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## Foreword

AAN underwent major organizational restructuring in 2002. This was one more effort to enhance the effectiveness of our work for poor and marginalized people. The new structure has done away with the geographical-based set up and established a theme-based framework. The new 'thematic structure' is an attempt to address the issues of poverty and marginalization with thematic rights-based interventions and focused strategies rising above geographical boundaries. The thematic structure was prompted by the fact that the main causes of poverty and marginalization lie in the distribution of power, the main causes of which are not confined to any one geographical region and hence need persistent efforts to change.

Enduring poverty perpetuated through centuries cannot be overcome if the structural causes are not hard-hit. Specialist approaches are needed to strike at the embedded causes of poverty and marginalisation. As a part of enhancing strategic and operational effectiveness, the programme and policy departments were realigned and reformed to bring in more logic and a rights-based slant in their composition. The thematic structure is also an attempt at leadership building in the organisation by fostering proper development and specialization of staff. The adoption of a new type of structure has called for, and also brought in, various new methods of work. The merging of the programme and policy departments has paved way to eliminate the gap between these two important aspects of the organisation.

The flatter and decentralized structure called for proper clarity on the thematic strategies and plans, including inter-linkages between various themes and their standing in the overall Country Strategy Paper. To address this need, AAN decided to prepare Position Papers on all of its themes. Using a rights-based perspective, AAN has re-prioritized the themes for its campaign and advocacy work by weaving them into three major categories - Social Rights, Livelihood and Economic Rights, and Peace and Governance. The Position Papers will demand additions and updating as the themes gain new experiences and new contexts and realities emerge.

The Emergency and Disaster Management Theme was set up in AAN in September 2002. Before this, AAN had acquired some experience of Emergency work through its involvement with Poverty Policy and Program theme of CSP II period. With the recurrences of Natural Disasters in the form of flood and landslides, fire and epidemic and as well as the threat of big earthquake in the country, AAN felt an urge to involve itself on the issues of Vulnerability, Hazard and Risk reduction, to be able to contribute in Human Security Issues in the country and work for the improvement of the Disaster Preparedness, as both Emergency and Disaster had become crucial to address the structural causes of poverty and marginalisation.

The development of this Position Paper became an arduous task with rapid change in the Government and their departmental of the country and ever-changing security situation. There were swings to heightened conflict and temporary peace while AAN was engaging in preparing this Position Paper. Being a new department and due to a volatile political situation with no elected representatives at any level of governance of the country, this Position Paper will need revision at various intervals so that AAN's intervention strategies are duly relevant in the prevailing context. Thus, we will welcome any comments and suggestions on this Position Paper.

I would like to thank Shyam Sundar Jnavaly, Theme Leader, Emergency and Disaster Management for the making of this strategy, Yamuna Ghale, Team Leader, Livelihoods and Economic Rights and all other staffs for their support, expertise and dedication and hard work in giving the Position Paper to this shape.

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Dr. Shibesh Chandra Regmi  
Country Director  
January 2005

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# Emergency and Disaster Management Theme

## Action Aid Nepal

### 2005

## Chapter 1

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### 1. Background

ActionAid (AA) is an international development organization founded in the United Kingdom in 1972 and registered as a global organization in The Hague, the Netherlands in September 2003. The AA International Secretariat is based in Johannesburg, South Africa. ActionAid is a secular and non-political organization working with over nine million of the poorest people in the developing world in 40 countries across Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. It is committed to improving the quality of life of the poorest and the most marginalized people so that they can live a life of dignity.

ActionAid Nepal (AAN) has been working in Nepal since 1982. Its mission is to eradicate poverty by facilitating the process of empowering the poorest and the most marginalized communities (deprived/disadvantaged) women, men and children. The work of AAN over the years has undergone various changes informed by its engagement at the community and other levels. Its scope of work has thus grown in content, coverage, complexity and commitment over the period.

AAN changed its approach from direct service delivery to partnership mode with local NGOs in 1996. Similarly, it adopted rights-based approach from 1998 with an aim to creating an environment in which the poor and marginalized communities can exercise their rights, explore the causes and effects of poverty to eradicate by actively engaging themselves in all aspects of development initiatives.

AAN's rights-holders are the poorest and the most marginalized, particularly women, children, dalits, ex-bonded labourers, conflict victims, urban poor, land tenants, differently able people (disabled), and people living with HIV/AIDS. In 2003, AAN priorities five themes based on the local context and needs – Education, Food Rights (including Natural Resource Management), Peace, Gender Equity and HIV/AIDS. It is also engaged in themes on Globalisation and Corporate Social Responsibility, Emergency and Disaster Management, Disability, Urban Poverty and Media Advocacy.

AAN works at grassroots level to address the immediate conditions of the poorest and the most marginalized people and at the national level with various advocacy programmes in order to influence public policies and practices in favour of its rights-holders.

As a chapter of AA International, AAN is also actively engaged in advocating at regional and international levels on issues such as Education, HIV/AIDS, Food Security, Gender Equity and Governance that cut across globally, to campaign for pro-poor policies and to enable the poor and marginalized communities to secure their rights.

