
UNIT 13 PLANNING

Structure

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Planning in the Context of Disaster Preparedness: Meaning and Concept
- 13.3 Short-term and Long-term Planning
- 13.4 Role of Planner
- 13.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 13.6 Key Words
- 13.7 References and Further Readings
- 13.8 Answers To Check Your Progress Exercises

13.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this Unit, you should be able to :

- describe the meaning and concept of planning in the context of disaster preparedness;
- differentiate between short-term and long-term planning; and
- discuss the role of a planner in the process of preparing for disasters.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

The word 'planning' generally covers two entirely different approaches in the context of disasters. One is that of land-use or physical planning. It involves the regulation of the development process in urban and rural areas by means such as imposing limits on building heights and the use of land, the amount of land that can be built upon, etc. In urban areas that are declared to be 'development areas', laws and development regulations are accepted and are generally recognized as being helpful. However, outside the urban areas and especially in the rural flood plains, zoning and planning law proves difficult to enforce. If it does exist, it is mostly in the form of positive direction, rather than precise law, setting out 'what ought to be'. In such cases, planning is very careful because it raises awareness and sets certain standards.

The other form of planning relates to advocacy planning. It relates to policies and proposals. In this approach, the planning team acts as catalytic agents, presenting choices to various organizations like local self-government, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and community based organizations, while seeking support for that approach which seems to bring most benefits to a wide range of beneficiaries at a cost that is affordable.

Planning is advantageous because it results in clear allocation of responsibilities and consequently improves coordination between agencies. Accordingly, the planning process should never be regarded as one in which some specialist or team acts in isolation. The planning process essentially needs to be action-oriented, to involve a wide range of people and organizations and to produce an end result which has the agreement and support of all those involved in the common objective of dealing with the disasters in their areas of responsibility.

13.2 PLANNING IN THE CONTEXT OF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS: MEANING AND CONCEPT

The purpose of planning is to anticipate future situations and requirements and to make provision for the same. This will ensure the application of effective and co-ordinated counter-measures. This is a useful definition of planning for disaster management officials because it indicates the wide nature of an requirements for counter-disaster planning. In other words, Planning is not confined merely to preparedness for and response to specific disaster events. It should cater, as far as possible, for all stages of the disaster cycle from advance preparation to relief and rehabilitation. Therefore, requirements for planning involve a considerable range of activities dictating a flexibility of approach.

National Development

Many countries including India gear national development to a series of time-period plans; for example, Five Year Plans. This kind of a system provides considerable flexibility for adjustment to unscheduled or unexpected events, like disaster situations. Thus, many nations include disaster planning aspects in their overall planning cycles. This approach of incorporating disaster mitigation planning into the developmental planning process has been found to be cost-effective and result oriented.

These days, management of the environment rates high in national considerations. Since many disaster events are environmentally related, there is a strong case for linking disaster to environment, as far as national planning is concerned. Consequently, a key planning point is that wherever appropriate, disaster planning is linked to the development and environment considerations in the national plan.

Prevention

The possible range of prevention measures is quite large because of the nature of different disasters. At one end of the prevention range, the construction of flood control structures could involve extensive effort and very large amounts of money. At the other end of the prevention range, controlled burning in forest areas, prior to a high risk season, in order to prevent big fires from starting comes closer to mitigation, or even preparedness.

Planning for these different contingencies, therefore tends to fall into different categories. For example, a complex and costly flood prevention system could reasonably be expected to come within the category of national development, while the case of controlled burning would be more likely to fall within a specific annual disaster management programme, which could also be usefully included in a disaster preparedness/response programme.

Mitigation

If the term mitigation, or prevention/mitigation is taken as mainly including structural and non-structural measures designed to reduce the effects of disaster when they occur, it would seem appropriate for such measures to be applied as a series of programmes or regulations, rather than as plans. For instance, aspects such as building codes, land use regulations and safety codes for transport systems would fit more appropriately into a programme or regulation category. However, as with measures of prevention, it would also be reasonable to include appropriate references in disaster preparedness/response plans. For example, the fact that wind-resistant factors had been built into domestic houses would have some bearing on disaster response management decisions relating to possible evacuation or temporary movement to safe havens.

The combined categories of preparedness and response generally constitute the most widely used basis for counter-disaster plans especially those which might be called Action Plans. This is because so much of the effectiveness of response depends on good preparedness. In some cases, the preparedness/response plan may be called a national or state disaster response plan, as distinct from a separate plan designed to deal with recovery.

