**COURSE : DISASTER MANAGEMENT (MA/ MSc PART I)**

**Paper : II**

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**Topic : Disaster Preparedness**

Disaster preparedness refers to measures taken to prepare for and reduce the effects of disasters. That is, to predict and, where possible, prevent disasters, mitigate their impact on vulnerable populations, and respond to and effectively cope with their consequences.

Disaster preparedness provides a platform to design effective, realistic and [coordinated planning](http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/disaster-management/preparing-for-disaster/disaster-preparedness-tools/contingency-planning-and-disaster-response-planning/), reduces duplication of efforts and [increase the overall effectiveness of National Societies](https://media.ifrc.org/ifrc/what-we-do/disaster-and-crisis-management/disaster-preparedness/national-society/), household and [community members disaster preparedness](http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/disaster-management/preparing-for-disaster/disaster-preparedness-tools/community-preparedness/) and [response efforts](http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/disaster-management/responding/disaster-response-system/). Disaster preparedness activities embedded with risk reduction measures can prevent disaster situations and also result in saving maximum lives and livelihoods during any disaster situation, enabling the affected population to get back to normalcy within a short time period.

Disaster preparedness is a continuous and integrated process resulting from a wide range of [risk reduction activities](http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/disaster-management/preparing-for-disaster/risk-reduction/reducing-disaster-risk/) and resources rather than from a distinct sectoral activity by itself. It requires the contributions of many different areas—ranging from training and logistics, to health care, recovery, livelihood to institutional development.

This work, key to development, essentially involves reducing the vulnerability of households and communities in disaster-prone areas and improving their ability to cope with the effects of disasters; strengthening the capacities of National Societies in disaster preparedness and post-disaster response; determining a National Society role and mandate in national disaster plans; and establishing regional networks of National Societies that will strengthen the Federation’s collective impact in disaster preparedness and response at the international level.

DP provides an opportunity to design effective, realistic and coordinated planning, reduces duplication of efforts and increases the overall effectiveness of disaster preparedness activities by National Societies, households and community members. DP efforts can help minimize the impact of disasters on communities and also result in saving more lives and safeguarding livelihoods during any disaster situation and enable the affected population to return to a normal lifestyle within a short time period. The IFRC supports the strengthening of DP at different levels.

Disaster preparedness is a continuous and integrated process resulting from a wide range of risk reduction activities and resources rather than from a distinct sectoral activity by itself. It requires the contributions of many different areas - ranging from training and logistics, to health care, recovery, livelihood to institutional development. Viewed from this broad perspective Disaster preparedness encompasses:

* Recognizing the Red Cross/Red Crescent role in disaster preparedness as complementary to government and thus will not replace state responsibilities. In addition, the National Society should engage in debate with the government on the focus and nature of the National Response Plan and encourage the assignment of a clear role and responsibilities to the National Society, supported by appropriate legislation.
* Increasing the efficiency, effectiveness and impact of disaster response mechanisms at the community, national and Federation level. This includes:
* the development and regular testing of warning systems (linked to forecasting systems) and plans for evacuation or other measures to be taken during a disaster alert period to minimise potential loss of life, livelihoods and physical damage.
* the education and training of volunteers, staff and the population at risk
* the training of first-aid and disaster response teams
* the establishment of disaster response policies, standards, organizational arrangements and operational plans to be followed after a disaster.
* Strengthening community-based disaster preparedness through National Society programmes for the community or through direct support of the community's own activity. This could include educating, preparing and supporting local populations and communities in their everyday efforts to reduce risks and prepare their own local response mechanisms to address disaster emergency situations.
* Raising awareness of disaster hazards through public education, encouraging vulnerable people to take preventative and mitigating actions where possible before disaster strikes. Ensure that the Knowledge from prediction and early warning systems can be accessed, understood and acted upon by local communities.

Disaster preparedness is achieved partially through readiness measures that expedite Disaster response, rehabilitation and recovery and result in rapid, timely and targeted assistance. It is also achieved through community-based approaches and activities that build the capacities of people and communities to cope with and minimize the effects of a disaster on their lives.

A comprehensive disaster preparedness strategy would therefore include the following elements:

1. Hazard, risk and vulnerability assessments

2. Response mechanisms and strategies

3. Preparedness plans

4. Coordination

5. Information management

6. Early warning systems

7. Resource mobilization

8. Public education, training,&amp; Drills and simulations

9. Community-Based disaster preparedness

Community-based disaster preparedness incorporates the concept of building on and using local knowledge and resources in order to improve a population’s capacity to withstand the impact of disasters. As first responders to a disaster (i.e., search and rescue teams and the provision of emergency treatment and relief), communities need to be equipped to manage with the consequences of small-, medium- and large-scale natural hazards when they strike.

The work of the Red Cross and Red Crescent at the community level is paramount in addressing and being able to respond to vulnerabilities at the most direct level. Community preparedness activities should include an analysis of risks, vulnerability and capacities (VCA). Early warning systems should be accessible and understood by local communities, who can then act on warnings. Public awareness and public education campaigns, organization and training of community disaster response teams, and the development and testing of community response plans through simulations are all actions that empower communities in the face of disasters.

To effectively support community level programming and scale up activities National Societies’ capacities must also reinforced. This includes strengthening the capacities of National Societies in disaster preparedness and post-disaster response, determining the role and mandate of the National Society in national disaster plans, and establishing regional networks of National Societies that can support each other in times of disaster.

National Society capacities can be further reinforced through the establishment of National Disaster Preparedness and Response Mechanisms. These include: self-assessment process (WPNS), standard operating procedures, response and contingency plans, drills and simulations, logistics pre-agreement, volunteer disaster response teams, among others.