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Disaster Management: New Role for Civil Society Organizations in Changing Macro-Reality

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Abstract

The disaster management sector is undergoing major changes in the legal, institutional, and policy spheres.

Macro-level changes prompted by wider liberalization, globalization, and privatization policies will also affect the disaster management (DM) sector. The challenge before the civil society organizations (CSOs) is to cope with these changes and ensure adherence to the progressive principles in DM. These challenges can be met only by taking up new roles by CSOs. This would require preparation in terms of critical analysis of the conventional intervention strategies and of analyzing the probable impacts of also the macro-level changes. The conventional role of providing direct benefits to disaster affected people, in any case is highly important.

However, the paper emphasizes on the need for CSOs to go beyond this conventional role by undertaking direct interventions in the key governance functions of disaster management. To support this argument, the paper engages in detailed analysis of the challenges, problems, and opportunities presented by changing macro-reality that is affecting the DM sector. While elaborating on the new roles for CSOs, the paper presents some key strategies underlying these new roles and also suggests some practical actions in this regard.

1.0 Introduction

The disaster management, which is not being treated as a sector by itself, is undergoing major changes, especially at the institutional and policy levels, which are prompted by various macro-level factors. The challenge before the civil society organizations (hence further referred to as CSOs) is to comprehend these changes and come up with strategy and action plan to ensure that the objectives such as social justice, equity, and democratic governance are adhered in the changing perspectives, policies, and practices of disaster management (hence further referred to as DM). With this challenge in mind, this paper attempts critical analysis of the conventional intervention strategies of CSOs in DM sector. On this background, it attempts to evolve an alternative framework for interventions by CSOs, while keeping in mind the new policy frameworks and institutional changes. The analysis and prescription in this paper is largely based on the understanding

and insights that were gained through advocacy efforts made in the aftermath of the disaster of landslides and floods in 2005 in the Konkan region of Maharashtra.

2.0 Analysis of Conventional Interventions in DM by CSOs

2.1 Types of Conventional Interventions by CSOs

Various civil society organizations have been playing active role in management of disasters for a long time. These interventions of CSOs can be grouped as follows.

2.1.1 Mobilize Volunteers for Rescue Work

This has been a very important contribution from the civil society. Considering the urgency involved in the rescue effort and difficulties faced by outside agencies to arrive at the scene of the disaster, the role of local (formal as well as informal) CSOs and individuals becomes crucial.

2.1.2 Damage Assessment at the Local Level

This is often the first step taken by local and outside CSOs, after immediate rescue operations are over. Many local CSOs begin with the assessment of damages of the communities, with whom they are working. Such efforts have been useful in identifying the disaster-affected communities and families (needing relief) and even prioritizing among them. The ready lists of disaster affected people (hence further referred to as DAPs) requiring assistance are often shared with private support agencies (or individuals) as well as funding agencies.

This utility makes such efforts very important. However, it is often found that not all assessment efforts by CSOs reach their logical conclusion, in terms of influencing mainstream understanding and actual reports of damage assessment. This is necessary in order to ensure that adequate assistance reaches to all needy DAPs in timely manner. Influencing the mainstream's assessment is also necessary to build pressure on the government agencies to take progressive actions in DM.

Often, the CSOs adopt different formats and different methods for damage assessment. Sometimes the methods used by CSOs are found to be less systematic and the resultant data is often inconsistent, difficult to collate, and often unreliable. These problems make it more difficult to use such data for regional or state-level advocacy.

2.1.3 Mobilization of Funds for Relief and Distribution of Relief

This is again a very important contribution of CSOs from the point of view of DAPs, especially on the occasions when the government administration fails in this regard. However, the distribution of relief by CSOs often gets delayed. The main reason is the time-lag between information and action. In the case of the large and physically-concentrated disasters, efforts by CSOs to mobilize funds often prove inadequate. Another problem is duplication of beneficiaries and of relief items. Further, the relief package is not properly designed or, in some cases, some items are irrelevant or useless in the given ground conditions.

