

Conclusions and Recommendations

Bangladesh has made great strides forward in the field of disaster management. As typical in a disaster-prone country, members of vulnerable communities, driven by the urge for survival, make their own preparations to face and cope with ensuing disasters. Floods and cyclones are considered the main natural hazards, floods being annual phenomena. While scope for preparedness against cyclones was limited in the absence of cyclone shelters, flood-prone communities had enough to do, and their activities always fell short due to resource limitations and non-involvement of the government in the preparedness phase. The government would appear on the scene afterwards for post-disaster relief and rehabilitation. With inadequate preparedness, the damage would be great, so recovery would be complicated and costly also.

Pursuant to the disaster preparedness of the study (FAP-11) with UNDP assistance, the Ministry of Relief was thoroughly revamped and flood preparedness incorporated into the national development agenda. The result was encouraging and, with a comparatively small investment in preparedness, damage was reduced considerably. This was also corroborated by the pilot projects of the action research study of the World Meteorological Office and Global Water Programme (WMO-GWP). The UNDP supported MoFDM's CDMP programme will help to realise the vision, mission, and objectives of the GoB and Ministry and to make a difference. This time we expect that a true paradigm shift will be realised at all levels.

The Ministry of Food and Disaster Management should continue with its programme of improvement in hardware, software, human resources, and skills. In addition, the most important factor will be the exchange and sharing of knowledge with other countries in the region directly, as disasters recognise no political boundary.

Inspired by the success of the implementation of DP plans over the last few years during big floods, the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management has embarked on a corporate plan (2005-2009) and has also developed a National Plan for Disaster Management to serve as a key management tool to guide the efforts of the ministry and the country as a whole in this field. The aim is to achieve a paradigm shift in

national disaster management strategies from conventional response and recovery to a comprehensive culture of risk reduction.

It is, perhaps, not desirable to recommend what the Ministry should do, hence only generalised observations have been made below.

- Accurate early warning is a prerequisite to the success of a DP plan. Reportedly the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is going to offer a package for improvement of the early warning system in which DMB also has a share. This opportunity should not be missed.
- The most important factors of sustainability and reduction of dependence on aid should be considered by planners. This undesired evolution should receive high priority from the Ministry of Food and Disaster Management so that counter measures can be taken in time.
- The Ministry should develop a National Platform for Risk Reduction that can activate disaster management institutions in a meaningful and functional manner.
- Communication and information-sharing gaps at all levels should be minimised by extending the efforts of the Disaster Management Information Centre component of the Comprehensive Disaster Management Programme funded by the UNDP.
- The Directorate of Relief and Rehabilitation should develop projects based on action plans that are developed by unions and 'upazilla'.
- All relevant agencies should pick up district-level disaster management plans and identify their roles and should design their sectoral programmes in line with the needs and considerations reflected in the disaster management plans of a particular district.
- The Ministry of Food and Disaster Management should monitor progress and compliance with the implementation of disaster management instruments in Bangladesh and that information should be disseminated among all disaster management stakeholders in Bangladesh.