AAN has been focusing the right based approach in all the above sectors for the betterment of the poor and excluded communities like Dalits, Ex-Kamaiya, Disabled, Women, Children, People with HIV/AIDS, Conflict and Disaster victims etc. It has given prime importance to Education, Food Security, Peace building, HIV/AIDS and Gender equity themes with the focus on the people's rights including the Disaster Preparedness, relief and rehabilitation works under emergency response during the Country Strategy Paper III (CSP 2005 -2010). Thus, AAN will proactively engage in various important themes including Disaster Management Programme to ensure the betterment of the marginalized communities through emergency preparedness, relief, rehabilitation and policy advocacy.

Strategically, AAN has started responding the disaster situations and management with the understanding of root causes and effects of the disasters. Thus, this document is developed as position paper to provide basic strategy in Emergency and Disaster Management theme within AAN. It will further help AAN to develop Country Strategy Paper (CSP III: 2005 - 2010) as well as guide AAN and Partner's NGOs to plan and design effective Emergency and Disaster Management programs.

AAN believes on the definition that **"Any situation where there is an exceptional and widespread threat to life and the basic subsistence, which is beyond the coping capacity of individuals and/or community is to be considered as an emergency and disaster"**. In other words, an emergency is an extraordinary situation in which there are serious and immediate threats to human life as a result of disasters, potential disasters or cumulative processes of neglect, civil conflict, environmental degradation and socio-economic instability.

### 2. Review of the Present Situation

Nepal is a small mountainous country lying in the lap of the Central Himalayas in South Asia. The terrain of the country is very unique with Mighty Himalayas in the northern part sloping downward in the form of mountains, hills and Terai (flat plain in the southern part). Unstable steep slopes, weak and fragile geological formation of young mountains along with heavy monsoon rainfall make Nepal one of the most hazardous areas in the world.

Because of its topographical variation and geological characteristics along with torrential rain during monsoon season the country frequently suffers from different kinds of water-induced disasters like soil erosion, landslide, debris flow, flood, glacial lake out burst flood etc. These phenomena cause loss of lives and property, besides posing severe hazards to the physical infrastructures thereby causing disruption to the social and economic development of the country.

Disaster is usually an unexpected phenomenon. It damages the infrastructures, erodes the valuable agriculture land and losses of thousand of lives and livestock. So it is important to manage it. The ways of minimizing the disaster effects are multifarious. It has to be dealt with from both social/institutional and technical perspectives. Due to frequent floods and chronic landslides, Nepal is regarded as highly disaster prone area. These disasters are the consequences of tectonic movements of the young Himalayas and unpredictable meteorological conditions of the country.

There are many reasons for the heavy disaster. Haphazard development activities without maintaining the norms (road, buildings), deforestation, provision of khoriya<sup>1</sup>, and encroachment of flood plains are some of the immediate reasons. Disasters completely disrupting existing development efforts. Its consequences are poor services of infrastructure, less agriculture productivity, poor drinking water, irrigation and hydropower facilities. Migration, starvation, deaths, beggary, suicide, disability and illness are the major consequences of the disaster. It also causes significant economic loss, erosion in social and financial capitals, psychological dislocation and widespread physical injury and death. Especially the poor and disadvantaged people are more vulnerable from the disaster because of their poor access to and control over the available resources.

Still there is an orthodox thinking that disasters are occurred as the wish of god, so cannot be protected or prevented. These types of thinking are still deep rooted in the people's mind. As people are still believed in fate, they became more vulnerable after disaster. In the other hand, people have not much awareness and skills to fight

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<sup>1</sup> Khoriya is the activities in which poor people unofficially encroach or capture the forestland and clean cultivation. It invites the heavy soil erosion and landslides that affect the people of downstream.

against various means of disasters (floods, drought, landslides, and fires) that kill thousand of people every year. Hence, in this context, the contribution of preparedness, its mitigation activities to prevent the effects of the disasters are very crucial. There are many factors, which are reasons for disaster. Some of reasons are given hereunder.

### **2.1 Over-exploitation of Forest Resources:**

The continuously increasing population and its demand for both food and forest produce have led to increase deforestation in Nepal. This has further led to increasing surface run-off and soil erosion (in the upper catchments of the watershed) with serious negative impact on downstream settlements and agricultural lands, such as floods and siltation in the southern plains and landslides in the Siwalik Hills (Pre-feasibility Study, GTZ/ChFDP, 1996). Most of the government forests are currently over-exploited by illegal felling of timber and firewood (and encroachment of forest area by people in the name of landless). The root cause of the problem is unsustainable use of natural resources by the local population due to lack of alternatives of forest resources and income opportunities. This phenomenon also intensified the natural erosion process.

The decreased agricultural incomes and the lack of off-farm employment opportunities, combined with the degradation of natural resources, have resulted in most landless and marginal farmers losing their basis of livelihoods (Forestry Master Plan Sector 1988). In search of settlements, find the lower or cheaper price of land along the riversides. As a result, those settlements suffered from flood every year in different degree of disasters. Hence, over exploitation of forest resources caused the severe flood/landslide disasters in churia and Terai of Nepal. Most of the landless and poor hill migrated people are also encroached the land nearby forest.

