



ADB

SMALL GROUP WORKSHOP ON

Preparing for Large-Scale Emergencies

5–6 July 2007 • Auditorium Zone A, ADB Headquarters, Manila, Philippines

Country Perspective:

People's Republic of China

Yang Siquan



Asian Development Bank

The views expressed in this paper are the views of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), or its Board of Governors, or the governments they represent. ADB does not guarantee the accuracy of the data included in this paper and accepts no responsibility for any consequence of their use. Terminology used may not necessarily be consistent with ADB official terms.

China's emergency preparedness

5-6 July, 2007

Siquan Yang, Ministry of Civil Affairs, China

This paper introduces the current emergency preparedness policies and practices; and with flood emergency response system as an example in China. Lastly, trends on the future development of disaster emergency response management of China are dealt with.

China is a country prone to frequent and devastating natural disasters. The disasters are characterized by diversity, frequent occurrence, wide area coverage and serious losses. Almost all types of natural disasters occur in this country, including flood, drought, wind and hail, earthquake, typhoon, snow disaster, and a population of about 100 million affected annually by natural disasters, including over 10 million relocated and about one thousand lives lost. Take 2006 as an example, 2006 was yet another rough year for China with a tragic trail of natural disasters after 1998. Disasters of almost every kind and of varied intensity have ravaged China. Disasters have left 3186 people dead, 13.845 million people displaced and relocated and 41.0913 million hectares of crops damaged (of which 5.4089 million hectares of crops have totally failed). 1.933 million houses were destroyed in and RMB 252.81 billion yuan worth of economic losses were directly incurred.

The Chinese government attaches great importance to disaster reduction and regards it as an important guarantee for realizing the overall objective of sustainable development of the economy and society. The Chinese government maintains that disaster reduction should serve the national social and economic development and the relationship between disaster reduction and economic development should be handled correctly.

To this end, Chinese government has established a disaster management system in which 'The Government exert unified control, different levels of government authorities take charge of disaster management, while different departments are responsible for the different components of the disaster relief work.' It includes several coordinate organizations. National Commission for Disaster Reduction (NCDR) is designed to coordinate and launch disaster reduction activities, guide local disaster reduction operations and promote international exchange and cooperation. The commission is located at the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA). The Office of Comprehensive Coordination

for the Nationwide Fight against Disaster and Relief Efforts (OCC) overall coordinator that gives access to information about the development of disaster scenarios, disaster rescue and relief efforts in disaster-stricken areas. Meanwhile, supporting organizations have been established. The Board of Experts, an advisory body to the NCDR, provides advice and proposals for key decision making and planning concerning disaster reduction. National Disaster Reduction Center of China (NDRCC) is a specialized agency under the Chinese Government engaged in information services and supporting decisions on various natural disasters. It provides information and technology support to decision making on disaster reduction, undertakes emergency relief, organizes training and international cooperation, and promotes disaster reduction.

As for emergency related plans, Chinese government has established a system of disaster emergency plans covering national and local governments. In 1998, China issued the Disaster Reduction Plan of the People's Republic of China (1998-2010), laying down the main objectives, tasks and measures for disaster reduction. In 2006, the Chinese government promulgated the State overall emergency response planning for outbreak of public incidents and the state emergency response planning for natural disasters. Under the overall emergency response plan, special plans about disaster relief, forest fire, earthquake, geological disasters and flood have been established.

We take disaster relief planning for example. Since 2001, the Ministry of Civil Affairs has been establishing a nationwide system for disaster relief planning. In 2004, the central government promulgated the National Emergency Relief Plan on Natural Disasters. Till the end of 2004, all provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under central government have drafted the provincial emergency plans. Based on these plans, a well-regulated disaster emergency response system has been established. In 2006, the MCA embarked on 40 emergency response programs in 17 provinces, including 8 Grade-3 responses and 32 Grade-4 responses in a long span of 132 days. As part of its emergency response efforts, the MCA launched contingency plans 8 times in response to typhoon and flood disasters in Fujian alone. The total emergency responses in 2006 outnumbered those in 2005 and 2004, which registered 30 and 12 respectively. Sixty disaster relief work teams were dispatched by the MCA independently or collectively.

