

**UNITED NATIONS IN ODISHA: STRATEGY FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION****Ashok Kumar Pradhan**

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Introduction

This article is a review of the role of the United Nations and its different agencies in Odisha especially in the context of disaster management. Focusing on disaster risk reduction the article explores the role of the global institution in working in close collaboration with the government and non-governmental organizations. In the first segment it discusses the broader role of the UN and in the second segment it analyses the role that UN has played in the 1999 Super Cyclone (1999) and also the following cyclones like Phailin (2013) and most recently the Hudhud (2014). The conclusion summarizes the discussion and analyses to assess the effectiveness of the UN and Odisha partnership in disaster reduction and suggests a road map for future.

UN- Vision, Mission and Role in Disaster Management

UN as it is popularly known is the abbreviation of the United Nations Organization that came into being in the aftermath of the World War-II to stop the future wars so that human civilization can survive and flourish. Established in 1945 on the coffin of the League of Nations, UN emerged as a global platform to deal with international issues and challenges initially especially in the arena of military security and prevention of war and peace building and then gradually expanded its ambit to the issues of human security, development and environment. It is in this backdrop the UN has been playing a significant role in disaster management.

UN and its agencies in India and Odisha

India was one of the first members of the UN even when it was not independent. UN later established its office in India to engage with Indian central and state governments. From the very beginning India has been at the centre of focus of UN developmental and support

activities. Despite the Cold War and ensuing power struggle and India's tilt towards Soviet Russia, the UN continued to focus on the social-economic challenges that India faced. Post-Cold War UN presence in India has increased to a greater extent and it is playing a pivotal role in India's development. United Nations office in Odisha coordinates the activity the UNO and its agencies in the state. Odisha being counted as one of the poorest in the country has attracted the UN agencies to work in close collaboration with the state government and non-government organizations.

UN's Focus of Work and Collaboration with Government and NGOs

UN and its agencies have been working in several fields of socio-economic development and empowerment of marginalized sections of the society. Table-A shows some of the key projects that the UN and its agencies are involved in.

UN Response to Disasters

The United Nations declared the last decade of the 20th century (1990-1999) as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) and initiated several strategies to strengthen disaster preparedness among the disaster prone communities. The IDNDR was followed by the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) which proposed several institutional mechanisms at the global, national regional and local levels to strengthen disaster risk reduction through greater preparedness, improved mitigation efforts and improved emergency response capacities. The Hyogo Framework For Action (2005–2015) endorsed by 168 countries at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction at Kobe, Japan during 18th to 22nd January 2005 provided a new direction to disaster management by shifting the emphasis from post-disaster preparedness to improving preparedness, mitigation efforts and emergency response capacities in disaster prone countries. It was also agreed by member states to work globally towards sustainable reduction of disaster losses in terms of lives and social, economic and environmental assets of communities and countries.

In the year 1989, all the UNDP offices in disaster and emergency prone countries were requested to set up United Nations Disaster Management Team (UNDMT). In the same year on 22 December 1989 to strengthen the mechanisms to deal with the disasters, the UN designated the second Wednesday of October to be observed as the International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction. The U.N. Resident Co-coordinator acts as the focal point for disaster reduction and mitigation as well as ensures the effective dovetailing of relief assistance into rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes. In India, the UNDMT was established in the year 1990 and plays a crucial role in emergencies. The UNDMT is

currently active in the country in disaster preparedness, response and risk reduction with respect to natural disasters.

UN Response to disasters in India

In India, UN Agencies comprise of the U.N. Disaster Management Team (UNDMT); Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) International Labour Organisation (ILO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA). United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme (WFP) and World Health Organization (WHO). In January 2009, UNAIDS (Joint UN Programme on HIV & AIDS) became a member of the United Nations Disaster Management Team (UNDMT).

UN and 1999 Super Cyclone

In 1999, after the super cyclone of Orissa, the UN and its several agencies supported the Community Based Disaster Risk Management programme in 20 blocks in Orissa which ultimately led to the formulation and implementation of the disaster risk management programme. It aimed at building a community's resistance in disaster preparedness and mitigation measures under the programme, which was implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Home Affairs and an assistance of 41 million US dollar was provided to the central government and 17 State Governments for Disaster Risk Reduction primarily at the community level in 176 multi-hazard prone districts. After the successful implantation of this DRM programme, the government of India together with UNDP have launched a new programme for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) with an outlay of 20 million US Dollar (approximately 100 crores of rupees). At present DRR programme is being implemented in 26 states and 58 cities across the country.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) under the Community Based Disaster Programme (CBDP) in the state of Orissa trained small armies of volunteers to handle vaccination, first aid, reconstruction, carcass disposal and counselling in disaster situations. This programme in CBDM was supported by the United Nations Development Programme and the Department for International Development (DFID) of the Government of United Kingdom. The Orissa State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA) became the nodal agency for implementation and monitoring of the project at the state level. It laid emphasis on disaster preparedness and mitigation. The programme operated through a small army of National United Nations Volunteers (NUNVS), trained professional drawn from the field of medicine,

agriculture, information technology and construction. The NUNVS facilitated setting up of empowered groups in each village.