### **2.2 Increased Flood and Landslide Disasters**

Landslides and floods are the common phenomenon along the Ganges basin in the South Asia region, more dominantly in Terai and mid hills and Terai of Nepal and UP/Bihar in India. Every monsoon, landslides, swelling rivers and floods take a heavy toll of lives and properties. This region also contains some inundation-prone flood plains, mainly along the Indo-Nepal border sides due to the unplanned development initiatives especially the construction activities.

The last biggest water induced disasters of 1993 in the Terai, devastated the whole Terai region; the districts along the Bagmati river basins were severely affected. The flash flood swept away a number of bridges, completely inundated several villages, and took more than 1200 lives. It also affected seventy-three districts of Nepal (Oxfam: A Collaborative Research Project, 2001). It affected more than 100,000 families, out of which approximately 33,000 were rendered homeless. According to the report of the Ministry of Home of the Government of Nepal, flood is the second largest factor responsible for human deaths in Nepal during the last twenty years. Water induced disasters share about 28.7% of total disaster loss in the country.



Unfortunately, extent of flooding in Nepal has not yet received the same level of international attention as other flood-prone countries in South Asia have.

Equally, Nepal also has risks of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF) and avalanches. The main hazards of GLOF are loss of lives, displacement, loss of land and agricultural production, road blockage etc causing million casualties.

### **2.3 Increased sedimentation cause disaster in downstream areas**

Landslides, riverbank cutting and surface erosion cause the sedimentation. High sediment loads in the river lead to lateral shifting of rivers and rising of its bed level, which, in turn, extends the floods over agricultural lands and settlement areas. Thus, eroded sediment gets deposited on the farmland and settlement areas. These loads carry huge debris and sand deposits, causing desertification of huge farm areas in the Terai region of Nepal. The estimated annual sediment loads of the Koshi, Gandak and Karnali rivers are respectively 198, 169 and 170 million tones per annum respectively (Dixit 1995).

SO far, no formal studies have been done to assess the change in the level of riverbeds. Nevertheless, the Terai region has been experiencing an increasing trend of rise in riverbed level for the last two decades. The bridges over the National Highway (Mahendra Highway) can be taken as a reference point for comparing the height of the riverbeds thirty-three years ago (when the highway was built) and now. The rate of sedimentation from the Churia to the downstream riverside areas is reportedly very high. In recent years, the normal monsoon rains have also tended to turn into severe flash floods. These flash floods also carry heavy sedimentation loads, which get deposited on farmlands, destroying the standing crops and causing other devastation. The short-run impact of this is loss in the real income of the farmers whereas the long-run impact is deterioration in farm areas and/or loss of property, including public properties like roads, bridges, buildings, etc.

### **2.4 Reduced Groundwater Potential**

The close to Siwalik range in southern plains of Nepal is characterized by steep and unstable sloping terrain fragile geology hence prone to erosion and landslides. On the contrary, apart from peak monsoon, rest of the months face severe drought. This is another new form of disaster due to drought. During this time, it lacks sub-surface water for drinking or irrigating their winter crops. This has resulted in low agricultural productivity and production.

### **2.5 High Population Pressure**

Population pressure is one of the highest problems in the world with approximately 600 people per sq km of arable land. Over 81 per cent of the population depend on agriculture, which accounts for 40 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product of the country (Nepal: Country Assessment and Programme of Action for 2001-2010). As population increases, it demands larger settlement areas encroaching towards the forest or unsafe areas (along the basin of rivers) causing deforestation and then leads

to disasters. Due to current socio-political situation, migration is also increased from hills to Terai caused dense settlements along the river sides facing disasters.

## **2.6 Lack of coordination at implementation levels**

The problems of disaster of Terai are itself a complicated. So far, even planners, policymakers and development workers have not enough ideas about the flood, situation of flood-affected people and its implications. There is no or minimal coordination among several government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) working in the emergency and disaster management. Each organization has own program and agendas. Similarly, the role, functions and the duties of all district disaster management related agencies have no co-operation, coordination and mutual understanding. All the initiatives are remained at planning level only.

## **2.7 Development Infrastructures**

The recent trend has serious lacking of analysing the potential consequences of development infrastructures once they are completed. The tenth plan mentioned to carry out the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of all planned projects prior to the implementation. So far, no significant measures are taken in this direction. These projects or infrastructures, in general, block the natural water flow and divert huge volume of water towards one end causing serious flooding in the downstream settlements even with normal rainfall pattern. There are already several examples like irrigation canal in Rajapur, Bardia district and long embankments along the Bagmati, the Koshi and the Kamala rivers have resulted into the water logging then inviting the serious disasters. Other infrastructures like hydropower dam, high ways, retaining dams etc also caused disasters at the long run if EIA not properly carried out.

## **2.8 High dams**

Apart from road and canals, the dams (Embankment and high dams along the border) have negative effects on lives of people living in the area during monsoon. The high dam along the Indo-Nepal border has increased water logging on both sides of border, largely in Nepal sides. There are several high dam starting from the Koshi River in east to Tanakpur barrage in west. In the last few years, the most debated dams in Laxamanpur barrage (Banke), Khurdalotan (Rupandehi & Kapilbastu districts) and other dams along border sides of Rautahat, Nawalparasi districts have resulted the displacement of huge population in the monsoon period (July / August).