As for the emergency preparedness technology, China has set up a disaster early warning and prediction network for different disasters, such as those for meteorological forecasting, earthquake warning observation, hydrographic surveys, forest fire prevention, plant disease, and insect pests prediction. This system involves several ministries and commissions of China, and has played a key part in responding to devastating disasters. It has proven to be effective and efficient for disaster/emergency response management. Besides, NDRCC provides early warning and assessment of damage condition using remote sensing technology, improves the disaster reporting conduit through Departments

of Civil Affairs at different levels, and sets up a round-the-clock disaster monitoring mechanism. Also, China is going to launch two (2) small optical satellites, one small SAR satellite, called the "2+1" project, four (4) optical satellites and SAR satellites later. The satellites will be used to monitor various natural disasters, such as fire, drought, geological disaster, typhoon/storm, marine disaster, flood, insect infestation, dust storm and so on.

In order to reduce disaster, a storage system for disaster relief materials is absolutely necessarily. There are 11 big central-level material reserve warehouses for disaster relief and other small provincial-level warehouses operated by MCA and its local agencies through the country. A large amount of stored relief materials can be used during the emergency period. Up to now, a reserve network based on these sites has been established. Once a major disaster occurs, the first batch of disaster relief tents can be sent to the hands of the afflicted people within 24 hours. This is vital to protect the victims and give them some immediate comfort. In 2006, the MCA allocated 44,120 tents to the disaster-stricken communities to meet immediate evacuation needs .

The emergency response system of China is illustrated by taking flood as example.

Firstly, a well formulated counterplan to flood emergency is vital for emergency response. In 2005, after several emergency events such as bird flu, SARS, the Indian Ocean tsunami, the Chinese government pays greatly attention to emergency response. Under the leadership of the State Council, the National Flood and Drought Relief Emergency Counter Plan was established and authorized. This issue of the counter plan is a remarkable achievement for emergency management. This work has also been carried out at provincial, municipal and county levels organized by the government. The plan prescribes four response levels with different actions, and strengthens disaster monitoring, precaution, information transfer, decision support system, and recovery.

The administrative system of emergency response to flood is powerful to guarantee that all the emergency actions be carried out decisively. According to the flood control law, the flood control headquarters at each level are in charge of emergency flood management. At the State level, the commander of the headquarters is the vice premier, The vice premier's orders will be carried out by the minister of water resources. The members of the headquarters include deputy ministers from 18 relevant ministries and officials from the liberation army and the armed police. The Office of Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters (OFCH) takes care of day-to-day operation and management of the flood control headquarters. During the flood season, OFCH operates 24-hour basis; consultants meet every morning. It reports to the State Council daily, and is responsible for emergency response decisions. Meanwhile, National Commission for Disaster Reduction (NCDR) is coordinates while the Ministry of Civil Affairs (MCA) is responsible

for meeting immediate needs of the stricken population and temporary shelter after disaster.

At the beginning of each year, the NDRCC organizes an annual meeting to assess natural disaster trends. Hazard information is gathered by respective agencies. The China Meteorological Administration (CMA) and Ministry of Water Resources (MWR) are involved in issuing weather reports and flood warnings. While the China Earthquake Administration (CEA) on seismic activities. The central government agencies and the relevant branches of provincial government analyze the situation and development of disaster risks over time. At the same time, the NDRCC monitors the likely-affected regions, analyze and assess the development of hazards so as to guide local government in efforts to reduce disaster risk. According to the Regulation on Natural Disaster Statistics, civil affairs departments at county level are required to report disaster information within three hours after it occurs. A 24-hour reporting system shall be applied to severe natural disasters. Information technologies are widely applied to improve efficiency of early warning systems, such as mobile phone message service, satellite remote sensing, GIS and telecommunication systems.

