

Disaster Management in Arunachal Pradesh: Role of Panchayati Raj

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ABSTRACT: The article analyses the Arunachal Disaster Management Policy and also examines the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in the management of disaster there under in the State of Arunachal Pradesh, one of the most vulnerable states in India from the perspective of various types of disaster. The policy underlines the vulnerability of the State and emphasized the need for a proactive, comprehensive and sustainable approach to disaster management and reduce the detrimental effects of disasters on the overall socio-economic development of the state and its people. In this course, the policy paper talks about multi-prong, multidisciplinary, sustainable and continuous approach to address the various dimensions of disaster management and bestows its responsibilities to all the sectors, organizations, and agencies including the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), 'institutions of self-government'. As per the policy framework, the Panchayati Raj Institutions will work as an integral institution for the disaster management planning and action in the state.

This paper is an attempt to review the ADMP and the role assigned to the PRIs.

I. INTRODUCTION

Arunachal Pradesh, the land of the rising sun is situated in the far north eastern part of the country. With an area of 83743 sq. kms, the State stands the largest among the eight lakshamis (Seven sister and Sikkim). It stretches from snow-capped mountains in the north to the plains of Brahmaputra valley in the south. Arunachal is the largest state area-wise in the North-East region, even larger than Assam which is the most populous. It is situated between latitude 26° 30' N and 29° 30' N and longitude 91° 30' E and 97° 30' E.ⁱ The State of Arunachal Pradesh has a long international border with Bhutan, China and Myanmar. The scenic beauty of the state is distinctively shaped by the nature. The state is homeland for more than hundred communities. The tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh have developed their own traditional systems of self-governance prior to introduction of institutions are called as KEBANG among the Adis, Nogongthun among the Noctes, Jung, Blue among the Sherdukpens, Mele among the Akas, Builang among the Apatanis, Wancho Wangas among the Wanchos and so on, etc.ⁱⁱ

In Arunachal Pradesh, the Panchayati Raj system was introduced way back in 1968 with the enactment of North East Frontier Panchayati Raj Regulation 1967. With the introduction of Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 by the Government of India, the Government of Arunachal Pradesh replaced the North East Frontier Panchayati Raj Regulation 1967 with a new comprehensive, the Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act 1997. The Act introduced a full fledged three Panchayati Raj system in the State. Since then Panchayati Raj Institutions are working as local-self Government of Arunachal Pradesh and serving its people. The State Government took a transformative step on the Statehood Day February 20, 2014 by devolving all 29 subjects to the Panchayati Raj Institution. But actual devolution has yet to take place. Panchayati Raj Institution in the State has been working since 1968 as an institute of self-government and the concept of parliamentary democracy is not new to the tribal society.

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II. DISASTER MANAGEMENT

The Disaster Management Act 2005 defines that the "Disaster" means damage to, or degradation of, environment, and is of such a nature or magnitude as to be beyond the coping capacity of the community of the affected area. According to the Act "Disaster Management" is combination of a continuous and integrated process of planning, organising, coordinating and implementing measures which are necessary for prevention of danger or threat of any disaster. It also includes mitigation or reduction of risk of any disaster or its severity or consequences, capacity building, preparedness to deal with any disaster, prompt response to any threatening disaster situation or disaster, assessing the severity or magnitude of effects of any disaster; evacuation, rescue and relief and rehabilitation and reconstruction.ⁱⁱⁱ

Adversity Risk Profile of Arunachal Pradesh

Arunachal Pradesh due to its location is vulnerable to various types of natural adversities such as earthquakes, cloud bursts, landslides, flash floods and forest fires. As the state is placed in Seismic Zone V and the hills are made of with Himalayan ranges made of marine limestone from this ancient ocean, the state is particularly at risk to earthquakes and landslides. These natural adversities have the potential to cause large scale disasters resulting in loss of life and damage to property. Recurrent disasters have led to adverse impact on the overall economic development of the State.

