

Status of Disaster Management Efforts in Afghanistan

Country Context

According to the Afghanistan Information Management Services (AIMS), Afghanistan is considered to be a country prone to hazards like earthquakes, floods, droughts, landslides, sandstorms, and avalanches. One study conducted between 2002 and 2003 records the country's experience of a series of disasters: the Baghlan Earthquake, the avalanches in the north Badakshan region, floods and landslides in central provinces and a prolonged drought.

Earthquakes are relatively frequent - more so in the north and northeast of the country - and these often trigger landslides. Of the 32 provinces, earthquakes are common in the provinces of Takhar, Badakshan, Samangan and Baghlan. A medium level of occurrences are mostly in the provinces of Kunduz, Balkh, Jawzayan, Faryab, Saripul, Bamyan, Parwan, Kapisa, Laghman, Kunar, Kabul, Nangarhar, Logar, Paktiya, Herat, Hilmand, Balkh.

Floods are common in the spring when snow begins to melt and rainfall is heavy. Floods are frequent in the provinces of Herat, Ghor, Uruzgan, Ghaszni, Faryab, Jawzayan, Balkh, Samangan, Kunduz, and Badakshan. In the provinces of Takhar, Baghlan, Saripul, Badghin, Bamyan, Wardak, Laghman, Kunar, Nangarhar, Paktiya, Khost, Farah, Zabul, Paktika, Nimroz, Hilmand, and Kandahar flooding has been on a medium scale.

Drought is another hazard of concern. Of the 32 provinces, drought has a high frequency in the provinces of Herat, Ghor, Uruzgan, Ghazni, Faryab, Jawzayan, Balkh, Samangan, Kunduz and Badakshan. The provinces of Takhar, Baghlan, Saripul, Badghis, Bamyan, Wardak, Laghman, Kunar, Nangarhar, Paktiya, Khost, Farah, Zabul, Paktika, Nimroz, Hilmand, and Kandahar face medium risk of drought.

With regard to landslide occurrence, the seven provinces of Balkh, Samangan, Baghlan, Kunduz, Takhar, Badakshan, and Logar have experienced a high level of destruction. On the other hand, the twenty-five provinces of Jawzayan, Faryab, Saripul, Badghis, Herat, Farah, Ghor, Uruzgan, Hilmand, Kandahar, Zabul, Paktika, Ghazni, Bamyan, Wardak, Parwan, Kabul, Kapisa, Nuristan, Kunar, Laghman, Nangarhar, Paktiya, Khost and Nimroz were placed under the medium level of intensity.

Given the rugged and mountainous nature of the country and the location of villages, towns and cities, there is always a high propensity for widespread death and destruction whenever an earthquake, landslide, mudslide, avalanche, or flooding occurs. These natural hazards are coupled with manmade hazards like war, conflict and land mines forcing the people to live on the edge of high risk.

Effects of Disasters

IFRC/RC (2002) estimates that since the early 1980s, disasters resulting from natural hazards in Afghanistan have killed an estimated 19,000 people and displaced 7.5 million

people. In the last six years alone, the OFDA/CRED International Disaster Database has recorded nine major earthquakes, resulting in the deaths of over 1,200 individuals.

Floods, another frequently occurring natural hazard, have killed approximately 2000 individuals and rendered 79,000 homeless since 2000. From 1954 to 2006, the country has experienced 118 large-scale disasters, 21,346 persons have been killed and 10,989,211 people affected in various locations of the 32 provinces.

After more than two decades of continuous political upheavals and conflict the nation is suffering from the social, political and economic consequences of war. Significant shortcomings in the areas of water, food, shelter, sanitation, health facilities, education, security, natural resource management, as well as environmental degradation are experienced in the majority of provinces and districts across the country. The high level of poverty, lack of livelihood and income generating opportunities, chronic health problems, and poor state of the infrastructure all contribute to the increasing vulnerability of the Afghan people to natural hazards becoming disasters.

Afghanistan is currently undergoing a process of reconstruction and the people of Afghanistan are attempting to rebuild their lives. Interventions by many non-governmental international and local organizations first focused on emergency relief and rehabilitation in the form of water and shelter. This has now been replaced by long-term development programmes, including vocational training, alternative livelihoods and teacher training. These interventions however have not included disaster risk reduction.

Legal and institutional framework for disaster management

In January 2003, the Government of Afghanistan came out with a Disaster Management Framework for Afghanistan. The Department of Disaster Preparedness (DDP) which was formed as a coordination mechanism in 1971 has been revamped with the support of UNDRR, to form the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA), with seven regional offices covering all the provinces of Afghanistan. The Disaster Management Framework is currently under review. A national policy on disaster management has been prepared and also a National Commission on Disaster Management has been setup with 20 line ministries as members.

Government efforts towards disaster preparedness and response work include vulnerability mapping at the regional level, trainings on disaster preparedness and response and incorporation of elements of disaster management under the social protection pillar of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. Efforts made by the government however, are limited to regional and provincial levels and do not directly impact communities in the rural areas. ANDMA organises regular consultations with communities, government officials and other key stakeholders.

