

## DISASTER MANAGEMENT: AN OVERVIEW

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### Abstract

Disasters is a unique cooperative arrangement to provide free of cost access to geo-informatics products while responding to the natural disasters. International Charter, since its inception, has captured several disasters that caused lives and livelihoods. Charter, in its mandated role, has been making efforts to strengthen the hands and minds of civil defense agencies on the ground to manage the events with more contextual and holistic information. The recent South Asian floods, Asian earthquake and tsunami events have brought into fore several issues and challenges pertaining to the operational efficiency of International Charter. Finally, Charter proved its relevance and demonstrated the philosophy it is characterized with. There are however lessons to improve the Charter. Lack of capacity has created geo-informatics 'have' and 'have nots' for disaster management, while lack of voice has led to miss out several disaster events especially in South Asia. Decision Support Centre (DSC) was established under Disaster Management Support Programme by Department of Space to use the space technology for better management of natural disasters. DSC is an operational service provider exploring the synergy and convergence of space and contemporary technologies in pre-disaster, during disaster and post-disaster phases. The paper has made an assessment on these aspects and suggested some feasible mechanisms to address the existing capacity gaps as well as voicelessness of South Asian region in major international cooperation arrangements for the more effective access and outreach of geo-informatics products in support of disaster risk reduction strategies in high risk countries.

*Keywords:* DSC, Natural Disasters, Disaster Management, Pre-Disaster, During Disaster, Post-Disaster.

### Introduction

Disasters are as old as human history but the dramatic increase and the damage caused by them in the recent past have become a cause of national and international concern. Over the past decade, the number of natural and manmade disasters has climbed inexorably. From 1994 to 1998, reported disasters average was 428 per year but from 1999 to 2003, this figure went up to an average of 707 disaster events per year showing an increase of about 60 per cent over the previous years. The biggest rise was in countries of low human development, which suffered an increase of 142 per cent. The deadliest disasters of the decade (1992-2001). Drought and famine have proved to be the deadliest disasters globally, followed by flood, technological disaster, earthquake, windstorm, extreme temperature and others. Global economic loss related to disaster events average around US \$880 billion per year.

### The United Nations Defines a Disaster

As a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society. Disasters involve widespread human, material, economic or environmental impacts, which exceed the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources.

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