2.1.4 Mobilization and Channelizing of Funds for Rehabilitation

Many civil society organizations have done exemplary work in this area, especially at the time of massive, large-scale disasters. However, in many cases, efforts by smaller civil society organizations, which are less organized or have low professional capabilities, encounter such as delay, inadequacy, or irrelevance to local conditions. This is often true in the case of less spectacular disasters (though the plight of DAPs is equally serious).

Majority of the CSOs take one of the above-mentioned approaches. However, some CSOs do undertake innovative efforts, but the number of such innovative efforts is very limited. This critical analysis of the role of CSOs in DM is in no way aimed at undermining importance of such innovative efforts by progressive CSOs.

2.2 Advantages of the Conventional Efforts by CSOs

There are many advantages and strengths of the conventional efforts made by CSOs, Describing all these is not possible due to the space limitations. Hence, two such advantages are presented here just as examples.

2.2.1 Success in Reaching with Direct benefits to Most Needy DAPs

Efforts by CSOs made in systematic manner and in collaboration with local CSO are often more successful in reaching to the most needy DAPs (who often are most invisible) in a faster manner. Further, they have better success rate in providing the most needy DAPs with support that is appropriate for their needs and relevant to local conditions.

2.2.2 Wider Involvement of the Society

The efforts by larger and more organized CSOs often prompt and inspire smaller and informal CSOs to get into action. Such wide-scale participation of CSOs in DM-related efforts lead to involvement of the society at large in DM efforts. Such wider societal involvement, in turn, has many direct and indirect benefits. For example, increased awareness, understanding, and consciousness about such disasters and about the plight of DAPs create opportunities for CSOs to exert positive public pressure on the government for progressive changes in DM.

2.3 Limitations and Gaps in Conventional Efforts

There are many advantages, positive outcomes, and strengths in teh conventions interventions. However, the conventional interventions also suffer from various problems and limitations.

2.3.1 Absence of Proactive and Continuous Efforts

The conventional efforts of most CSOs in disaster management are restricted to activities they undertake only after outbreak of a disaster. There is hardly any follow-up activities like, analyzing experiences of the current and past disasters and drawing lessons for future. In absence of such efforts, most CSOs fail to work for maintaining continuous pressure in the post-disaster period on government agencies. Such continuous pressure is required for ensuring that: (a) government makes socially, politically, and financially progressive changes in DM policies and procedures, and (b) government takes effective actions to prevent the disaster (if possible) and / or to mitigate the impact of unavoidable disasters.

2.3.2 Narrow Scope of Conventional Interventions

Interventions by most CSOs are restricted to initial rescue and relief measures. Very few CSOs,—which are big, well-established, devoted solely to the work related to disaster management—participate in rehabilitating the DAPs. However, most conventional efforts do not touch upon the preparedness, prevention, or mitigation aspects of DM.

2.3.3 Lower CSO Response to Small-scale and Less Spectacular Disasters

Very often, the intensity of operations by civil society organizations depends on the scale and perceived impact of the disaster. Disasters which are smaller in scale, impact less area, not perceived as massive, and are not spectacular, fail to attract significant response from civil society. This is true especially for international CSOs. The medium and small-scale disasters, get less attention, though they create equally debilitating impact by destroying livelihoods and / or increasing vulnerability of the livelihoods of disadvantaged sections. This is mostly because of the critical role played by the publicity that is given by the media to the large-scale and spectacular disasters.

Lower response by CSOs could also be seen in the case of gradual and chronic (or slow-acting) disasters. These ‘slow-acting’ disasters are less conspicuous, receive less media attentions, and fail to prompt CSOs into action, unless they turn into some sudden catastrophic disastrous event. Example in this case is the ‘slow-acting’ disasters like drought or the recent suicides by farmers in the states like Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. Often, these ‘slow-acting’ disasters are rooted in chronic causes that are outcome of complex political economy.

2.3.4 Lack of Coordination

As soon as a disaster strikes, a number of local, state, and international CSOs get into action. Very often, these efforts are not coordinated and this leads to problems such as duplication of efforts in terms providing same relief items to same DAPs. The lack of coordination also leads to failure to put up a joint front to exert pressure on the local and state-level polity and administration to take appropriate actions as well as progressive decisions.