Major Disaster Events^{iv}

Earthquake on 15th August 1950 in the northeast was the 6th largest earthquake of the 20th century, which killed 1500 people and the drainage of several rivers was blocked because of induced landslides triggering in the hills. Subsequently, the consequential floods due to blocking of rivers were the cause of many deaths and other damages in the region. Frequent earthquakes of moderate intensity are a common phenomena in the state. Apart from the earthquakes, the state is also prone to various other hazards due to its natural setting. Landslides, floods, forest fires, cyclones, etc., are the other major types of hazards those occur frequently in the state. Due to high seismicity, high annual rainfall and geological fragility of the region, almost all parts of state experience one or more of these disasters every year.

Heavy and prolonged seasonal rainfalls in Arunachal Pradesh are one of the major causes in triggering landslide incidence by liqification of land mass, increased flow in streams thereby stream bank erosion and toe cuttings, etc. Landslides are capable of causing irreparable damage to human life and property most of the times. In July 2008 heavy rainfall triggered massive landslides in and around the town of Itanagar that killed about 20 people.

III. DISASTER MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK IN THE STATE POLICY

Principles of Arunachal Disaster Management Policy (hereafter APDMP)

Recognizing the vulnerability and the need for a proactive, comprehensive and sustainable approach to disaster management and reduce the detrimental effects of disasters on the overall socio-economic development of the state and its people, the Government of Arunachal Pradesh has formulated the Arunachal Disaster Management Policy. The Policy aims at to establish necessary systems, structures, programs, resources, capabilities and guiding principles for reducing vulnerability to various hazards and preparing for and responding to disasters and threat of disasters in the State in order to save lives and property, avoid disruption of economic activity and damage to environment and to ensure the continuity and sustainability of development of the State.^v As the policy address the entire gamut of disasters arising from natural (drought, floods, earthquakes, cyclones, landslides etc) and manmade (forest fires, chemical catastrophes etc) hazards.

The policy paper talks about multi prong, multidisciplinary, sustainable and continuous approach to address the issues of disaster management and bestows it's responsibility of all sectors, all organizations and all agencies that may be potentially affected by a disaster. It pronounces that disaster management principles will be incorporated as an integral part of the overall Development planning process. The policy paper says that self-reliance shall be developed by promoting and encouraging the spirit of self-help and mutual assistance among local authorities and constituents. All administrative units of the state will develop and maintain documented plans of their disaster management functions and activities. These documented plans should be updated yearly or as instructed by the government. To ensure that all responsible agencies, their staff and the public are familiar with policy, plans and procedures related to

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disaster management, periodic exercises and drills shall be conducted at all levels, with specific emphasis at the district and local levels.^{vi}

Institutional Arrangement for Disaster Management in Arunachal Pradesh

In order to accomplish the aims and objectives set for the disaster management framework for the state, the Government of Arunachal Pradesh has established a set of agencies that play a key role in disaster management.

- Arunachal Pradesh Disaster Management Authority;
- State Steering Committee/ State Executive Committee;
- Prl. Secretary RR & DM / State Relief Commissioner;
- District Administration, headed by the Deputy Commissioner;
- Local Authorities, including Municipal Corporations, District, Gram Panchayat etc.
- Voluntary agencies, including NGOs;
- Public Sector;
- Private Sector;
- Community.^{vii}

Role of Panchayati Raj Institution

The passage of the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act, 1992 has added the new dimension to the vision Local Government. The amendment recognizes Panchayati Raj Institutions as 'Institutions of self- government'. The amendment has also laid down necessary guidelines for the structure of their composition, powers, functions, devolution of finances, regular holding of elections and reservation of seats for weaker sections including women. These local bodies can be effective instruments in tackling disasters through early warning system, relief distribution, providing shelter to the victims, medical assistance etc.^{viii}

Disaster management Act 2005 has made Panchayati Raj as integral for the disaster management. The act said that at the district level there will be a District Disaster Management Authority headed by District Magistrate or District Commissioner and the ZilaParishad Chairperson will be the co-chairperson.