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has developed a global framework for disaster reduction. This focuses on protection and risk reduction for those who are most vulnerable to disasters especially children and women. Its headquarters is located at New York, USA. According to its estimates more than 3.3 million children were affected by the Super Cyclone 1999 and an undetermined number had been separated from their families including many seriously injured. It mounted door to door campaign in cooperation with other agencies. The volunteers walked from village to village in an attempt to identify injured and/or orphaned children. It also devised an innovative strategy called "Five-R strategy" Rescue, Relief, Restoration, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction-enumerated by the government of Orissa. It also organized programmes in the areas of health, education, nutrition, water and sanitation. Countries like Netherlands, France, Germany and Spain extended generous financial help to UNICEF to carry forward its work on these and related fields. The Government of Orissa supplied text books to the school out of the funds supplied by DFID.

World Health Organization (WHO):

It aims to support countries in building capacity in risk reduction and emergency preparedness. It has been playing commendable role in preventing spreading of diseases during and after disaster. It came to Orissa as a part of an assessment team. It provided technical assistance to the health authorities throughout the initial post-disaster period. It also provided initial guidelines on the management of diseases like that of diarrhoea and cholera and malnutrition. The WHO helped the state of Orissa to set up a disease surveillance system which would raise an alarm through the early health warning system in case of an outbreak of diseases following a cyclone. The UN sponsored doctors were involved in giving training to field staff and improving the quality of medical services to deal with several contagious diseases.

The total U.N. special assistance to the victims of the cyclone amounted to almost 16 million US dollars. UNICEF contributed more than half some 9.4 million including 3 million worth of medical aid and relief supplies distributed by the end of December 1999. WFP contributed some 5.1 million worth of blended food, rice, pulses and high energy biscuits. The United Nations Population Fund (UNPF) provided assistance worth \$7000000 which included supply of reproductive health kits, support to five mobile medical units and logistic

support. The World Health Organization (WHO) contributed \$ 1000,000 towards the setting up and management of an emergency surveillance system to control the spread of epidemics and technical assistance. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the U.N. Office for Co-ordination of Humanitarian Assistance (UNOCHA) and the Government of Norway each contributed 50,000 dollars. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) allocated 420,000 dollars through its ongoing programmes on food security and water rehabilitation and an additional 15,000 dollars towards the supply of groundnut seeds for farmers in the affected areas.

The World Bank also participated in the United Nations Disaster Management Team (UNDMT) meetings with NGO's and bilateral agencies in New Delhi. Its 20 member assessment team visited Orissa in December 1999. In one of its largest release of emergency funds since KOSOVO crisis, the United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) released 3 million dollars from its emergency fund to finance programmes in health, education, nutrition, water during super cyclone UNICEF India mobilized 450 tonnes of food, medicines and emergency supplies worth more than and 1.25 million. The team conducted coordination meetings and workshops bringing together key NGOs, government agencies, donors, bilateral agencies and UN Organizations to focus on rehabilitation activities. The U.N. agencies worked out a preliminary budget of USD 50 million to be spent in 15 years following the disaster. An important outcome of these meetings was the establishment of the Orissa Disaster Mitigation Authority (OSDMA) by the government as the coordinating agency with representatives of all key players.

Government of Orissa constituted Orissa State Disaster Mitigation authority (OSDMA) after the October 1999 super cyclone, in order to have a systematic and planned approach to disaster mitigation management in Orissa. The UN initiations in Orissa were taken in collaboration with the state Government and OSDMA and addressed issues relating to food, nutrition health, livelihood, agriculture, shelter, water and sanitation, disaster management and strengthening of infrastructure. OSDMA started working in close collaboration with Government of India and its agencies, government Orissa its various departments and agencies the administration of all 30 districts of Orissa, local self-government, communities the Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), community based organizations (CBOs), bilateral and multi-lateral aid agencies, UN agencies, government of other states in the country.

The United Nations Disaster Management Team (UNDMT) convened in New Delhi to set up emergency relief operations. The UN Resident Coordinator offered the Chief Minister of

Orissa the full support of all UN agencies in India in restoring normalcy and mobilizing funds for rehabilitation and reconstruction. Interacting with the Government at the Centre and the State, as well as collaborating with international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Food Programme (WFP) prepared daily situation reports that were shared with the donor community. UNDP coordinated the efforts of all UN agencies working in Orissa.

The total UN special assistance to the victims of the cyclone amounted to almost \$16 million. UNICEF contributed more than half-- some \$9.4 million, including \$3 million worth of medical and relief supplies distributed by the end of December 1999. WFP contributed some \$5.1 million worth of blended food, rice, pulses and high-energy biscuits, The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) provided assistance worth \$700, which included supply of reproductive health kits, support to five mobile medical units and logistic support. The World Health Organization (WHO) contributed \$100,000 towards the setting up and management of an emergency surveillance system to control the spread of epidemics and technical assistance.

