

Mr. Duni Chand Rana from India



I am from the Himachal Pradesh Administrative Services (HPAS), and am presently posted as Joint Secretary to the Government of Himachal Pradesh at HP Secretariat, Shimla. I joined the services in 1999, since which time I have been posted to many administrative positions mainly in fields involving disaster management work. Over the last two years, I worked with the UNDP as State Project Officer-HP in GOI-UNDP DRR Program (2009-12). Under this program, we conducted many training activities for various stakeholders, developed and designed information, education, and

communication (IEC) materials, and also assisted the state government in establishing a basic policy and procedural framework for disaster management. We also assisted the state in finalizing the framework for the establishment of emergency operation centers and initiating detailed state-wide multi-hazard risk assessment. In order to design a targeted IEC campaign and conduct focused training and capacity building of various stakeholders, a study to capture the current status of knowledge, aptitude, and awareness (KAP) in disaster management was commissioned and finalized.

Due to its physiographic and climatic conditions, India is one of the world's most disaster-prone areas. It is vulnerable to windstorms from both the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. There are active crustal movements in the Himalayas, leading to earthquakes, and about 58.7% of the total land mass is prone to earthquakes of moderate to very high intensity. The Himalayas, being a fairly young mountain range, are undergoing constant geological changes that result in landslides. Floods are caused by heavy rains and droughts occur in the arid and semi-arid regions. About 12% of the total land mass is prone to flooding and 68% of the arable land is vulnerable to drought. Western India, typified by the Thar Desert, and central India, where the Deccan Plateau is located, face recurring droughts due to acute shortages of rainfall. India has also increasingly become vulnerable to tsunamis. It has a coastline that stretches along 7,600 km, and is repeatedly threatened by cyclones. In addition to the lives that are lost, India loses 2% to 3% of GDP annually due to disasters. Many pockets of the country are hotspots for disasters and our vulnerability index is one of the highest in the world.

Steps have recently been taken to institutionalize holistic disaster management in India. For emergency response, India has a system of multiple toll-free numbers (100 - Police; 101 - Fire; 108 - Medical; 102 - Ambulance; 1070/1077 -Disaster, etc.). However, having multiple toll-free numbers tends to cause confusion. Also, in most emergencies, response efforts must be taken by more than one agency and the present system lacks a means of achieving the effective

coordination and integration of services. This can lead to response deficiencies and delays. Multiple toll-free numbers and response systems also lead to waste in terms of resources and manpower. The existing system does not use the many ICT tools available for handling calls, creating databases and a decision support system, managing emergency dispatch, and optimizing the utilization of existing resources. The existing system also has no effective and efficient means of communicating early warning signals to vulnerable communities and response agencies. The end result is avoidable loss of life.

Here at ADRC, I am interested in studying the Japanese system and international best practices in emergency response systems (ERS) and in proposing a model ERS for India, preferably based on a single integrated toll-free number for optimum resource utilization and effective response.

During my brief stay in Japan, I have attended international conferences with other visiting researchers, observed community disaster drills, participated in activities commemorating the anniversary of the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake, and seen youth education activities. I have also tried some hands-on activities and look forward to many more. Preserving the memory of past disasters and using that knowledge for the education and training of the next generation is done remarkably well in Japan. It is also amazing to see as how this knowledge is being transferred to the next generation in a very interesting and systematic way. "We don't forget 1995.1.17" (the day the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake struck Kobe) is the tagline for DRR used by the residents and government of this beautiful port city.

Finally, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my state government, the government of India, and ADRC for giving me the great opportunity to participate in this program. I am sure it will help me grow professionally and I will be able to contribute to DRR in my state and country in the future. I would also like to express my deep gratitude and admiration to the ADRC staff members for taking such good care of us and for facilitating our learning.