2.3.5 Lack of Influence on the Polity

It is a general experience that the CSOs wield very limited influence on thinking, decisions, and actions of members of the local and state-level political establishment. In fact, often there are not many efforts by CSOs to establish contact and communication with the members of the state legislatures. Infact, the state legislative processes provide vital spaces for influencing the governance of DM, which can be effectively utilized by CSOs. In absence of such efforts, the politicians, enjoying unrestrained power, tend to use the legislative spaces for partisan politics.

2.3.6 Lack of Influence on Administration

Apart from few exceptions, it was found that the CSOs were also not able to exert substantial influence on the local or state level administration. For example, even when the damage assessment by the government was found to have many serious lacuna, the local NGO in Konkan lacked wherewithal to influence the government to undertake

reassessment. The state-level CSOs also were not able to influence the state administration and force it to evolve comprehensive policies or to take appropriate and timely actions.

2.3.7 Limitations on Building Public Pressure

Disasters are dispersed spatially as well as temporally. This fact coupled with the episodic occurrences of disasters make it difficult to maintain public pressures (especially in period after the disasters) for effective implementation of pre-disaster measures. This is true at both the state and local levels. At the local levels, typical action programs employed by local political organizations to pressurize local administration (such as demonstrations or *morchas*) get limited response from DAPs and also have very limited impact.

2.3.8 Lack of Influence on Private Sector

Many DM operations, especially in the prevention and mitigation arenas require cooperation from the private or business sector. For example, private companies from insurance sector can play important role in mitigation strategies. Similarly, the operations of the private companies, especially in infrastructure and constructions sectors, have close connection with the objective of prevention of disasters (especially man-made). However, the CSOs have very little influences on thinking and actions of the private businesses.

3.0 Challenges and Opportunities Created by Changing Macro-Reality

As mentioned before, in continuous like India, the perspectives, priorities, policies and practices of government agencies are changing at a very fast speed. Underlying these are changes in political economy at global, national and state levels. In the DM sector, these macro-level changes have a significant impact. Two such changes need to be considered seriously. First, the wider economic reforms and the policies of liberalization, privatization, and globalization (hence further referred to as LPG) do pose new challenges. Second, the efforts by the nation-level government to bring in more systematic legal, policy, and institutional framework, also are important in this regard.

3.1 Problems and Challenges Created due to Economic Reforms

3.1.1 Shrinking Governments' Role in Public Services

In the era of economic reforms, the policies of LPG have created a new environment wherein it is considered desirable to drastically reduce the size, scope, and expenditure of the government. This has given rise to pressure on reduction in overall government expenditure, resulting in lower allocation of resources to activities like DM, which do not carry the support of political heavy-weights. Further, the current discourse and popular rhetoric on LPG (that legitimized less active role of government) reduces expectations of people and media from government, allowing increased complacency in government agencies as well as acting as a demotivating factor.

3.1.2 Insulation of Government from Accountability

It has been the experience in almost all sectors that there is increasing tendency on the part of the political and administrative functionaries in the government and legislature to insulate themselves from accountability towards the larger public interest and public causes. This is also evident when it comes to DM and DAPs. Unfortunately, these

functionaries seem to have achieved considerable success in insulating themselves, with advent of LPG policies.

Lack of action by civil society certainly aggravates this problem. However, the main reason underlying this successful insulation is the abject failure of the only major mechanism for ensuring accountability of the government, viz., the electoral process. This poses a challenge before the civil society to create new ways to ensure accountability of government in effective manner.

3.1.3 Increased Risk of Disaster

With LPG policies gathering speed, heavy investments are being made in industrial, infrastructure, and urban sectors, especially in the hitherto neglected rural areas. This is leading to unprecedented changes in the local, regional, and global ecosystems, which, in turn, significantly increase the risks of different types of man-made disasters.

Unfortunately, the different vulnerable sections of society—who are normally bypassed by the ‘developmental’ gains of LPG policies—are often the worst victims of the disasters.

