Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of the paper is to persuade all partners in disaster management to take action and create a pair of synergistic and invincible forces – government and people – that interact to bring about a reduction in the impact of natural hazards in Uttaranchal, India.

Design/methodology/approach – There is an urgent need for a comprehensive tool to make the community aware of its right to safety. Today, policies and planning for disaster management are a State subject, in which the participation of the community is negligible. Therefore, disaster management has become supply-driven instead of demand-driven.

Findings – A Citizen’s Charter of Disaster Management is considered to be another appropriate tool to bring in citizen-centric governance. The Charter aspires to meet the present and anticipated needs of citizens in an efficient manner by eradicating errors and wastage through a scientific approach with participation between government and citizens.

Research limitations/implications – The analysis is based on the experience gained over a period of seven years (1999-2005). The period is short for developing any hypothesis, but sufficient care has been taken to consider vital factors.

Practical implications – With the help of the Citizen’s Charter of Disaster Management, the quality of public services can be improved. To make society safer it is required that people should know the mandate of the Department of Disaster Management concerned, how one can get in touch with its officials, what to expect by way of services, and how to seek a remedy if something goes wrong.

Originality/value – The Citizen’s Charter of Disaster Management does not by itself create new legal rights, but it certainly helps in enforcing existing rights.

Keywords Disasters, Charters, Contingency planning, India

Paper type Conceptual paper

The cost of damage from natural hazards to governments, businesses, and families is very high. The money spent on cleaning up disasters is money lost to economic development. Planning, coordination and awareness techniques can greatly reduce costs due to natural hazards.

The purpose of this paper is not to tell what actions to take to increase the safety and wellbeing of citizens: this is already known. The purpose of this paper is to persuade all partners in disaster management to take the actions they already know they should take with respect to natural hazards. A second purpose is to create a pair of synergistic and invincible forces – government and people – that interact to bring about a reduction in the impact of natural hazards in Uttaranchal.

The mountains of the Himalayas Region of Uttaranchal particularly are fragile and restless. This is what is called a “high seismic area”. The high seismicity in the Himalayas is caused by the fact that these mountains emerged as a consequence of the collision of the Asian and Indian continents, and there is a ceaseless pressure on the
Himalayas, so much so that according to seismologists the Indian continent is persistently pushing northwards at the rate of 5 cm every year. Thereby, the faults are kept tectonically and seismically alive, giving rise to frequent earthquakes.

The mountain region of Uttaranchal has fragile and unstable slopes. Rockslides in the upper catchments of Himalayan rivers are frequent. The impounding of water due to landslides and the subsequent bursting of reservoirs has caused devastation downstream. Apart from this, cloudbursts and other related phenomena have also caused disasters. All this calls for a comprehensive strategy to meet these challenges.

Uttaranchal Disaster Mitigation, Management and Prevention Bill 2005
Earthquakes spell disaster. Many people have lost their lives or have been rendered homeless. These disasters repeat year after year and although policies have been framed by the Government of Uttaranchal to meet such disasters, urgent measures have been adopted in as much as a new Directorate and in fact a new Ministry have been created by the Government of Uttaranchal to meet these challenges. Yet all this must have statutory backing. Hence, there is an urgent need for a comprehensive Act to deal with disasters and mitigate and control them, and to put measures in place so that the impact of these disasters can be minimized on the lives and properties of people. To fulfill this requirement, the Uttaranchal Disaster Mitigation, Management and Prevention Bill 2005 came into existence. The Act ensures efficient and effective management of disaster, helps to achieve a greater coordination and responsiveness in respect of the prevention, reduction and mitigation of disasters and preparedness programs for the same, provides for better rescue, relief and rehabilitation of the victims of such disasters, and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Citizen’s Charter of Disaster Management – a model
The Citizen’s Charter of Disaster Management is considered to be another appropriate tool to bring in citizen-centric governance. The following tenets of the Citizen’s Charter of Disaster Management incorporate all the principles of citizen-centric governance and bring the citizen to the fulcrum of governance:

- standards of services;
- information and openness;
- choice and consultation;
- courtesy and helpfulness;
- putting things right; and
- value for money.

The Citizen’s Charter of Disaster Management aspires to meet the present and anticipated needs of the citizen in an efficient manner by eradicating errors and wastage through a scientific approach with participation between government and citizens. The primary objective of the Citizen’s Charter of Disaster Management is to provide quality services to citizens in a hassle-free manner.

When we talk about quality in services, there are primarily three levels of quality:

1. “must be” quality – the absence of this quality dissatisfies but its presence goes unnoticed;
(2) *satisfier* – the absence of this quality dissatisfies but its presence satisfies and is acknowledged; and

(3) *delighter* – this quality meets latent/unexpressed needs and comes as a surprise.

The main objective of the exercise of issuing the Citizen’s Charter of Disaster Management is to improve the quality of public services. This is done by letting people know the mandate of the Department of Disaster Management concerned, how one can get in touch with its officials, what to expect by way of services and how to seek a remedy if something goes wrong. The Citizen’s Charter of Disaster Management does not by itself create new legal rights, but it certainly helps in enforcing existing rights.

The Citizen’s Charter of Disaster Management represents the commitment of the State Government towards standards, the quality and time frame of service delivery, a grievance redress mechanism, transparency and accountability.

1. Citizen’s/Client’s Charter of Disaster Management

1.1. The Citizen’s/Client’s Charter of Disaster Management is a document which represents a systematic effort to focus on the commitment of the government towards its citizens/clients in respect of standard of services, information, choice and consultation, non-discrimination and accessibility, grievances redress, courtesy and value for money. This also includes expectations of the government from the citizen/client for fulfilling the commitment.