Other UN agencies made cash contributions to be routed through UNDP for use in Orissa. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA), and the Government of Norway each contributed \$50,000. UNDP allocated \$420,000 through its ongoing programmes on food security and water rehabilitation, and an additional \$15,000 towards the supply of groundnut seeds for farmers in the affected areas.

The World Bank too was a participant in the UNDMT meetings with NGOs and bilateral agencies in New Delhi and its 20 member assessment team visited Orissa in December 1999. In one of its largest release of emergency funds since the Kosovo crisis, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) released \$3 million from its Emergency Fund to finance programmes in health, education, nutrition, water & sanitation, and child protection services. In the days preceding the super-cyclone UNICEF India mobilized 450 tonnes of food, medicines and emergency supplies worth more than \$1.25 million

Table 1 – UN agencies to focus on rehabilitation activities

UN agency	Sectors of intervention
UNDMT	Disaster Preparedness, MIS support, UN House operation, Advocacy and communication and intersectoral coordination
UNICEF	Health, Education, Child development and nutrition, Child protection and Child Rights.
UNESCO	Text books
WHO	Health
FAO/UNDP	Agriculture / Allied sectors
ILO/UNDP	Livelihood support for artisans
UNDP	Shelter Development and slum improvement
WFP	Nutrition / Food for work
UNCHS, UNFEM, UNHCR, UNFPA	Technical Know how / Expertise

Source: Orissa Super Cyclone, M.C. Gupta & Vinod Sharma, NCDM

In the month following the super cyclone UN assistance to the rehabilitation efforts was around \$3 million. UN agencies also sought support worth \$50 million from international donors for an action plan and prepared a joint report to the donor community following a request by the Orissa Chief Minister. In response to this appeal Denmark donated \$30,000 and the Netherlands \$46,500.

Agency	Financial Pledge in \$ (USD)
OCHA	100000
UNDP	100000
WHO	100000
UNFPA	170000
WFP	200000 + 375000 = 575000
UNICEF	200000 from executive directors emergency fund

Note: UNICEF also provided \$ million in aid for cyclone victims. It also pledged \$ 15 million to carry out restoration and rehabilitation in the next 15 years.

Source : Orissa Super Cyclone, M.C. Gupta and Vinod Sharma, NCDM.

UN on Phailin and HudHud

Phailin and HudHud are two cyclonic storms that have hit the coast of Odisha in a period of one year. In both cases the government has shown exemplary resolve to prevent loss of life and property. Through advance warning, bureaucratic support and a whole of government alertness approach, the government has been able to reduce the impact of both these cyclones. The efforts have been lauded globally including the possibility of becoming a model for other countries and cities for disaster management and risk reduction.

Phailin struck the coast of Odisha on 12 October 2014. The government alerted before four days and special efforts were made to evacuate people from low lying planes to high rising

areas. In a matter of 48 hours the government could evacuate more than 1.1 million people there by ensuring the loss to human life was minimum. In fact the casualty rate was zero and this has been hailed as a major success by the government of Odisha. This is true given the case of 1999 cyclone which killed more than 10,000 and affected millions in the aftermath.

Margareta Wahlstrom of United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) presented a citation which appreciated the 'effective coordination and preparedness' during cyclone Phailin. This has been cited as a model for other states in the region of East Asia and the UN officials have admired the government's proactivity.

HudHud struck Odisha's coast on 12th October 2014 and by that time the government had taken proactive steps in reducing disaster risk by advance warning, on time evacuation and real time relief support. This time like during the Phailin in 2013, the government was on alert, strategic and sensitive to the needs of people.

Evaluation and Conclusion

Margareta Wahlstrom recently after the impact of HudHud cyclone was well managed asserted that "India has clearly demonstrated that a 'zero casualty' focus in the face of extreme weather events is both feasible and actionable following its second major success in 12 months at minimizing loss of life in the face of a severe cyclone packing winds of up to 200 kmph. She further added that "India's journey from the loss of 10,000 people in the Odisha super cyclone of 1999 to today's relatively low death tolls from similar events demonstrates the value of agreeing on global priorities for reducing disaster risk." This goes without saying that the 1999 Super Cyclone has remained as a 'lesson learnt' in the history of disaster management in Odisha and also in the country. It is obvious that these lessons have been used in the cases of Phailin and HudHud.

It would not be an overstatement to say that the UNO and its specialized agencies with their dedicated work have been able to influence and inspire the government through funding, policy support and training to communities, have been playing a crucial role in the disaster risk reduction in the state. However, the UN system has its own challenges as it most often prefers to work in collaboration with the government. The rising capacity of NGOs and the Media needs to harness to have holistic impact in the process of disaster risk reduction.

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