3.1.4 Cruel Disparity in Compensation

The increasing disparity in the society caused by LPG poses a new paradox before DM. While the vulnerable sections are getting more pauperized at most places, the well-to-do sections are increasing their consumption and acquiring more and more assets. As a result, when the disaster strikes, the monetary value of losses suffered by the vulnerable sections is much lower than the values of losses suffered by well-to-do sections. The well-to-do sections also have more ‘voice’ and ‘agency’. Hence, these sections are able to secure higher priority in DM and corner larger amounts for compensation. This, in the context of reduced allocation of government funds to DM, results in elbowing out of the vulnerable sections from the race for getting government assistance, though these sections suffer from acute deprivations and strife as a result of disasters.

3.2 Problems and Challenges Created due to New DM Act

3.2.1 Increased Bureaucratic Expenditure

There is a concern that the cost of operations and maintenance of the new institutions and authorities created by the new act and the new policies would lead to increased burden on the scarce resources available for disaster management. The most serious concern is that these management costs may reduce the actual expenditure on relief and comprehensive rehabilitation. This, in turn, may affect the DAPs from the vulnerable sections of society disproportionately, as they have least influence on governments.

3.2.2 Increased Top-Down Working

The act and policies would create a hierarchical institutional framework of DM authorities and executive bodies, starting from national, state to district, block, and village level. It is feared that this would lead to increased bureaucratization and a hierarchical top-down approach in DM related activities. This may also prove to be a new barrier to acceptance of the more grounded and bottoms-up approach in DM, which is propounded by civil society organizations.

3.3 Opportunities Created by Changing Macro-Reality

3.3.1 Increased Systematization, Accountability, and Motivation

The new act and the policies are bringing in systematic policies and elaborate institutional structures exclusively for DM at the central and state level governments. This can be seen as the opportunity for making the government agencies more accountable on issues in DM. The policy and institutional push given by the central government is definitely an opportunity for the CSOs to start working on making the polity and administration accountable on DM. There is also a possibility that this policy push would generate interest and enthusiasm in the administration, especially at the local-level, for progressive actions. This interest may be either out of compulsion (created by the well-laid-out policies and rules) or even out of genuine interest created by training and sensitization.

3.3.2 Benefits of Increased Capacities

The DM act is aimed at strengthening of institutional framework right from national, state, to district-levels. The strengthening of government institutions is expected to lead to increase in capacities of these government institutions. Such enhancement of capacities would, in turn, lead to increased effectiveness and efficiency in DM. This is especially true for capabilities required for mobilizing, attracting, and managing larger funds for DM from within or from outside the government. Allocation of large funds to DM will be beneficial to the sector as a whole, but, more specifically for vulnerable sections among DAPs, if these funds are properly channelized. Increased availability of funds will also make it possible to work towards strengthening pre-disaster systems, especially for disaster preparedness, mitigation, and prevention.

3.3.3 Increased Acceptance of Participation of Civil Society

Broadly, there is an increasing acceptance of the principle of 'civil society participation in governance' in sectors like water, electricity, and other public services. For example, in the electricity sector, the new law and policies provide many critical spaces for intervention and participation by and also give considerable authority to civil society organizations. These spaces for participation are further supported by provisions related to transparency and accountability.

Considering the importance of people's participation in DM, the same principles will be applied in the DM sector in future. A somewhat similar attempt has been made through the UNDP-supported 'participatory DM program' implemented in selected districts in India. The program tries to instill peoples' participation in DM by the government machinery, though there are serious lacunas in implementation of the program at the village level.

4.0 New Roles for CSOs in DM

The CSOs will have to stand up and take up new roles in order to address the concerns reflected in the challenges and problems discussed above. The main challenges in DM could be summarized as below:

- Lack of Influence of CSOs on Polity, Administration, Private Sector
- Lack of Effective Public Pressure on Mainstream Agencies

- Lack of Coordinated, Proactive, and Long-Term Interventions by CSOs
- Shrinking of Role of Government in Public Services
- Failure of Indirect Accountability Mechanisms
- Increased Risk of Disasters Induced by Increased Urbanization and Industrialization
- High cost, Top-down Government Authorities and Institutions

4.1 Key Strategies Underlying the New Role for CSOs

The analysis presented above requires deep thinking on the new roles that CSOs should take in the DM sector. Outlining the broad strategies that will guide practical actions could be the first step in this direction.

