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Over the last 10 years a number of natural (and some human-made) disasters have led to a wealth of experience on post-disaster management of relief and rebuilding. The Orissa cyclone, Gujarat and Latur earthquakes, Gujarat riots — all of them provided a rich learning experience to all the major constituents of post-disaster management programmes: government bodies, nongovernmental organisations, corporate sector, army/paramilitary forces, media and the public at large.

And yet a number of TV channels continue to ask the question: what should one do? How can one help? As it happens in times of all disasters, there is a public outpouring of sympathy and a desire to reach out to those affected.

The fact that learning from previous disasters are indeed being absorbed (at least by some people) came the other day when the director-general of the Indian Red Cross categorically told a TV channel that old and used clothes are not needed as they had discovered during the post Gujarat earthquake days that people affected by the calamity did not want hand me downs. We also notice an effort at setting up disaster

Remember that both at state and at central government levels we are talking about a huge machinery of departments and political bodies. It's no wonder that the first knee-jerk reaction of politicians in India is to call in the army for post-disaster management — the army with its hierarchal chain of command and discipline is about the only body that is apolitical, works on its own steam, brings in all knowhow and is not amenable to any control by outside bodies! As they say this happens in India only.

In New York, when over 10,000 persons were killed and the city effectively brought to a grinding halt, the army went out to do its job of guarding the nation while the civilian bodies came together in effective management. Firemen did their job and bore the brunt of rescue efforts at the WTC while other bodies managed their ends of the disaster management.

Coordinating post-disaster management effectively requires a focused pyramid structure that is both reasonably scaled in terms of responsibility and reasonably flat to reach out as quickly as possible to affected individuals. This would mean a decision on who will relinquish authority and who will assume it.

This is where all problems arise. Who is to decide?

A few days ago SS Pore told us how he subsumed

## The hand that can help still

management programmes and some effort at putting together training programmes.

However, by and large, we seem to be caught in the same rut of running around trying to figure out what to do or who should do what and how to co-ordinate the various efforts. Now we read that Sonia Gandhi is on the spot to coordinate disaster management operations.

In this scenario we have worldwide media coverage picking up the heartrending stories of tragedy (and heroism) and getting the public at large very emotionally charged up and wanting to reach out with money and kind. This, while being welcome in its impact creating ability, adds to the pressure of post-disaster management.

Unlike in the US, where the city mayor (of New York) became the focal point for all post-disaster management (post 9/11 when all effort — federal, local and private were routed through the mayor's office), here in India, with our distinctions as indicated in the chart on the facing page, it becomes difficult to figure out who is coordinating whom.

While this multiplicity of ownerships of various institutions may reflect a vibrant social-democracy, in times of disaster management, this can very quickly become a nightmare from the control perspective.

principal authority in plague-afflicted Surat on the authority of a fax message from the then prime minister, PV Narasimha Rao.

Just look at the contrasting scenarios as they unfolded during some significant events:

Bhopal: Post Carbide disaster management by various state and central bodies; result: huge mess.

Narmada Dam project dislocation of villagers: (mis) managed by state and central government and political bodies creating unending social tension.

Konkan Railway and now, Delhi Metro dislocation of residents/businesses: managed by the corporations (it's not just a coincidence that the same person who headed the Konkan Railway project now heads the Delhi Metro project) with common sense principals of management resulting in no tensions and smooth operations.

Surat: Plague management at localised level with single point management of efforts: very successful.

Latur: Post earthquake management: Reasonably managed by state government (though this would be vehemently protested by many).

Gujarat riots: Grossly mismanaged by both state and central Govts and resulting in enormous social tension.

The larger question of how to effectively work out the post-disaster management structures (Which bodies

## WHO IS CONTROLLING WHOM

Type of Organisation	Control by
Municipality	State Govt appointed officials with elected Councils
Police	State Govt.
Fire Brigades	State Govt.
Public Hospitals	State Govt.
Army	Central Govt.
Para-Military Forces	Some by Central Govt some by State Govt.
Panchayats	None (?)
Food stocks	Both State and Central Govt.
Co-operative Societies	Mostly State Govt but some Central Govt.
Public Distribution System	Mostly State with some Central (for e.g. Fuel)
Govt owned Corporates	Both State Govts and Central Govts have separate organisations
Railways	Central Govt
Public Road transport	State
Roads	Some Municipality, some state Govt and some Central Govt owned and managed
Airlines	Central Govt and Private Sector
Telecom	Central Govt
Power supply	State and Central Govt owned and managed
Collectorates	State controlled, but staffed at top management level by (IAS) cadre of Central Govt Officers
Business Organisations	Private Sector, Co-operative Sector, State Sector, Central Govt Sector
Post and Telegraph	Central Govt
Banking Sector,	Private Sector, Co-operative Sector, State Sector, Central Govt
Insurance	Private Sector, Central Govt Sector
NGOs	Privately funded and controlled, State aided, Central grant aided, Internationally funded and controlled, Forms covering Trusts, Societies, Charities, Service organisations.
Education facilities	Private Sector, Co-operative Sector, State Sector, Central Govt Sector.

must be the prime front-end managers for the various dimensions of the post-disaster management programme? How the last-mile delivery of the program will be managed?) needs a much more detailed and comprehensive paper (and of course there are any number of wizened bodies doing the research on that).

