuous education where necessary;

    b. affected persons should have documentation services for during early recovery period;

    c. affected communities should have assistance for speedy recovery of disrupted livelihoods and market systems;

    d. displaced persons and their properties, and people with special needs should have search and rescue services, care and protection;

    e. in the event that individuals at relief centers need an extended stay, district administration should arrange additional services;

    f. in the event of re-settlement, houses should be adapted to beneficiary needs and respect accessibility standards as per national law. Houses should be provided only in locations suitable for human settlement and the housing should be designed and constructed with beneficiary participation..

    g. Counseling services should be available to address post-disaster trauma and other psychological needs of affected persons including into the long-term.

    h. Disaster management policies, legislations and regulations should respond to emerging needs, and minimize the impacts of disasters on society, economy, infrastructure and the environment.

Integrated systems to reduce disaster risk

22. National and local government agencies must have strong legal mandates, institutional capacity and information and communication technology (ICT) systems to manage disasters.

23. Hazard profiles, vulnerability and risk assessments for multiple hazards should be regularly updated. Areas prone to hazards should be identified for parties to prevent and mitigate impacts.

    a. Risk analyses should incorporate inter-linkages among disasters, poverty and development.

    b. Scientific research tools and methods should be available and used to reduce disaster risk.

    c. Disaster risk reduction activities should integrate climate change adaptation.

24. All planning development projects, programs and processes must assess disaster impact and integrate disaster risk reduction.

    a. Institutions should analyze the costs and benefits of investments to reduce disaster risk.

25. Local government officers and planning authorities should use building and planning guidelines to minimize disaster impacts.

a.Guidelines should be in place to reduce disaster risk in planning and development initiatives at rural, urban, regional and national levels.

b.Building codes and guidelines should be in place for construction in hazard-prone areas and incorporated in the National Physical Plan, urban planning and development control processes.

c.Disaster-affected houses and settlements should be rebuilt with disaster-resilient features.

d.Land use, involuntary resettlements and rehabilitation criteria should reduce disaster risk in line with government policies and guidelines on physical planning, resettlements and local governance.

e.Guidelines, plans and strategies should be in place to identify safe lands for relocation of potentially vulnerable population living in disaster-prone areas, taking in to consideration their lifestyle and livelihood.

f.Government should partner with non-government and civil society organizations to rehabilitate public and private infrastructures and properties damaged due to disasters as per agreed building codes and guidelines.

g.In rehabilitation and reconstruction of houses affected by disasters, proposed housing policies and strategies in the National Housing Policy should be followed. In order to optimize the land utilization priority should be given to condominium property development.

26. Mechanisms should be in place to transfer or share risk among parties best-placed to manage it.

a.A mechanism should be in place to obtain financial assistance on concessionary terms from international institutions, state and private sector financial institutions, civil society organizations and risk transfer schemes to reconstruct/repair and rehabilitate damaged properties, and for other recovery needs.

27. Disaster management authorities should be able to take legal action against institutions or individuals that conduct activities leading to hazardous situations.

a. Awareness programmes should be implemented to introduce housing technology to reduce the construction of buildings prone to disasters.

Fiscal Disaster Resilience

28. Fiscal resilience to disasters will be improved with efficient budgetary mechanisms, access to contingent credit and sovereign and private catastrophe insurance products. Development of such programmes will be confirmed by a Fiscal Disaster Risk Assessment.

29. The fiscal disaster risk management programme would be put in place with due consideration to the availability of post-disaster funds and the rapid execution of those funds. Fiscal and risk transfer mechanisms will be designed and implemented to ensure the availability of sufficient funds for recovery and reconstruction.

Education, training and professional development

30. Staff managing disasters at all levels must be adequately trained to fulfill respective responsibilities.

31. Disaster management should be integrated in curricula in schools, technical colleges and universities. All formal and informal education systems should contribute to strong, mainstream concepts of disaster management.

    a. Members of the general public and school children should be able to carry out primary first aid, Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and other emergency techniques.

32. Disaster Management Authorities should promote disaster risk reduction related research in universities and other research institutions .

    a. Academic institutions should implement programs to strengthen the capacity of professionals in disaster management.

    b. A programme to be developed to disseminate affordable technology in disaster resilient housing construction.

33. Media personnel should have the knowledge and skills to communicate different aspects of disaster management.

Access to resources

34. The Ministry of Disaster Management will coordinate with stakeholder agencies to prepare the Plan to implement this Policy and request funds from the Ministry of Finance and Planning in such funds will be allocated to the relevant government agencies.

35. NGO, civil society and the private sector are encouraged to undertake activities in the Plan.

Implementation

36. The DMC will lead implementation of the National Policy, under the administrative control of the Ministry of Disaster Management and the policy guidance of the Council.

Provisions for review

37. The Policy remains in effect until such time as it is amended. The Council will review and amend the Policy and related instruments as appropriate to address emerging issues changes and after any occurrence of a major disaster event.