Mains Practice Question

Q. India has traditionally followed a reactive approach of disaster management. Do you think there is a need to shift our focus from the way we perceive disaster management at present? (250 words)

18 May, 2022   GS Paper 3 Disaster Management

Approach:

- Briefly describe 'disaster' and 'disaster management'
- Discuss the disadvantages of reactive approach of managing disasters
- Then talk about how disaster management can be made more holistic
- Conclude suitably

Introduction

Disaster is a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources. Primarily, disasters are triggered by natural hazards or are human-induced, or as a result from a combination of both. Whereas, Disaster Management can be defined as the organization and management of resources
and responsibilities for dealing with all humanitarian aspects of emergencies, in particular preparedness, response and recovery in order to lessen the impact of disasters.

The disaster management approach in India traditionally focuses on relief and rehabilitation in post disaster scenario also known as a reactive approach.

Body

The major disadvantages of reactive approach to disaster management are:

- Enhanced loss of lives and material: Reactive approaches focus on relief and immediate rehabilitation and ignore preventive disaster reduction policies. Such an approach causes higher amount of loss of lives and material.
- Absence of adaptive approach to different types of disasters: For different types of disasters, response measures may vary which are not possible to suitably incorporate in reactive approach to disaster management. Reactive approach is like 'one size fits all' approach to disaster management.
- Absence of Early Warning Systems in reactive approach causes delayed response to disaster. The provision of timely and reliable information, through identified institutions, allows the community and the government machinery to reduce the risk and be adequately prepared to face the hazard.

Current position in disaster management reflects a post-mortem type approach and little attention has been paid to disaster risk reduction strategies that have the potential to save thousands of lives by adoption of simple preventive measures.

By following these preventive measures we can shift our focus from the way we perceive disaster management in present times and handle it in a better way:

- Coherent disaster risk reduction strategies and a 'culture of prevention' should be identified and suitably adopted to curb the growing phenomenon of disaster related loss of lives and property.
- Disaster management should include the 'systematic development and application of policies, strategies and practices to minimize vulnerabilities, hazards and the unfolding disaster impacts throughout a society, in the broad context of sustainable development'. It should include appraisal of likelihood and intensity of hazards and analysis of vulnerabilities faced by the community.
- Crucial to all these efforts, however, is the existence of a 'safety culture' in societies. Inputs like education, training and capacity building play a very significant role.
- The traditional knowledge available with the community should also be used along with knowledge acquired through research and past experiences.
  It needs to be understood that such preparedness cannot be a 'one time' effort, but it is a continuous process. Disasters are no longer to be considered as occurrences that are to be managed through emergency response services. So, there is a need to foster a culture of prevention and identification of the key issues to be addressed, especially in the development process.

Conclusion

Disaster Management has to embark upon a strategy aimed at holistic human development integrating the sustainable development goals, and policies and practices that harness people's strengths instead of vulnerabilities.

PDF Refernece URL: https://www.drishtiias.com/mains-practice-question/question-1269/pnt