## **2.9 Earthquake**

Due to the Indian plate moving towards the north, Nepal, located between India and Tibet where the Himalayan mountain ranges are young, unconsolidated and still active, is a seismic area and has a long record of destructive earthquakes, which make the country earthquake prone. This is the reason that highly destructive earthquakes had already hit Nepal. Every year, thousands of various sizes of earthquake are recorded in Nepal (2-5 on the Richter scale). Though destructive

earthquake is not a frequent phenomenon, the magnitude of damage by earthquake is the highest in Nepal. Poor and unsafe infrastructure (housing and others) construction is aggravating the problem further more.

### **2.10 Epidemic**

Epidemics are usually precipitated by some other drastic change or crisis and epidemic might be most likely as a complicating factor in a whole variety of emergency situations. Water pollution, malnutrition, unhygienic shelter, low level of public awareness, inadequate public health facilities are contributing factors for epidemic disaster. Epidemic is also serious in case of high hills and Terai (during monsoon period). The epidemic situation in Terai follows with the high floods or monsoon, shows linkage with dirty water, mosquitoes causing high fever and stomach problems etc.

### **2.11 Famine**

A very localized famine is unlikely observed in the high hills and partly in other parts of the country. It causes severe displacement (in the mode of seasonal migration) from their settlement areas for work and food. It is mainly due to the limited or no food in the areas and/or not access to the food grown or transport problem. The situation is further worsening and accelerated due to the recent socio-political situation of the country.

### **2.12 Fire**

Fire disaster occurs mainly in the dry season between March to May, in the rural areas mostly in Terai and Mid Hills region where temperature and occurrence of strong winds is high. A total of 959 people were reported killed and about 60,243 houses destroyed by fire during last ten years. As 90.8 percent of the total population live in the rural areas in a very poor housing condition fire hazards are common. The houses of those rural areas especially of the Terai areas are usually very close to each other and are made up of straw or reeds and timber, and low level of awareness and ignorant are causes of fire.

Every year fire has been destroying considerable amount of forest resources in Nepal. Forest fire occurs annually in all major physiographic climatic regions of Nepal, including the Terai, Siwalik and High Mountain regions mainly during the dry season. The main causes of forest fire are anthropogenic due to negligence and occasional deliberate burning of bushes to induce succulent grass growth for fodder purpose and reclaiming farm area within forest.

### **2.13 Windstorm, Thunderbolt and Hailstorm**

Windstorm occurs mainly during dry season between March to May. Thunderbolt occurs during monsoon and hailstorm takes place in the beginning and end of monsoon. Hailstorm causes heavy losses of agricultural crops though the magnitude of human life loss is seldom. Windstorm and thunderbolt causes the loss of human life as well as physical property.

## 2.14 Drought

Some parts of the country face the problem of drought. Uneven and irregular monsoon rainfall is the main factor of drought. The mountainous region (the northern belt) of Nepal is generally dry. The lack of irrigation facilities makes the problem even more serious as prolonged drought condition has adverse effect in crop production and productivity.

Statistic of the loss of lives and properties is presented in the table starting from 1992 till to 2002. In the recent years, the loss of properties and also the lives is more serious in case of water-induced disasters (landslide/floods).

**Table 1: Loss of Lives by Disaster in Nepal**

<b>LOSS OF LIVES BY DISASTER IN NEPAL</b>												
<b>Years/Types</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>1994</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>1997</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>Total</b>
Earthquakes	2	-	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	1	-	4
Floods & landslides	71	1336	49	203	258	83	273	193	173	196	441	1869
Fire	97	43	43	73	61	65	54	39	37	26	11	409
Epidemics	1128	100	626	520	494	951	840	1207	141	154	0	4933
Windstorm/thunderbolts	20	45	47	34	75	49	23	22	26	38	6	320
Avalanche				43	4	12	-	5	-	-	-	64
<b>Total</b>	<b>1318</b>	<b>1524</b>	<b>765</b>	<b>873</b>	<b>895</b>	<b>1160</b>	<b>1190</b>	<b>1466</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>458</b>	<b>7599</b>

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs, 2002

### **3. Poverty: Cause and Effect of Disaster (Vulnerability Analysis)**

Thousands of families, every year, especially from the eastern terai are being homeless due to water-induced disaster. These people are settled under the tent and plastic roof supported by temporary relief programs. Mostly Poor and excluded (women and children of disadvantaged and minority ethnic groups like Dalits) families are affected from disaster. Since they usually live in the disaster prone area due to socio economic and cultural structure of the society; so it is obvious that they are more victimized. It is because, most of the people forced to settle in the banks of the river, as the land price is comparatively less. Especially women and children are more affected. Women are more affected because they have to go for collecting firewood, fodder and grass from forest. Children also suffer from inadequate housing; nutrition and education rights if the family is suffer from disaster. These activities create them to homelessness and forced to adopt street life.

The heavy rain and storm during the monsoon and long drought in the dry season are the major risks of rural people in Nepal. Its consequences are fear, danger, and accidents, injure and lose of the wealth and property. It also reduces the psychological strength of the people. The risks are also increasing due to the poor institutional set-up and poor capacity and capability of the community. People usually eat dead fishes, contaminated food and water. As the environment being contaminated due to dead animals, the quality of water is worse. There are no habits of the people to preserve water for emergency period. During this period, increase in snake insects biting is normal phenomenon because of poor settlement pattern. People have no proper emergency preparedness and absence of secure places during emergency.