4.1.1 Increased Attention to System-Level Improvements

Provision of direct benefits to DAPs in form of relief and rehabilitation has been the most important contribution of CSOs in the field of DM. The effectiveness and efficiency of contribution in this area can be enhanced further by paying attention to improvements in the system of operations in the DM sector as whole. These systemic improvements should be focused more particularly on improvement in the functioning of the public (and private) agencies involved in DM.

The attempt to institutionalize (in other words to bring more systematization) various systems of DM at the government level, through the new laws and policies, will provide a good entry point for CSOs to start their efforts for system-level improvement. These efforts for system-level governance improvements will not bear fruits in a short period; rather, it would require a long-term involvement of CSOs in such efforts. Such involvement may not demand high intensity of efforts required at the time of disaster, but the perseverance would be the key.

4.1.2 Mix of Proactive and Reactive Work

One of the key strategies underlying the new role of CSOs will be to arrive at an appropriate mix of reactive and proactive efforts. Emergency work in response to the disaster is certainly the most important and urgent aspect of work of CSOs in DM. But this reactive work should be accompanied with proactive efforts in the pre-disaster period. should be focused on two critical aspects of DM. First, they should focus on enhancing capabilities and systems for preparedness, mitigation, and prevention of disaster. Second, the focus of proactive efforts should also be on ensuring effective, efficient, and sensitive response in the aftermath of a disaster especially from the local and state level polity and administration. Such proactive work would require consistent and continuous efforts. Consistent and proactive work will enable the CSOs to deal more effectively with the ‘slow-acting’ disasters like drought, that often require gradual but consistent interventions.

4.1.3 Increasing Influence on Governance in DM

To address the failure of indirect accountability mechanisms, it has become necessary for CSOs to start intervening in direct manner in the governance of DM. Accountable governance in DM sector could be interpreted in terms of discharge of the following three key governance functions in accountable manner—viz., decision making, implementation, and regulation—performed by the agencies involved in DM.

In the post-LPG era, the government is withdrawing especially from its role as the primary custodian of the public interest in public affairs. In this context, it is all the more important for CSOs that they start taking up the responsibility of protecting the larger public interest in all public matters, including DM. This would require building core strengths necessary for public interest advocacy and proactive and informed interventions in governance.

The new top-down institutional mechanisms being developed by government in DM provide new challenge for exerting influence and pressure on the government to improve the governance in DM. Further increase in influence of CSOs in governance functions at the government level would also enable the CSOs to indirectly influence the policies and plans of private business actors.

4.1.4 Multi-stakeholder Partnerships

It has been the experience that DM is a highly varied and multi-dimensional sector that would require contributions from diverse actors. Hence, in future, the success of DM would also depend on emergence of diverse, complimentary, and synergetic multi-stakeholder partnerships in DM. The CSOs can play a vital role in this regard, benefiting from their inclusive and participatory mode of working, and agility in maintaining dialogue with diverse actors. The key feature of such partnerships would be the multi-directional flows of information, and knowledge.

4.1.5 Mix of Facilitative and Adversarial Strategies

The new policy and institutional framework, being adopted by the government, does provide certain spaces for intervention in governance of DM. In one approach, these spaces can be used for collaborative work with government agencies, with the objective of playing a facilitative role in improving governance functions as well as improving performance of these agencies. CSOs could be the best catalysts playing meditative role between the government and the society at large.

However, even in the current policy framework, the direct spaces for civil society to play such a facilitative role are limited. Hence, in some situations, the CSOs will have to take adversarial positions and attempt to put pressure on the government to increase the spaces of civil society interventions or to ensure improved performance. Thus, the challenge before the CSOs is to maintain an optimum mix of facilitative and adversarial efforts and strategies.