Recovery

There are various planning options that can be used for recovery. Sometimes, a separate plan is utilized, so that two main plans exist, a disaster response plan and a disaster recovery plan. However, in some cases the agencies prefer to take a more flexible approach and deal with recovery through arrangements which, depending on circumstances, are specific to each disaster event.

The planning process usually involves consideration of a wide range of disaster-related matters in order to decide what is eventually included in the plan. However, not all aspects will be related to all levels of plans. Neither will all aspects assume equal importance in different plans.

Planning guidance cuts across the projects of private developers and the functions of government agencies. Planning related activities command popular support when they are seen to be implementing a good public information policy to be directed towards achieving public good and people's access to amenities and services. A high level of public consultation and transparency will ensure public support. This will ensure that the plans which reduce vulnerability to natural disasters command public confidence and support.

13.3 SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM PLANNING

Mitigation is defined as "measures aimed at reducing the impact of a natural or man-made disaster on a nation or community". The basic assumption is that, whilst it may be possible to prevent some disaster effects, other effects will persist. The concept of mitigation recognizes this and maintains that the application of certain measures can moderate or reduce disaster effects.

An effective approach to reducing risks and achieving disaster mitigation has long-term and short-term goals. Long-term goals are either an integral part of the national/regional/local disaster management plan or are set after a major disaster with a view that, should a similar disaster strike again, the population will be well-prepared and able to cope with it. Long-term planning, therefore, involves measures for prevention, mitigation and rehabilitation.

Prevention measures are those that are aimed at impeding the occurrence of a disaster even though it may not be possible to avoid the event that creates the hazard. Construction of a dam or embankment to control floods arising from heavy rains is an example of a preventive measure. Another example is the controlled burning - off in a bushfire-prone area.

The nature of disaster prevention is such that the measures involved, usually need to be implemented from senior levels of government. For example, the population of a single community or area is unlikely to be able to institute a major flood-prevention project. Sometimes, Legislation is also resorted to, to implement measures of prevention, like in case of mandatory building codes.

Many factors which apply to prevention also apply to mitigation. Mitigation can be introduced within the three diverse contexts of reconstruction, new investment and the existing environment. Each presents different opportunities to introduce safety measures. Mitigation measures are complex and interdependent, and they involve widespread responsibility. They are most effective if safety measures are spread through a wide diversity of integrated activities.

Simple examples of mitigation measures are :

- 1) adoption of land-use planning and development controls to restrict the activities in high risk areas;
- 2) economic diversification to allow losses in one sector to be offset by increased output in other sectors;
- 3) changing crop cycles so that crops mature and are harvested before the onset of the disaster season; and
- 4) retrofitting houses to withstand cyclones and earthquakes (reconstruction and rehabilitation).

Long-term planning proposals generally face a lot of opposition, at least in the initial stages. These may be a long-standing acceptance of disaster risks by governments and communities, who may feel that traditional measures, taken over many years, are adequate. Also, Long-term measures tend to be ruled out, perhaps without a detailed analysis of cost-benefit and other factors. Higher priorities given to other national programmes sometimes totally preclude the consideration of disaster preventive measures. Considerations affecting disaster prevention and mitigation may be given limited priority in national development plans. So disaster-related measures do not receive adequate or appropriate attention in national planning.

During its initial period of implementation, a mitigation or prevention-related strategy needs recognition and leadership from a high governmental and city management level, if it is to be sustained through a network of implementing agencies. A long-term programme also includes periodic reviews and renewals of policy statements, professionals engaged in mitigation work and public education programmes. In a long-term plan, a major objective is to involve all sectors of society in some degree in contributing to the formulation of appropriate mitigation measures, and in the execution of work where possible. Some sectors will be involved in policy formulation at the national level, others at the level of urban neighbourhood and local communities known to be at high risk.

Long-term planning, therefore, involves multiple agencies, each agency doing some specific work related to reducing risk in their area of concern. Such goals are incorporated into the agency's current priority list. Short-term planning, on the other hand, consists of measures to deal with disaster situations immediately at hand. These measures may be initiated either immediately after a disaster strikes (reactionary) or precluding a disaster situation (proactive).

Reactionary measures are those taken immediately after a disaster strikes, for example, after an earthquake. In this case, the planning process is triggered off once the occurrence of the tragedy is known. Immediate measures initiated in such cases are:

- i) provision of temporary shelters for the affected,
- ii) ensuring adequate supply of safe water food and medicines,
- iii) provision of sanitary facilities, and
- iv) maintenance of law and order

For this purpose, a single agency is formed, though many other bodies may also be involved in the relief work. The central agency does the work of determining priorities, coordinating the relief and rescue operations, directing the supplies, etc. The agency works either according to an existing government plan or through an emergency plan formulated for the occasion.