This article attempts to answer one simple question: In the face of the vast scale of relief and rebuilding required post-tsunami: How can the corporate sector help?

The answer to that question lies in accepting the skill sets that corporate India brings to the table:

1. Relatively far better human resources management: Outside of the army (and, this is the hornet's

nest: that venerable institution has bungled twice, with disastrous consequences, in the last 50 years), which body under either the state government or the central government been able to generate better levels of productivity from human resources as compared to the corporate sector?

2. Relatively better management of scarce resources including capital equipment and finance — again we can argue until the cows come home but fact is that return on capital deployed is better in the corporate sector.

3. Relatively better management of external bodies such as the government, communication, media, trade bodies, international partners, technology resources.

4. Clearly demonstrated skills in public perception management towards a desired objective.

For far too long, our perception of the corporate sector as the creator of wealth in the hands of their stake holders has blinkered us — it has made us seek financial largesse from the corporate sector while ignoring the fact that the corporate sector brings to the table a far more effective skill: management. First off the block on donation to the PM's Relief Fund was Anil Ambani — but remember Reliance set up their Patalganga plant in 22 months — faster than anyone had done it anywhere in the world. Can't we use those skills from them? ITC set up the Delhi Maurya Sheraton in some eight months. Professional managers managed the Cricket World Cup with millions of live spectators and billions of TV viewers.

Having stated that, in view of the rising hackles let us also state that No, we are not talking of 'outsourcing' post-disaster management to the corporate sector. That would simply be accepting the neglect of that duty by the state. But harnessing the management skills of the corporate sector in the immediate term so as to ensure rapid delivery of succor to the most in need is a smart thing to do. What's wrong with that?

How much time would it take to set up a management team with the task of providing a front-end face to corporate sector's efforts in assisting with the task at hand? About a dozen phone calls and by the end of the day the team would be set up. Within a few days the team would have figured out clear objectives and in no time it would start interfacing with different corporates to bring in a combination of skills sets and resources to the field. Does the CII have a role? Sure. Do NASSCOM, FICCI, ASSOCHAM and other trade bodies have a role? Sure. Will it mean that some 1000 managers from the corporate sector will have to be deputed to the relief



Management skills are imperative in post-disaster management. This is where the corporate sector needs to lead. PHOTO: PRA

effort for a couple of months? sure. Will it hurt the corporate sector bottom lines to do this? Not as much as *not doing it* would hurt.

Will it mean that executives from the corporate sector seconded to the relief effort be forced to take the task? Even if it is voluntary, the best managers would give their right arms to be able to be exposed to situations that test every management skill they ever possessed. Does it mean the team would be able to assist in ground-zero level efforts? Sure. How?

The corporate sector is always in need of human resources and has the ability to quickly train and engage people in productive activity. That's what all the management institutes are forever teaching. That's what's required at ground-zero — quickly get people on their feet and back to a semblance of normal life as quickly as possible.

It's not just a question of donating money but in quickly

bringing to the task a skill set that Corporate India has in abundance: *management of resources, dealing with various combinations of obstacles and overcoming them to achieve end result.*

The latest initiative in the development sector — the formation of Indian Confederation of NGOs (I-CONGO) is just such an attempt-harnessing professional management skills to the compassionate, rights-based approach and service skill sets of the development sector NGO community in order to ensure that the sector's impact on the economy is even more significant than it is now and ensure that more of the public participate in assisting marginalised communities to find their feet under the sun.

Corporate India, let not the public wait forever for the ethnic equivalent of "Ich bin ein Indian." (which is of course: I am proud to be an Indian) Don't just reach for your wallet, come over yourself. India

*needs its best managers on the task.*

We know its impossible to work with *babus*, that they mess up routinely, that governments work under difficult controls — bureaucratic as well as political. But you know how to get round that don't you? You have been doing a great job doing just that.

Come and help get work organised, get relief managed, provide the front end support to NGOs so they can do their job of helping managing the stress of trauma better, help corporate sector reach into their backyards for equipment and resources and get them to the sites fast. And no, the government and the NGO community is not running away from their responsibilities. All we are saying is together we can work swifter and more effectively.

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