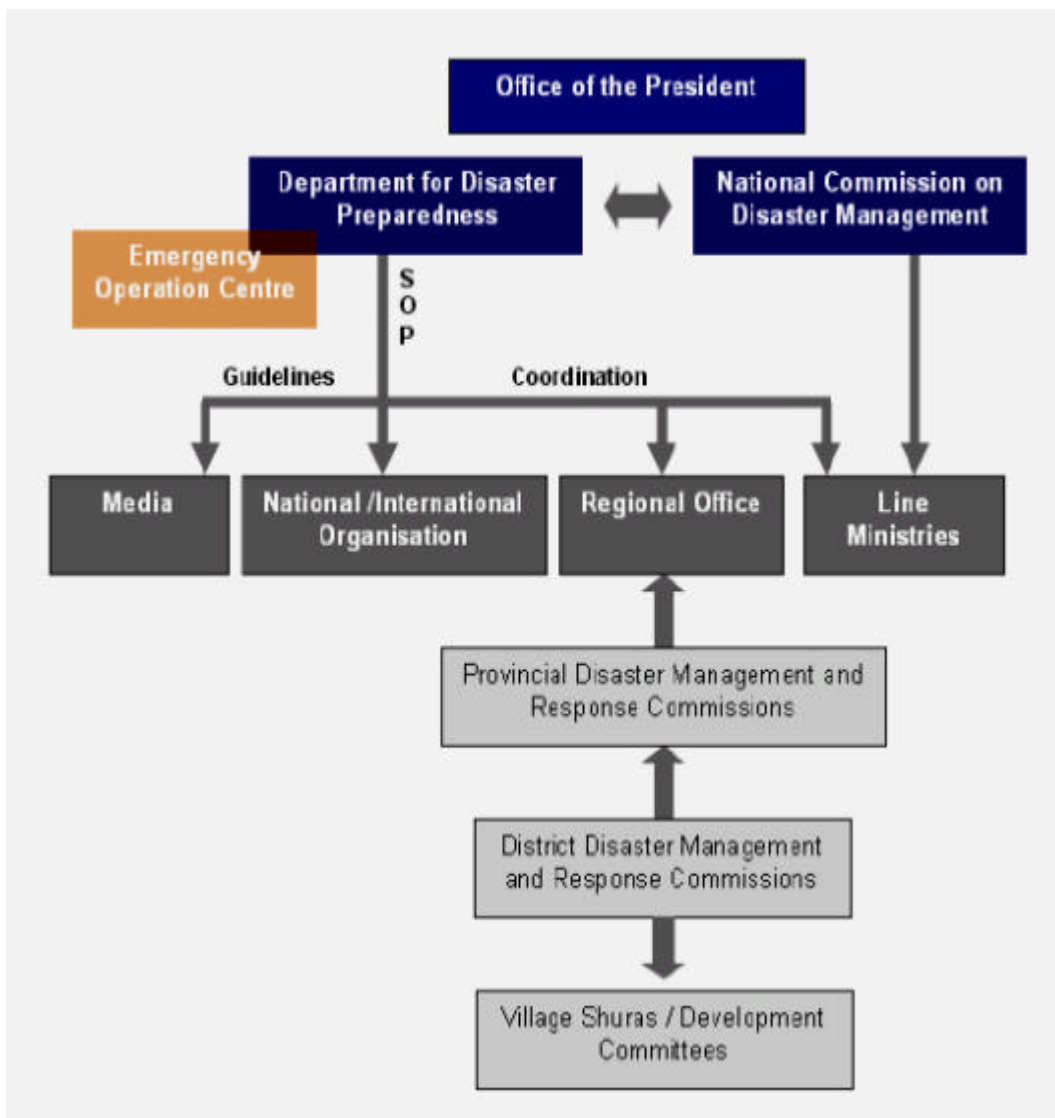


Figure 1. Institutional framework for disaster management

Achievements so far

- Afghanistan developed a national Policy and Strategy for Disaster Management in cooperation with ADB in 2003
- The National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP) with cooperation of SEEDS, India has also been completed
- Afghanistan has instituted a bold reform to restructure ANDMA departments and posted personnel according to this new direction
- The National Emergency Operation Centre has been established to respond quickly in times of disaster
- In cooperation and with funding support from UNDP, the CDRRP was prepared
- A five-year DRR plan was prepared in cooperation with ANDS

- ANDMA has been upgrading the skills of its personnel on disaster preparedness
- ANDMA has also put into operations its regional/zonal offices
- With ANDMA in the lead, a consortium of partner organizations has been established

Civil society efforts

A number of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), both national and international, are active in the disaster preparedness sector in Afghanistan. The national disaster risk reduction consortium comprises Oxfam, Tear Fund, FOCUS Humanitarian Assistance, Save the Children UK, Concern, AKDN, CHA, CoAR, and UNAMA. ActionAid Afghanistan also works with the consortium. These organizations have made the following contributions to government's efforts:

- Strengthening resilience of communities
- Conducting capacity building at provincial and district levels
- Feeding experiences of working with communities into policy development framework
- Holding the state and donors accountable for not fulfilling their responsibilities in accordance with Hyogo Framework of Action.

The way forward for ANDMA

ANDMA has been effective in strengthening the social protection sector with the optimistic projection, that by the end of 2010:

- an effective system of disaster preparedness will be in place and operational at all levels of the bureaucracy in partnership with the international organizations
- an effective system of disaster response and attendant mechanisms will be in place

Limitations

- The Country Strategy is donor driven and largely dependent on external resources
- Most efforts are put on response due to continuous conflicts and series of disasters. As a result, prevention and mitigation activities are undermined
- Shortage of human capacity and human resources
- Absence of early warning system, technology and equipment due to shortage of resources
- Lack of equipment for search and rescue like helicopter, heavy machinery, fire fighting trucks and tankers