Similarly, settlement in the hazard / risk affected area without taking any protective and preventive measures such as construction of houses using weak and poor construction materials and no practice of timely maintenance of physical infrastructures. The haphazard use of land for agriculture and other activities also invites the risks. The main reason is depletion of natural resources (i.e. forest) in the Churia that causes heavy soil erosion and landslides and floods have chance to swept all these materials with it and deposited in the downstream.

Due to the poverty, unemployment, dry season and storm, the people living near by the disaster-affected area are being under the situation of vulnerability. Among them, pregnant women, disable people, old aged people are found more vulnerable. The poor, family residing near by the rivers, people residing in the laps of Hills, people displaced by the landslides and floods are affected from disaster.

Those people are vulnerable that are not able to manage the destruction right after the disaster by their own resources, i.e. they cannot face the disaster. In addition, those who's livelihood is distressed by the disaster or who can not manage the

disaster by their own efforts. On the contrary, those people do not fall under vulnerable category that can easily face the disaster or who are able to rehabilitate by their own resources after disaster. In other words, their livelihood is not disturbed by the disaster or they can rehabilitate easily after the disaster.

In the rural area, people run their livelihood through agriculture, livestock, daily wage labour, forest products, small business, service and foreign employment. The livelihood of disaster victims who reside in the lap of Churia largely depends upon the collection of firewood from forest. Some people run small vendor shops, tea shops nearby highway. Majority of them are in the low-income group, who are dependent and work as daily wage labourers. Those people who have some vocational skills such as carpentry, brick maker and are able to cope with disaster better than people who have no skills. Majority of the people are not fulfilling their food demands from their own production. Hence even those who have land have to depend on other two-three different sources of work to run their livelihood.

Different types of relationship between vulnerability and family size are also found. Even in the big families where more family members are engaged in the labour work or services can be able to run their livelihood, otherwise it is more vulnerable. Similarly many social ills and disorders such as domestic violence, crime, divorce, trafficking and alcoholism are the consequences of disaster that increase the further vulnerability. In the true sense, the skills, capabilities, access to and control over the resources are needed for livelihood security of the victims.

The vulnerability situation depends on the awareness level of family and community. Due to the socio-economic condition and lack of awareness among the people of the community, they are not able to face these hazards, so their condition is being vulnerable. As the hazard is increasing, vulnerability is also increasing due to the multiple effects of the previous hazards. This year, thousands of families are being landless and displaced from flood, hence forced to settle in the public lands. As a result, these displaced families suffer from flood and other social ills and disorders. Other hazards related to vulnerability also depend on the availability of food. The vulnerability is found more prevailing in the period of food scarcity than during the availability of food. It is also seen that there is a strong relation between hazards, vulnerability and poverty.

Poverty is found to be the major cause of vulnerability. And poverty is the consequence of hazards. Many people became landless and they are forced to settle in the public lands, roadside and at the bank of river and forests.

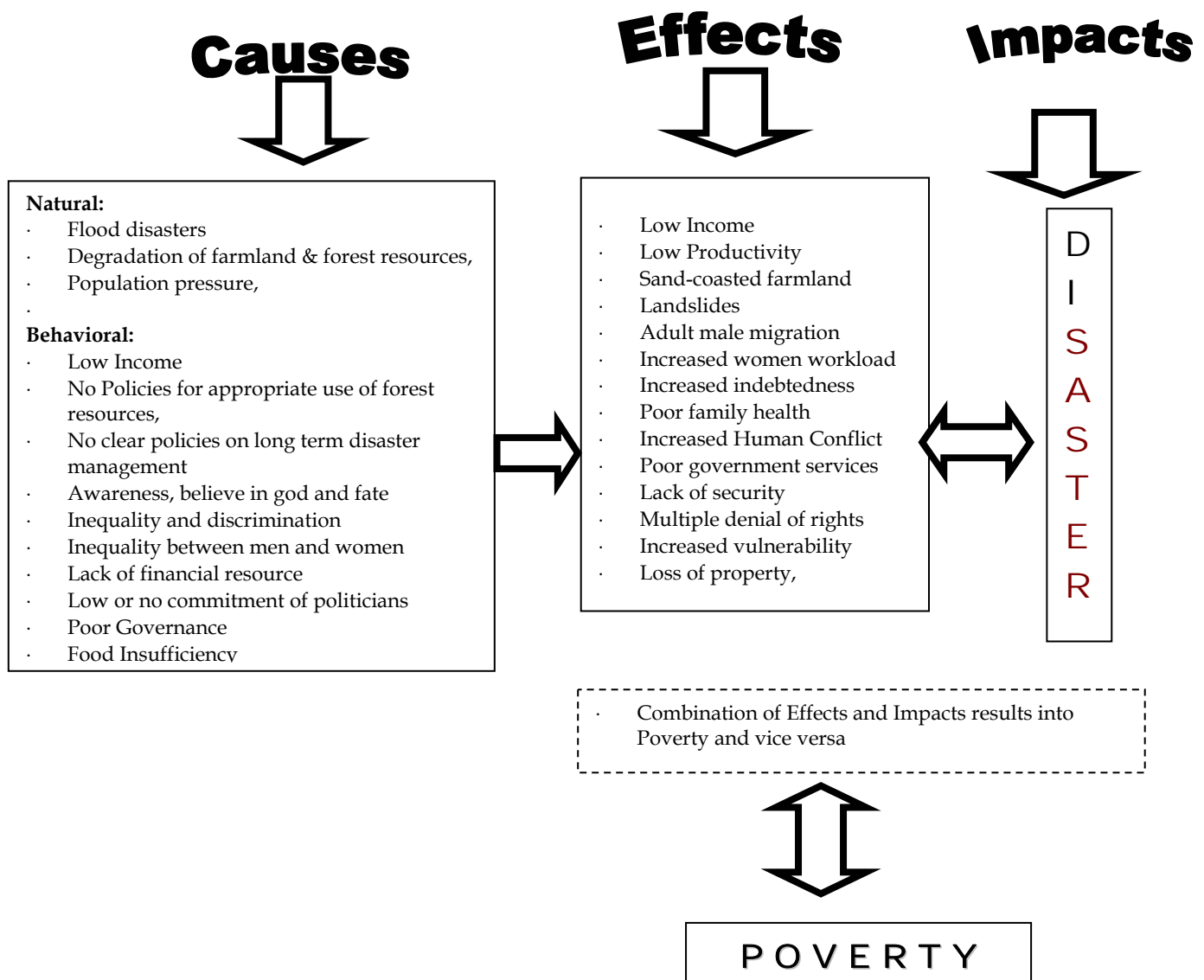
Those who have less skill and have no influence over the available resources are more vulnerable. The vulnerability situation depends on family, community and types of disaster. The families/communities who are affected for the first time are less vulnerable as compared to the families and community affected more than once. Similarly there is a strong relation between food availability and vulnerability. In general the most starvation months are from July to early September. Unfortunately