1.2. The Charter comprises the following components:

(1) Vision and Mission Statement: “Disaster Reduction for Safer Communities and Sustainable Development”.

(2) Details of business transacted by the department concerned:

- generation and dissemination of basic knowledge that documents potential hazards and information on mitigation approaches both at government and private sector decision-makers;
- providing timely relief to disaster affected people;
- rehabilitation of disaster affected people;
- identification of areas of refuge;
- build and educate constituency for risk management;
- development and promulgation of standards;
- creating an open process of sustainable development for decision makers;
- creating strategic alliances within government, merging natural and technological hazards and risk management;
- utilize regulation and insurance to drive mitigation;
- professionalize and standardize emergency management;
- preparation of community based disaster management action plans and creation of village/town level Disaster Intervention Teams;
- ensure comprehensive, coordinated government response through fail-safe communication among various sectors and preparation of DMM Plans; and
- capacity building, both institutional and personal.
(3) Details of customers/clients:
- Government of India and State Government;
- community;
- training and academic institutions;
- R&D institutions;
- regional Development bodies and local institutions; and
- non-government agencies and institutions.

(4) Statement of services provided to each citizen/client group separately and time limits for the same (see Table I).

(5) Details of grievances redress mechanism and how to access the same:
- through representation, applications and proposals; and
- through People's Representative ("State Disaster Management Committee" has been constituted).

(6) Expectations of the citizen/client:
- more aware about rights and duties;
- more aware about Contingency Relief Fund (CRF) norms; and
- develop the habit of a disaster management and safety culture.

2. Duties and responsibilities of "Contact Officer for the Citizen's Charter"
The State Government should nominate a "Contact Officer for the Citizen's Charter" to be responsible for the formulation/implementation of the Citizen's Charter in the department concerned. The duties and responsibilities of the Contact Officer for Citizen's Charter are given below:

- **Job title:** Contact Officer for the Citizen’s Charter.
- **Responsible to:** Principal Secretary, Department of Disaster Management.

The Contact Officer is responsible for various activities involved in the formulation and implementation of the Citizen’s Charter for Disaster Management, as enumerated below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Citizen/client group</th>
<th>Services provided</th>
<th>Time limit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government of India</td>
<td>Information about</td>
<td>One hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and Government of</td>
<td>hazards</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Uttaranchal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Information about</td>
<td>One hour to 12 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training and academic</td>
<td>risk potential</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>R&amp;D institutions</td>
<td>Awareness about</td>
<td>Three days</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>disasters</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Regional development</td>
<td>Preparedness against</td>
<td>Five days</td>
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<tr>
<td>bodies and local</td>
<td>disasters</td>
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<tr>
<td>institutions</td>
<td>Technological inputs in mitigation</td>
<td>One hour</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Search and rescue</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Relief</td>
<td>Two hours to one month</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rehabilitation</td>
<td>Two months to one year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table I. Services provided to each citizen/client group and time limits
2.1. *Formulation of Citizen’s Charter*:
Formation of a Task Force in Disaster Management to oversee the formulation of the Citizen’s Charter. The Contact Officer shall act as a Member Secretary for the Task Force. The composition of the Task Force shall be:

- one or two representatives from top management;
- two or three representatives from middle management;
- two or three representatives from cutting-edge level staff;
- representatives from staff associations/ unions; and
- two to three representatives from Citizen's/Client's associations/NGOs/consumer groups.

2.2. *Duties of the Task Force*:

- Identification of all stakeholders/clients and services/products provided by the Department of Disaster Management in consultation with officers/staff/clients/ representatives, etc.
- Determining the standards of outputs/services, etc., provided by the Department of Disaster Management in consultation with all stakeholders and officers/staff, etc. (particularly at cutting-edge level).
- Preparation of a draft Charter and circulation amongst various clients/stakeholders, management levels and staff for comments/suggestions.
- Modification of the draft Charter to include suggestions, etc.
- Submission of the draft Charter for consideration by the “Core Group on the Citizen’s Charter” of the State and liaison with the Nodal Officer for the Citizen’s Charter of the State.
- Modification of the draft Charter on the basis of suggestions/observations made by the Core Group on the Citizen’s Charter.
- Seeking the approval of the Minister In-Charge.
- Issue/release/publications of the Charter into the public domain.

2.3. *Implementation of Citizen’s Charter*:

- Ensuring wide publicity of the Charter. Conduct awareness campaigns. Putting up the Charter on the Department of Disaster Management website and sending copies to People’s Representatives and all stakeholders and their representative associations, etc.
- Organising training programmes, workshops, etc., for the orientation and motivation of officers and staff of the Department of Disaster Management to align the workforce to the commitments made in the Charter so as to ensure proper implementation of the Citizen’s Charter.

2.4. *Monitoring of the Citizen’s Charter*:

- Set up an Integrated Performance Monitoring System and monitor the Department of Disaster Management’s performance *vis-à-vis* commitments made in the Charter on a regular basis and keep the Head of the Department informed.
2.5. Evaluation and Review of the Citizen’s Charter:

- Arrange for regular internal and external evaluation of implementation of the Citizen’s Charter in the Department of Disaster Management and assessment of the level of satisfaction among citizens/clients. Report to the Head of the Department on a regular basis.
- Based on feedback/assessment/evaluation, take necessary steps for review/revision of the Citizen’s Charter.
- Ensure that activities related to the formulation/implementation of the Citizen’s Charter form a part of the Annual Action Plan of the Department of Disaster Management.
- Ensure that all activities relating to Citizen’s Charter during the year are included in the Annual Reports of the Department of Disaster Management.

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