The Short-term post-disaster planning process continues till such a time as some semblance of normalcy is restored in the area - normally till the services are functional. After that, the long-term rehabilitation and reconstruction work starts.

Proactive short-term planning is initiated when there is a warning issued that a disaster is about to strike. For example, modern technology has made it possible to track the path of cyclones so that warnings can be issued well in advance to the residents of the area where they are likely to strike. Once the warning has been issued, the pro-active planning mechanism swings into action and efforts are launched to evacuate people out of harm's way. They are transferred to temporary storm shelters where they stay till the danger is past. Evacuation is also done when there is a danger of floods. Periodic inspection and monitoring, e.g., checking of embankments for breaches prior to the onset of monsoons and drills for officials in simulated emergency situations are all a part of the short-term planning strategy.

Disasters can be met with effectively only if a judicious combination of long-term and short-term planning is adopted. While the results of short-term planning are more apparent and faster, the ultimate reduction in damages from disasters is achieved only through long-term planning.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answers.
 ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the unit.

1) Differentiate between short-term and long-term planning.

2) Give simple examples of mitigation measures.

13.4 ROLE OF PLANNER

It is very important for the planner, throughout the planning process to keep certain critical points in consideration. Being a person trained in a wide range of abilities ranging from administrative procedures to developmental perspectives, he or she occupies a unique position as being able to perceive, from various standpoints, conflicting issues that might arise from time to time. Such a skill comes in most handy to settle the contentions of differing professionals and for varied interest groups..

The planner has to take on the responsibility of keeping the approved aim of the plan in clear focus. Needless to say, the plan has to be evolved in response to the user needs and should have the maximum support base in the community. The plan should also have formal approval of Government or any authority designated on its behalf.

The planning process is a co-operative process. There should always be full consultation with all concerned, particularly to ensure that mutual agreement is reached on responsibilities designated within the plan. This consultative process is best carried out, from a practical as well as psychological viewpoint, by the planners going to see the key individuals and agencies concerned, and not vice-versa.

For best success, the planner has to ensure transparency at every stage and periodic progress reports should be made public indicating the physical and financial targets and achievements.

The planning process, and the plan itself, should include provision for legal authorization, thus making the plan a lawful instrument of the government. It is generally recommended that this should happen whether or not disaster legislation exists.

Obviously, the responsibility carried by disaster management planners is an onerous one. If the planners get the plan wrong, then the repercussions can be very severe and widespread, possibly involving the loss of many lives. On the other hand, accurate and meticulous planning not only produces an effective plan, it also provides the focus for successful overall disaster management.

13.5 LET US SUM UP

Planning is one of the most efficient tools available to deal with disasters. Planning can be applied in the physical aspects like land-use and infrastructure as well as in its advocacy form, which involves policies and proposals. Proper planning ensures that damages from disasters are considerably reduced in the long term. It also prepares people and officials to cope better in disaster situations. In the process of the preparation of a disaster-preparedness plan, the planner plays the crucial role of coordinating with the administrative authorities as well as among the different interest groups involved. On him lies the responsibility of keeping the ultimate aim and format in mind and guiding the draft-plan preparation process accordingly. A judicious combination of long-term and short-term planning measures is the best possible manner in which to achieve the mitigation of disasters. Long-term and short-term planning techniques should ideally take into account cost-benefit considerations.

13.6 KEY WORDS

- Advocacy** : Promoting the cause (of disaster planning)
- Physical Planning** : Making arrangements for real goods and services required for completion of a project.
- National Development Plan** : Planning for economic development of the country. It may be short, medium or long-term.
- Retrofitting** : To equip or modify a house or a building to make it safer

13.7 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READINGS

Carter, W.N.(1991) *Disaster Management : A Disaster Manager's Handbook*, Asian Development Bank, Manila.

13.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS . EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Short-term planning consists of measures which deal with the disaster situation immediately at hand. Such measures may be initiated either immediately after a disaster or earlier to prevent/reduce its impact.
 - Long-term planning involves measures that can be implemented over a period of a few years and need large expenditure. Therefore these need periodic reviews and renewals.
- 2) Your answer should include the following points:
 - Adoption of land-use planning and development control to restrict the activities in high risk areas.
 - Economic diversification to allow losses in one sector to be offset by increased output in other sectors,
 - Changing crop cycles.
 - Retrofitting houses.