After a major disaster, government officials and experts form an assessment group which is responsible for the assessment of the disaster situation through a full scale investigation. Departments of civil affairs at all levels are requested to draft reconstruction plans, which shall contain information such as project officials, time frame, and quality of supervision so as to ensure the successful completion of the work. Disaster victims are given relief cards on a per household basis by the county civil affairs department. They receive relief funds and goods based on the cards they received. Thus, the relief goods and funds can be distributed transparently and fairly.

In July 2006, typhoon Bilis attacked China and severely affected several cities, the Public infrastructure was destroyed, a large number of houses went under floodwaters and croplands were destroyed. According to the statistics, Bilis caused 843 people dead, 3.3 million people evacuated, and 390,000 collapsed houses. Direct economic losses amounted to US\$ 4.4 billion (RMB 34.8 billion). According to the death toll, Typhoon bilis is the most severe natural disaster since the 1998 flood in China. In order to assist the disaster relief efforts of local governments during the shock of Bilis , the central government appropriated RMB 299 million of emergency fund to disaster-hit areas. Local governments also raised lots of relief funds and materials for disaster resistance and relief.

When typhoon Bilis came to China, the different stakeholders were prepared to deal with the disaster. The CMA meteorologists monitored and tracked the typhoon's movement and development, and the early warning was released in time. Before the typhoon, armed

policemen reinforced embankments, the disaster relief materials were prepared, the local governments in the coasts evacuated the peasant workers from other regions to safe shelters, all the ship and vessels were moved to safer harbors. During the response to typhoon Bilis, full-scale disaster relief task forces mobilized quickly. The local leadership following the work team members from the CPC Central Committee and the State Council and ministries like the Ministry of Civil Affairs, instructed task forces on the ground to ensure the disaster relief efforts were well organized and delivered. The community assisted and was at the forefront of disaster rescue and relief. They relocate disaster-hit population to safer places, assessed damage and offered consolation to the victims. With their commendable dedication, relief supplies in cash and kind reached those in need in time to ensure the safety and subsistence of the victims.

Chinese government did an efficient job in responding to the emergency created by typhoon Bilis.

Future development of emergency management of China will focus on the following four aspects:

Firstly, intensify efforts to improve the disaster management system under the leadership of the Government and to optimize the operational mechanism along with the implementation of the State Overall Emergency Response Planning for the Outbreak of Public Incidents and the State Emergency Response Planning for Natural Disasters.

Secondly, popularize the application of high technology for across-the-board improvement of disaster emergency response and relief capabilities. Along with the “2+1” project for environment and disaster monitoring and forecasting, the Government aims to build an integrated system for disaster monitoring and early warning that covers the skies, space and ground. And then, practical skills and disaster-awareness shall be enhanced through regular and small-scale disaster drills in line with specific local scenarios. Capability building for disaster relief reserves and equipment is a priority to prepare for disasters. Lastly, training programs shall be offered to improve the capability of disaster management staff at various levels, the field level personnel in particular, to rise up to disaster-induced challenges.

Thirdly, redouble efforts to increase public awareness about disaster preparedness. Model communities that practice community-based disaster reduction shall be set up through intensive drives. Disaster management know-how at the grassroots level shall be enhanced. Practical skills to protect oneself and offer mutual aid and protection be improved through well-structured training programs, plan making, effective drills and awareness contests, among others.

Fourthly, built upon what the Asia Conference on Disaster Reduction¹ has offered, ensure the full implementation of the principles and policies highlighted in the speech delivered by Premier Wen Jiabao at the Special ASEAN Leaders' Meeting on Aftermath of Earthquake and Tsunami.² We also desire to strengthen international exchange and press ahead with bilateral and multilateral cooperation in disaster reduction as a good neighbor and friend.

¹ The Asia Conference on Disaster Reduction (ACDR) was held in Beijing in September 27, 2005. Its purpose was to exchange experiences of Asian countries' disaster management, specifying the priority areas of disaster-reduction and promoting regional disaster-reduction cooperation. The conference output was the Beijing Action Plan for Disasters Risk Reduction in Asia. The conference had an important and positive impact on promoting disaster reduction cooperation in Asia and even the world at large.

² The ASEAN Leaders' Meeting on Aftermath of Earthquake and Tsunami was held in Jakarta in January 2005.