

# Standing Committee Report Summary

## Disaster Preparedness in India

- The Public Accounts Committee (Chairperson: Professor KV Thomas) submitted its report on ‘Disaster Preparedness in India’ on December 10, 2015. The recommendations of the Committee are based on a performance review of disaster preparedness, conducted by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) in 2013.
- **Disaster Planning:** Under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, the National Plan for disaster management is meant to include measures for disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness, responsibilities of different Ministries, etc. It is to be prepared by the National Executive Committee (NEC) and approved by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). The Committee observed that there was a seven year delay, from 2006 to 2013, in finalising the National Plan, and it was still awaiting final approval. The Committee stated that it should be updated on the status of the Plan.
- **Role of NEC:** Under the Act, the NEC is responsible for coordinating response in case of a disaster, preparing the National Plan for disaster management, monitoring implementation of disaster management guidelines, etc. It is required to meet at least once in three months. However, the audit found that it had met infrequently even when there had been disasters, such as the 2007 floods in West Bengal and the 2008 stampede in Rajasthan. The Committee recommended that the NEC either meet more often to better perform its role, or delegate its responsibilities to another authority.
- **Functioning of NDMA:** The NDMA is the central policy making body for disaster management. Under the Act, it is to have an Advisory Committee comprising experts in the field of disaster management. It was noted that the Advisory Committee had not been re-constituted since 2010. Also, of the various projects recommended by a working group of the former Planning Commission, only one project (i.e., the National Earthquake Risk Mitigation Project) was being implemented by the NDMA. The Committee recommended that the Advisory Committee be re-constituted, and the NDMA’s project execution capacity be reviewed.
- **Funding arrangements:** The Committee noted that the centre, states and districts had not constituted Mitigation Funds from which money could be utilised on disaster preparedness, restoration, etc. The Committee recommended that these Funds be constituted at the national, state and district levels urgently so that mitigation activities may be pursued.
- **Communication technology:** Projects undertaken for strengthening the communications network for disaster management were either at the planning stage, or were delayed. For example, the National Disaster Communication Network and the National Disaster Management Informatics System were still being planned by the NDMA, and another project, the satellite based communication network, had not been made fully operational. The Committee recommended that these projects be completed and operationalised at the earliest.
- **Disaster Response:** The Committee noted that in 2012, 27% posts in the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) were vacant. Further, it observed that the NDRF’s training institute, the National Institute of Disaster Response, had not been established, though it had been approved in 2006. It recommended that the vacancies must be filled, and necessary infrastructure be provided to the NDRF so that their performance is not hampered. The Committee also observed that only seven states had constituted State Disaster Response Forces (SDRFs), and recommended that states be encouraged to form their SDRFs at the earliest.
- **Disaster specific preparedness:** With regard to floods, the Committee observed that there were several deficiencies in the forecasting infrastructure. These include non-functional telemetry systems (used for measurement and communication) and absence of dedicated communication facilities in forecasting stations. It recommended that these deficiencies be rectified. Similarly, with regard to radiological disasters, the Committee recommended that the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board spread awareness about safety measures that need to be taken by the public. This is because any radiation leakage may become a major disaster.

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