these are the months of heavy rains that cause landslides, flood and outburst of communicable diseases. As a result, the social, economic, educational and the entire situation have led to the increase frustrations and conflicts.

Because of economic reasons, the poor and the disadvantaged people living in rural areas are forced to settle in areas adjoining riversides and, therefore, bear the brunt of severe flooding, river erosion every year. There is a chain effect relation between water induced disasters, flood, famine, emergency and poverty, which is the key to understand the disaster vulnerability situation in Nepal.

The above-mentioned problems are making the inhabitants of disaster-prone areas more vulnerable and poorer. The poverty is the direct outcome of disasters with an increasing trend within the vicious circle of poverty. One problem has accelerated the dimension of other problems. Disaster is coming as the major factor to accelerate the poverty in the country. The negative impacts of the disasters are observed more among the poor, household women, children and the labour class. This vicious circle of poverty is summarized in the following diagram.

· The vicious circle of poverty and linkage with disaster





### 4. The Rights Perspective

International human rights law does not speak explicitly about the right to protection and relief from disasters, but it is clearly implied. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights says in article 3, 'Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and security of person.' Article 25 says:

**'Everyone has the right to standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, or old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.'**

Disasters are conditions under which an individual may face 'circumstances beyond his control'. The right to an adequate standard of living is not suspended in disasters. These rights are further elaborated in subsequent human rights agreements, particularly the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It is fully understood that national governments may have limited capacity in relation to such rights. Nevertheless, no matter how meager their resources may be, all governments have an obligation to take positive action to protect lives, and to assure an adequate standard of living, not only in normal times but also in conditions of acute crises.

#### 4.1 Security and Protection Rights:

All people have a right to protection from disasters, and consequently governments have an obligation to protect them. It is believed that the state was an outcome of an agreement, which is popularly known as 'social contract'. As a result, the state is obliged to protect those people to whom its existence is legitimised. The right to an adequate standard of living is not suspended in even in disasters. It is fully understood that national governments may have limited capacity in relation to such rights. Nevertheless, no matter how meager their resources may be all governments have an obligation to take positive action to protect lives, and assure an adequate standard of living, not only in normal times but also in conditions of acute crises.

Thus, basic disaster relief is not about charity. The human right to disaster protection means there are some services to which people are entitled. While dealing with the disaster situation the victims' dignity and intrinsic value are respected and protected. There should be domestic and international agencies that are capable of calling national governments to account if their preparations are not adequate. There must be organizational and training of personal, evacuation plans, emergency medical facilities, arrangements for providing food and water, etc. No state can deny these rights while responding disasters. It is not matter of charity but obligation of the government and international community.

Fundamental or inviolable basic rights have been guaranteed to all citizens under the 'Constitution of Nepal 2047'. Irrespective of the fact that it does not mention right to get relief and protection from disasters in particular, it can be found under the right to life and individual liberty under Article 12 of the Constitution. Right to life has meticulous dimensions. The Supreme Court of Nepal has interpreted this right as to include the dignified life embodying the right to shelter, health, clean environment etc in different Public Interest Litigation (PIL) cases. So, from this point of view, it can be concluded that human rights with respect to disaster response, such as right to protection from any disaster, right to rehabilitation, right to resettlement etc. can be defined under this Constitutional provision. If these rights are enshrined in the constitution, compensation occurred from any disaster should also be right of the victim. Rights are always to be compensated *in restitution in integrum* basis, which means to reconstitute in the earlier position.