Disaster Risk Management Programme and Panchayati Raj

The status report on disaster management in India prepared by the Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, National Disaster Management Division, up to date us that a programme on Disaster Risk Management has been started with the help of UNDP, USAID and European Union to prepare State, district and Block level disaster management plans in 169 districts of 17 multi-hazard prone States such as Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Delhi, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, Orissa, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal and West Bengal. As per report, under this programme village disaster management plan will also be developed in conjunction with the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). It has also been visualized that disaster management teams consisting of village volunteers will be trained in preparedness and response functions such as search and rescue, first aid, relief coordination, shelter management, etc. In fact, the thrust of the programme is to build up the capabilities of community in view of the fact that the community is invariably the first responder to situation. Capacity building of the community, including Local Authority has become more important when an isolated occurrence take place.

As per the latest information in this regard, the status report revealed that Disaster Management Plans have been prepared for 8643 villages, 1046 Gram Panchayat, 188 blocks and 82 districts. More than 29000 elected representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions have already been trained, besides imparting training to members of voluntary organizations. About 18000 Government functionaries have been trained in disaster mitigation and preparedness at different levels. 865 engineers and 425 architects have been trained under this programme in vulnerability assessment and retrofitting of lifeline buildings. 600 master trainers and 1200 teachers have already been trained in different districts in disaster preparedness and mitigation.^{ix}

National Disaster Management Framework and Panchayati Raj

The framework lays emphasis on the community based mitigation, preparedness and response plans and visualize to enhance the capacity of communities in the sensitive state to respond effectively to disasters. It gives special attention to the capacity building of vulnerable communities and groups including women. The framework stress to set up and

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train village/ Panchayat (for rural areas) and wards/municipal council/corporations (for urban areas) disaster management committees and disaster management teams which will be engaged in preparedness, mitigation and post reaction activities such as identification of safe shelters and management, early warning dissemination, first-aid and counseling, assist in search and rescue etc.

In this regard the framework clearly said that such plans to be made integral to annual development plan of local bodies and mitigation plans of the community and Panchayats to receive priority under various rural development schemes administered by the Panchayats and Urban.^x

The Disaster Management Act 2005^{xi} clearly mentions the role, responsibility of the Local Authority. According to the Act the Local Authority will function as per direction of District Authority. The Local Authority will ensure that its officers and employees are trained for disaster management; resources relating to disaster management are so maintained as to be readily available for use in the event of any threatening disaster situation or disaster, all construction projects under it or within its jurisdiction conform to the standards and specifications laid down for prevention of disasters and mitigation by the National Authority, State Authority and the District Authority, carry out relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities in the affected area in accordance with the State Plan and the District Plan. Apart from this mentioned function, the Local Authority may take such other measures as may be necessary for the disaster management.

Strategy of APDMP and Panchayati Raj

Considering the fact related to disaster risk in Arunachal Pradesh. The Arunachal Disaster Management Policy has talked about the strategy to meet the challenges of disaster. The policy stated to implement the integrated approach to disaster management, broadly categorized in three phase i.e. pre-disaster phase, disaster/ impact phase, post-disaster phase. And, as it is envisaged, in each phase Local Authority^{xii}/ Panchayati Raj has been given greater role to combat the menace of disaster.

IV. APPROACH AND STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Pre-Disaster Phase- Prevention, Mitigation & Preparedness

From past few years, the Government is giving considerable importance to prevention, mitigation and preparedness like activities. These activities is categories under pre-disaster phase involve wide-ranging of data collection, keeping directories of resources, Risk assessment, developing action plans, capacity building through training and mass awareness etc. The policy, in this stage, rightfully thought that Government departments, district administration, local authorities should develop plans for prevention and mitigation of disasters which will strengthen the capability and ensure preparedness in the event of a disaster actually taking place.

