National Policy on Disaster Management

Subashini Dayananda (LL.M, P.G. Dip in IHL,LL.B)
Legal Officer
Ministry of Disaster Management

Section 25 of the Sri Lanka Disaster Management Act No. 13 of 2005 identifies 21 disasters

- Landslide, Cyclone, Flood, Drought, Industrial hazard, Tsunami, Earthquake, Air hazard, Maritime hazard, fire, Epidemic, Explosion, Air raids, Civil or internal strife, Chemical accident, Radiological emergency, Oil spills including inland and marine oil spills, Nuclear disaster, Urban and forest fire, Coastal erosion, Tornados, Lightning, Strikes and Severe thunder storms.

- New disasters are identified as animal attacks and dam safety issues. They are to be included in the Act when it is amended.

History of formulating a policy for disaster management

- After the Tsunami of December 2004 a parliamentary Selective Committee was established to give the recommendations on natural disasters
- Act No.13 of 2005 was drafted according to the recommendations of the Parliamentary Selective Committee.
- This Act established the institutional and legislative framework for Disaster Risk Management. (DRM)
- After the Act disaster management policy shifted from reactive approach to a proactive approach.
- The Act provide for the establishment of National council for Disaster Management (NCDM) which is chaired by H.E. the President and Disaster Management Centre (DMC).
- Section 4 of the Act provide for the formulation of National Policy

National Policy

- Vision – A Sri Lanka safe from disaster
- Objective – To protect Sri Lanka's people, property and environment from disaster.

Legal Basis

Under the Sec.4(a) of the DM Act the National Policy and Program on DM shall provide for;

- The protection of life of the community and environment from disaster and the maintenance and development of disaster affected areas.
- The effective use of resources for preparedness, prevention, response, relies, reconstruction and rehabilitation.
- The enhancement of public awareness and training to help people to protect themselves from disasters.
- Capacity building, among persons living in areas vulnerable to disaster, in relation to risk management and the application of disaster management and mitigation practice and
- Pre-disaster planning, preparedness and mitigation while sustaining and further improving post-disaster relief, recovery and rehabilitation capabilities

Cross cutting principles

- Multi-dimensional
- Collective responsibility
- Equality, diversity and inclusion
- Transparency and accountability
- Best fit of best practice

Multi-dimensional

- Multi-hazards such as natural , human induced and technological
- Multi-phases such as before , during , after
- Multi-sectors such as emergency services, meteorology, social services etc. (the council is consisted of Ministers in charge of 20 subjects (Sec. 3(1)(d) of the Act)
- Multi-stakeholders such as public sector, private sector and civil society etc.
- Multi-locality covering international, regional and national perspectives to provinces , districts and Grama Niladhari divisions across entire territory land ,sea and air.
- Multi-temporal planning and decision-making for the short, medium and long term.

Collective Responsibility

- All concerned have a role to play to reduce disaster risk and create a culture of safety;
  - Coordinate and consult with each other
  - Form the basis of efforts to reduce disaster risk and immediately recover from disaster
  - Plan and implement DM related programmes in a transparent manner prioritizing the high risk areas.
  - Encourage a culture of safety and attitudes of self-recovery
  - Public-private partnerships

Equality, diversity and inclusion

- Target resources based on severity of and vulnerability to disasters
- All have equal rights to receive assistance and information
- Marginalized groups and those with special needs should be given special consideration
- Ensure gender equality and in particular the empowerment of girls and women
- Prevent violence unlawful engagements against entire community during disaster situations

Transparency and accountability

- Ministry of DM and agencies under the Ministry should be made accountable to develop programmes to create awareness on specific hazards
- Participatory, transparent, and accountable decision making should be involved at all levels.
- Disaster prone communities have the right to participate and contribute in all the stages of disaster management
- The public have a right to receive information on disaster risks prior to any disaster and on services and facilities available after a disaster event
- Disaster related information and should be timely and easy to understand
- Multi-hazard maps, risk profiles, modern tools and methods should be shared with stakeholders and communities.

Best fit of best practice

- DM should align with international initiatives, standards and agreements in a manner suited to Sri Lanka's national circumstances
- DM tools and methods should be modern and state-of-the-art
- DRM should also promote indigenous knowledge and traditional methods where appropriate
- DRM approaches should be economically and socially acceptable

Policy Statements

- A single designated agency should disseminate clear, concise and early warning messages at national, sub-national and community level
- A DM plan should be in place for all public and private sector organization
- Emergency services should be available at national and sub-national levels on a 24/7 basis
- All the sectors should be prepared to involve in mitigation, relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities
- Relevant agencies and organizations should have an emergency response systems, plans and programmes in place to undertake the data collection after a disaster situation
- In responding to disasters there should be assistance for speedy recovery and adequate laws to minimize the impacts of disasters on society, economy, infrastructure and the environment

Policy Statements contd....

- National and Local Government Agencies must have strong legal mandates, institutional capacity and ICT systems to manage disasters
- Hazard profile, vulnerability and risk assessments for multiple hazards should be regularly updated
- All planning development projects, programmes and processes must access disaster impact and integrate disaster risk reduction
- Local Government officers and planning authorities should use building and planning guidelines to minimize disaster impacts
- Mechanisms should be in place to transfer or share risk among parties best-placed to manage it
- DM authorities should be able to take legal action against institutions or individuals that conduct activities leading to hazardous situation
- Fiscal and risk transfer mechanisms will be designed and implemented to ensure the availability of sufficient funds for recovery and reconstruction

Policy Statements contd…

- Staff managing disasters at all levelsa must be adequately trained
- DM should be integrated in curricula in schools, technical colleges and universities
- DM authorities should promote disaster risk reduction related research in universities and research institutions
- Media personnel should have the knowlwdge and skills to communicate different aspects of DM

Thank You