However, as in many areas of human endeavours, the law's response to disaster situations in Nepal has been inadequate. In the area of legislation, there is no comprehensive, enacted law to deal with the issues arising out of a disaster. The existing laws, such as National Natural Calamities (Relief) Act 1982, are archaic and anachronistic, and do not serve the purpose of alleviating the victim's misery. Government has relied on *ex gratia* discretionary payments to meet the demands of victim-creating situations. The right to life has been interpreted not to include a mere right to existence. 'The right to life includes the right to live with human dignity and all that goes with it, namely, the bare necessities of life such as adequate nutrition, clothing and shelter and facilities for reading, writing and expressing oneself in diverse forms, freely moving about and mixing and co-mingling with fellow human beings.

The traditionally recognized social and economic rights, such as: right to shelter, education, and health, have now been construed as being an integral part of the right to life itself and therefore enforceable as such, makes it possible to take disaster-related issues to court. In addition, from a social security point of view, rights to rehabilitation, resettlement and compensations against loss and damages by the natural disasters have received the least attention in law. The judiciary's rightful domain is raging; its importance in getting the government to fulfil the constitutional obligations of a social welfare state has been firmly established.

In Nepal, Natural disasters have generally remained outside the development of compensation law and the notion of compensation to victims of natural disasters has remained at the discretion of the state, and as expressions of compassion and charity. However, a relationship is emerging between disasters and state policy; where there is, in addition, the gradual unfolding of a notion of culpable inaction. Ironically, the relief provided is of discretionary nature. No prior knowledge is there about when such relief would be provided, nor is there any standard as to the amounts that will be paid. It is a political expression of compassion in the nature of largesse, rather than as a policy.

Mass disasters, particularly natural disasters such as, floods and landslides, fire and earthquakes, witness a transfer of funds from the centre to the affected areas as a measure of relief. This is the relatively visible part of the exercise. Compensation to affected persons is only on part of what follows and tends to lack transparency. There is misappropriation and corruption of resources. Generally, the relief fund is used to assist the disaster victim. This fund is out of the social audit. No standards have been fixed to use this fund. It is generally used to satisfy the political cadres. Due to the lack of code of relief standards, the 'Natural Disaster Relief Fund' is being utilized in discretionary basis. The process of getting relief is also very lengthy. The problem of providing compensations troubles victims of mass disasters too.

Hence, Emergency and Disaster Management becomes vital intervention of AAN pertaining to ensure rights of disaster victims and poor and marginalized community vulnerable to natural and manmade hazards.

The purposes of disaster management are to enable the rights holders' societies to be resilient to natural and manmade hazards. These are targeted through community preparedness, capacity building, relief and rehabilitation and through strengthening coping strategy of poor and vulnerable groups and policy advocacy ensuring rights of poor and marginalized in such situation particularly focusing women and children.

### **Box 1: Rights to Humanitarian Assistance**

#### **Everyone who is extremely needy has a right to assistance**

- States have a duty to provide humanitarian assistance to victims in their territory or under their control.
- States, international governmental organizations and nongovernmental organizations have a right to offer humanitarian assistance to other States.
- States, international governmental organizations and nongovernmental organizations have a right to provide humanitarian assistance to victims in other States with the consent of these States-in case of disintegration of governmental authority and of civil war-with the consent of the relevant local authorities.
- States have no duty to provide humanitarian assistance to victims in other States but they have a duty to facilitate humanitarian assistance lent by other States, international governmental organizations or nongovernmental organizations. If measures of coercion are taken against a particular State, supplies for essential humanitarian needs have to be exempted from them.
- The Security Council, by virtue of Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter, may determine that the magnitude of a human tragedy constitutes a threat to international peace and security and authorize States or UN forces to take all measures necessary to bring humanitarian assistance to the victims.
- States have a duty to admit humanitarian assistance furnished by other States, international governmental organizations or nongovernmental organizations in accordance with international law. They may not arbitrarily refuse their consent.
- Individuals have a right against the State under whose control they are to receive humanitarian assistance insofar as this State has a duty to provide humanitarian assistance or to permit its distribution according to rules 3, 4, and 6.

**Rights to humanitarian assistance UNESCO, Paris 1995**

### **Box 2: Action Aid's Rights Analysis**

- A rights-based analysis considers people affected by emergencies as citizens with rights and responsibilities. People have a right to protection, to human security and to assistance based on their needs.
- Analysis of the distribution of power will inform all the elements of our rights analysis. It will also identify where and how poor people affected by disasters can increase their share of power.
- An analysis based on rights looks at who does and who does not have access to, and control over, basic resources and services. This often reflects discriminatory policies and practices, as in countries where women's lack of entitlements to land makes them more vulnerable to disasters.
- Our analysis will identify the responsibilities of people and institutions at all levels (individuals, families, local and national governments, regional bodies and international actors), and their capacities to uphold such responsibilities.
- A sound analysis of the existing international, national and local legal and governance systems is central to AA's approach, since they establish clear obligations on states and non-state actors to guarantee human security and poor people's assistance and protection.
- We will examine how people affected by disasters, particularly the most marginalised, can be actively involved in assessments, decision-making, and negotiation of their rights with other stakeholders.
- ActionAid's analysis will identify those groups of people and social sectors whose rights are severely denied. Thus ethnicity, gender, generation and disability become high priorities in emergencies.
- We will look at how gender roles and relations and patterns of discrimination make women more vulnerable, while undermining their capacity to cope with the effects of emergencies. For example, we will analyse the dynamics of sexual violence and human trafficking so that they are addressed by emergency programming.
- A rights analysis addresses both the tensions and synergies between power, culture and rights.