In this Phase, as it is stated in the policy, a number primary activities such as planned development, development of policies and guidelines, establishing a proper chain of command, develop disaster management plans, develop repositories of information, establish communication and technology networks, developing early warning mechanisms, establish flexible procedures, building capabilities & expertise knowledge management, Identifying avenues for risk sharing and transfer will be carried out to strengthen the capability and to ensure the effective preparedness.

Out of these various activities there are three area viz. planned development, develop disaster management plans, building capabilities & expertise where Local Authority/ Panchayati Raj has direct role. As per the Policy and DM Act 2005 Local Authority/ Panchayati Raj Institution will be involved in basically two major activities in this phase.

Firstly, for a long-term disaster management approach a detailed disaster management plan addressing local needs will be required. This will enable the relevant authorities and the community to respond systematically to disasters. The guidelines for such plans will be prepared by involving local authorities along with Government departments, district administration, and expert agencies etc., in consultation with APDMA. Each level of authority will prepare its own plans using the guidelines developed by all stakeholders and ensure that these are persistently reviewed and updated according to the local requirement and emerging challenges.

Secondly, as states in the Policy that Local Government authorities will be a key intuition of the network of relevant institutions and those stakeholders who are involved in disaster management such as disaster management agencies, research institutions, disaster management specialists, NGOs, community groups, line departments for handling

various aspects of disasters. It has been envisioned that Local authorities inform Panchayati Raj Institutions will work in close coordination with and provide all assistance to relevant Government departments, under the overall guidance of DC of APDMA.

Impact Phase- Emergency Relief Measures and Relief

This phase is very crucial. It is a challenge for the District Administration and Local Authority that how they carry out relief activities when the impact of a disaster is restricted within the geographical boundaries of a district because the district administration headed by the DC, in conjunction with local authorities, are responsible for the all the activities necessary to be carried out. At this stage a number of activities are listed in the Policy such as Search and Rescue, Subsistence, Shelter, Health and Sanitation, Infrastructure and essential services, Preliminary damage assessment, Post-relief assessment, etc. As per Policy the Deputy Commissioner, in conjunction with local authorities will be responsible for the search and rescue operations in an affected region. It is also true that when a disaster takes place, it disrupts the food supply, water supply and sanitation mechanisms. It may also force the people to abandon their houses, either temporarily or permanently. In this situation, the Policy clearly laid down that the relevant Government departments and local authorities will work for providing temporary shelter, health and sanitation services to rescue victims in order to prevent any outbreak of diseases.

Similarly, disasters can cripple the infrastructure in the area in terms of roads, public buildings, communication network, etc. And again Policy paper said that the local authorities would work in close coordination with relevant government departments in order to restore infrastructure to normal operating conditions as soon as possible.

The Policy paper also entrusts the Government departments and the local authorities to carry out a preliminary 'need and loss assessment' and extend their support in emergency relief measures and relief activities. It is also expected that Local Government will taking part in the documentation of the learnings from the experience following any disaster that can be used as inputs into further mitigation, relief or rehabilitation and reconstruction plans.

Post-Disaster Phase – Reconstruction & Rehabilitation

As per Policy the thrust areas in this phase will be ensuring a speedy return to normalcy and mitigation of long-term consequences of the disaster. The policy objective of the Government in this phase will be to focus on economic and social consequences of the disaster and directing efforts to improve the machinery of the state as well as with the aid of other stakeholders with whom long-term relationships have been developed in the pre-disaster phase.^{xiii}

In this phase the activities such as Detailed damage assessment Assistance to restore houses and dwelling units Relocation (need based), Implementing initiatives for recovery of reconstruction costs etc., have assigned to the local Government

In post disaster phase, basically comprise reconstruction and rehabilitation activities. It is important to note that a detailed assessment must be conducted before commencing reconstruction and rehabilitation activities. The Disaster Management Policy paper of the Government of Arunachal Pradesh envisioned the role of the Local Authority and said that relevant Government departments and local authorities shall initiate detailed assessment at their respective levels for damages sustained by housing, industry/ services, infrastructure, agriculture, health/ education, etc. assets in the disaster affected areas.