4.1.6 Analysis and Knowledge Based Work

The new era of LPG has brought with it a package comprising a new discourse, commensurate popular rhetoric, and related prescriptions at the policy as well as practice levels. The emphasis (at least at rhetorical level) in this package is on 'objectivity' and 'rationality' in governance, based on sound knowledge and analysis. It is often argued that the underlying interpretation of the 'objectivity' and 'rationality' is too narrow and often goes against the larger public interest. It is also argued that this package, emphasizing on 'objectivity' and 'rationality' has also resulted in emasculation of the traditional means of voicing public concerns such as petitions, appeals, or public demonstrations.

This makes it necessary that, in order to ensure protection of the larger public interest, the same instruments of knowledge and analysis will have to be used, if CSOs want to be effective. While the knowledge and analysis-base created by CSOs will have to be

methodologically sound, it will also have to be grounded in the reality of people, especially the most vulnerable sections of the society. This is necessary if CSOs would like to make forceful representation of the concerns, expectations, and aspirations of the vulnerable sections.

Hence, in the new scenario, the CSOs have a huge task of developing relevant, strategic, sound, and grounded analysis and knowledge base pertaining to various operations in DM. Further, it is an equally challenging task to effectively use this analysis and knowledge base to influence the mainstream actors. Such knowledge-intensive interventions will be of significant importance, as we realize the limitations of putting pressure on government through traditional mobilization strategies, specifically in the context of DM.

4.2 Some Suggested Practical Actions

Based on the findings related to the key dimensions of the new role for CSOs in the DM sector, we propose some practical actions in this regards.

4.2.1 Wider Participatory Process to Analyze New Changes in DM

The current emphasis on creating new policy and institutional frameworks in DM seem to be coming from initiative of the national or international-level actors. As a result, the government agencies and civil society institutions at the state level and below are not even aware of the new policies, institutions, legal provisions, and the rationale underlying all these.

This requires many practical responses in near or immediate terms. First, it is necessary to make civil society aware and informed on the impending changes in DM (the new laws, the new institutions, and new policies) and the underlying rationale. This should be followed by discussions to analyze these changes and the rationale from the perspective of different social actors. This should also be accompanied with the grounded analysis necessary to opine on these issues with due authority and confidence. In other words, efforts should be made to initiate the process of participative policy analysis and, simultaneously, the process of wider dissemination of the outcomes of the analysis and discussion.

This, then, should be followed by efforts to put pressure on the state governments to take cognizance of the findings of the participatory analysis as well as the outcomes of the efforts to view the new development from different standpoints.

4.2.2 Efforts to Create New Spaces for CSO Interventions

Our preliminary analysis suggests that though the central act attempts at setting new institutions and their duties, the provision in the act are very lenient when it comes to specifying and exacting accountability from these institutions. Also the act is found to be weak in providing direct spaces for civil society to intervene in the governance of DM.

At this stage, the new frameworks and institutions are still in nascent stage and yet concerted to crystallize fully. This provides a very valuable window of opportunity for CSOs to make efforts to include in the new setup provisions for direct accountability that the CSOs and citizens could utilize. Simultaneously, efforts should also be made to bring in provisions for transparency and public participation that would be crucial for effective utilization of the provisions for accountability.

4.2.3 CSO Intervention in Spaces Available in New Frameworks

The DM act currently does not provide direct spaces of intervention by CSOs. Nevertheless, various activities could be undertaken to ensure that the actions required by the act and the policies are complied to. Two examples, in this regard, will be helpful.

- The current provisions require annual updating of the DM plans at the state and district levels. Civil society organizations could make efforts to gain opportunities for participation in the meeting and other processes that are expected to be undertaken for this updating. If there is no positive response from the concerned authorities, CSOs could use the media pressure to force the authorities to acknowledge their positions and suggestions.
- Civil society organizations can undertake effort to continuously monitor the decisions and actions of the government to check for compliance or fulfillment of the promises made at the time of the disaster. This could be accompanied with public education campaign to build public pressure on these issues. In such monitoring and public education efforts, many tools could be used.