The Disaster Management Policy of Arunachal Pradesh has entrusted a very important role to the Local Authority. The need-based considerations and not extraneous factors drive relocation of people will be entertained and carried out by the local authorities, in consultation with the people affected and under the guidance of APDMA. Relocation efforts will include activities like: - Gaining consent of the affected population; Land acquisition; Urban/ rural land use planning; Customizing relocation packages; Obtaining due legal clearances for relocation; Getting the necessary authorization for rehabilitation; Livelihood rehabilitation measures for relocated communities wherever necessary.^{xiv}

The Disaster Management Policy paper also authorizes the Local authority to impose local taxes for the implementation of various the initiatives undertaken for reconstruction and rehabilitation.

The Disaster Management Policy paper said that the post-disaster phase will mainly comprise reconstruction and rehabilitation activities. Currently, the activities in this phase are primarily carried out by the local bodies (Gram Panchayats, District, Talukas, Municipal corporations, Municipalities etc.) and various Government departments and

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boards. However, their activities in this phase shall be in accordance with the reconstruction and rehabilitation plans framed by APDMA, in conjunction with implementing authorities.^{xv}

IV. CONCLUSION

No doubt, Disaster Management Act, 2005 provides an institutional arrangement for disaster management in the form of National Disaster Management Authority, State Disaster Management Authorities, and the District Disaster Management Authority. First, two i.e. National, State, authority is headed by the elected representative of people, while the district level disaster management authority is headed by the District collector or Deputy Commissioner. Taking same principle the District Disaster management Authority should be headed by the Zila Parishad Chairperson, instead of the present provision in that Zila Parishad Chairperson is co-chairperson. Though the Act and Arunachal Pradesh Disaster Management Policy has mentioned the role and responsibilities but to ensure an effective role of local government, including Panchayati Raj depends on the integration of 29 subjects listed under the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution of India for Panchayati Raj Institutions in the disaster management activities. The Panchayati Raj Institutions have already shown the way and proved their indispensable role during the several disasters, i.e tsunami catastrophe in Tamil Nadu, Cyclonic calamity in Orissa, Flood tragedy in Bihar and earthquake catastrophe in Gujarat. It is worthwhile to mention here that Article 243 G has not only made this body as constitutional local self government, but Article 243 ZD has provisioned a District Planning Committee for preparation of district level plan under the Chairmanship of Zila Parishad Chairperson. Therefore, disaster management plan should be the integral part of the development plan. The Village and block level disaster management plan should also be integrated with respective village and block level plan. A standing Committee under Panchayati Raj Institutions may also be constituted. It is also indispensable to mention that a Disaster Management Fund, including response and mitigation at all levels should be created to meet the challenges.

ⁱNIDM, Arunachal Pradesh, National Disaster Risk Reduction Portal

ⁱⁱ<http://arunachalpradesh.gov.in/rural/html/panchayat.htm>

ⁱⁱⁱBased on the Disaster Management Act (53 of 2005) 2005, Government of India, New Delhi

^{iv}NIDM, Arunachal Pradesh, National Disaster Risk Reduction Portal

^vArunachal Pradesh Disaster Management Policy(APDMP)

^{vi}ibid

^{vii}ibid

^{viii}Disaster Management in India - A Status Report, Government of India Ministry of Home Affairs National Disaster Management Division

^{ix}Ibid

^xThe Disaster Management Act (53 of 2005) 2005, Government of India, New Delhi

^{xi}Ibid

^{xii}"Local authority" includes panchayati raj institutions, municipalities, a district board, cantonment board, town planning authority or Zila Parishad or any other body or authority.(Disaster Management Act 2005)

^{xiii}Arunachal Pradesh Disaster Management Policy(APDMP), Government of Arunachal Pradesh

^{xiv}Arunachal Pradesh Disaster Management Policy(APDMP), Government of Arunachal Pradesh

^{xv}Arunachal Pradesh Disaster Management Policy(APDMP), Government of Arunachal Pradesh

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