4.2.4 Developing and Maintaining Multi-stakeholders Partnerships

As mentioned before, developing multi-stakeholder partnerships at different levels could be an effective strategy. The CSOs have capabilities to take lead in facilitating such multi-stakeholder partnerships. The experience is that it is logistically and operationally difficult to keep alive such partnerships, especially when it comes to concrete actions, mainly because of the differences in the priorities of the stakeholders involved. Hence, the main challenge before CSOs is to maintain a consistency of such efforts and to evolve different actions groups based on the different priorities and interests of the participants in the partnership. Such different actions-groups could be developed to handle the issues in different arenas like policy, technology, media, disaster response, and mitigation-prevention. The challenge before CSOs is also to maintain complementarity in working of these groups, so that there is synergy at the operational level. Such partnerships will enable establishment of live linkages between government and non-government agencies like CSOs, activists, academic-research institutions, and media. Absence of such linkages is one of the major barriers to improving governance in DM.

4.2.5 Activities for Developing Knowledge-base

The efforts for developing alternative knowledge (and analysis)-bases to promote the larger public interest and the interest of the disadvantaged sections of society could be guided by two perspectives. The first perspective—called the 'Sustainable Livelihoods Perspective'—focuses on theme of 'the guarantee of satisfaction of all the livelihoods needs of the disadvantaged even at the time of disaster'. This theme (or this guarantee) is considered as the priority and primary objective of all the DM efforts. This perspective mainly pertains to the content of the DM related efforts and policies.

The second perspective—which is called as the 'People-Centered Governance Perspectives'—focuses on the objective of enhancing control of people and DAPs on the three governance functions in the DM sector as a whole. This perspective pertains to the process aspect of the efforts for DM.

With these perspectives in mind, the practical actions for building knowledge-base could be designed using the following two approaches.

- State-level CSOs can work on developing capabilities of local CSOs in collecting local data, analyzing it from their own perspectives, and coming out with relevant findings.
- State-level CSOs can also work for facilitating collaborative knowledge-building processes and efforts (with other stakeholders) such as joint data collection efforts, collaborative workshops for analysis of the data, and consultations for drawing and sharing findings and conclusions.

Some crucial issues that such efforts for knowledge-building could focus on are: ecological roots of disasters, relationship between urban-industrial development and disasters, assessment of the government assistance, assessment of the special needs and demands of vulnerable sections of DAPs, participative methods in disaster monitoring and damage assessments.

4.2.6 Using Spaces for Legislative Advocacy

In our action-research, we found that there are some very useful spaces for interventions by civil society organizations in the state legislative processes. Sound knowledge-base and different products presenting the outcome of these efforts are very useful in utilizing these spaces for legislative advocacy.

However, these efforts should be wary of two dangers. First, the CSOs should be able to retain its autonomy and not become a pawn in the partisan politics. Second, CSOs should actively discourage expectations of the political activist for quid-pro-quo.

It is our experience that the many politicians see value of independent, grounded, and sound analysis. The responses from such politicians often lead to increased visibility and recognition of the CSOs' perspective on DM.

4.2.7 Developing and Documenting Innovative Practices

The DM sector is comparatively new and is still under development. As a result, even the mainstream actors are finding some problems irresolvable and are open to new and innovative solutions at policy and practice levels. If such new and innovative ideas are found to be useful, then there is good chance of their up-scaling and mainstreaming.

CSOs can play a proactive and facilitative role in this regard, by identifying, documenting, and disseminating such new and innovative ideas. There also is need to facilitate development of innovations by nurturing and testing new ideas in DM. For example, there is considerable need for new and innovative ideas in areas like participatory methodologies for damage assessment, rehabilitation planning, and mitigation-prevention planning.

5.0 Summary

The conventional interventions by CSOs in relief and rehabilitation operations are important, however, the paper suggests that CSOs should expand port-folio of their interventions. It identifies the challenges as well as opportunities created by: (a) the new policies coming out of the wider economic reform process, and (b) the new policy, legal, and institutional frameworks being adopted in the DM sector. The paper argues that in this

changing macro-reality, the CSOs will also have to prepare themselves for taking up new roles for ensuring effective, efficient, and sensitive DM policies and practices.

The paper analyses the requirements of these new roles. It discusses some key strategies that could be adopted while playing these roles and suggests some practical actions under these new roles.

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