**ActionAid Emergency Strategy 2003-2007**

### 5. Recent Development Challenges on Disaster Management

The recent challenges are the big gaps in the policies and practices for the implementation of disaster management programme effectively. The planners and donors have not yet internalised the huge loss of lives and properties due to disasters during the development planning cycles. These several challenges on socio-political, financial and management aspects are as follows:

#### 5.1 Policy and practice related issues

- No separate department or institutions to deal with natural disasters in a comprehensive way (relief, rehabilitation and preparedness). Most of the actors show their presence during disasters only for rescue and relief works,
- The disaster management programme is not yet prioritised in national programme, as a result, the donor agencies are reluctant to address the disaster problems holistically,
- Lack of political commitment among the lawmakers and development planners for the continuity of the programme after rescue and relief works,
- Though NDRA (1982) is amended twice, but still focus remains on rescue and relief works –but not the preparedness programme in holistic ways,
- Unplanned development infrastructures – channel/roads/dams/high dam, and stone quarries in Siwalik hills resulting to the landslides, river beds increased, embankments are filled with deposition, finally sedimentation over the cropped fields or settlement areas in southern plains,
- The Indo-Nepal water treaties are not yet clear to the people living in the affected areas; the Government of India has ignored the people’s voice and built the high dam along the Indo-Nepal borders.
- 'Poverty is a cause and consequence of the disaster'. But, it has not been mentioned adequately the disaster management programme in the recent Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP),
- Limited availability of research and study reports for better understanding and analysis to the cause and effects of the increasing trend of disasters in Nepal,
- Less initiation on regional cooperation for the common problem like flood (ICIMOD organized one workshop, May 2001) and landslides in South-Asia,
- No access to poor, marginalized/disabled people, women and children in the process of implementing the disaster response programme,
- Vulnerable women, poor, children are not properly assessed during/post disaster situations in terms of equity and accessibility resulting to the increased drudgery and indebtedness for women in post disaster situations;
- The situation is being irreversible if not taken immediate preventive and mitigation measures in the flood prone districts

## 5.2 Operational and Management Issues

- Low or no transparency and accountability to the projects implemented (either by the people or government institutions and NGOs/CBOs),
- Lack of good governance leads financial mismanagement caused several disasters due to low quality of works (irrigation cannel, roads, others),
- Low or no allocation of financial resources for long term disaster management programme,
- The post disaster rehabilitation work demands relatively high cost compared to other development programme and rescue/relief works. Thus, donors and development planners have some reluctance for investment in the post disaster support activities.

### 6. Legislative and Policy Status

#### 6.1 Natural Calamities (Relief) Act 1982 (directly responding to disasters)

Natural Calamities (Relief) Act (NCA) 1982 of His Majesty's Government of Nepal (HMGN) is the first Act so far that recognizes earthquake, fire, storm, flood, landslide, heavy rainfall, drought, famine and epidemics as disaster. This is the Act responding to the several disaster situations directly. According to this Act, HMGN has constituted the Central Disaster Relief Committee under the chairmanship of the Home Minister in order to formulate and implement the policies and programme relating to the natural disaster relief work and to undertake other necessary measures thereof. The district committee is headed by the Chief District Officer, and supported by other government agencies. These committees are active only during the rescue works.

The Central Committee prepares specific norms of relief assistance to be provided to the disaster victims of the affected areas in cash and/or in kind through the District Natural Disaster Relief Committees. The Central Committee plays a vital role, as it has the mandate of preparedness and rehabilitation works after disasters. But, their works are still limited to the relief and rescue. There are some rehabilitation works focusing the housing supports but not yet prioritised. The roles of the Central Committee are entitled to recommend HMG for declaration of the Emergencies for the affected areas and also formulate national policies on its management.

Natural Calamities (Relief) Act 1982 defines natural disaster relief works as any relief work to be carried out in the area affected or likely to be affected by the natural disaster in order to remove the grief and inconvenience caused to the people, to rehabilitate the victims of the natural disaster, to protect the public property of the people, to control and prevent the natural disaster and to make advance preparation thereof. In the last two decades, the Act is amended twice in 1989 AD and 1992 AD. The Act is in principle, not so active in the practices. The Act is silent to describe the duties and responsibilities of all the disaster management related agencies other than the Ministry of Home Affairs. Duties and responsibilities of various other disaster management agencies have to be reflected in National Disaster Relief Regulation (NDRR), as every detail could not be stipulated in the Act. The Act has not yet developed the regulation for programme implementation. There are some responses during the serious disasters, but these activities are limited to the relief and rescue works, not yet reached the preparedness part. There were some rehabilitation works, mainly housing parts only. The Disaster Management Action Plan 1996 is prepared but not yet implemented in place.

The NDRA is silent to describe the duties and responsibilities of all the disaster management related agencies other than the Ministry of Home Affairs. Duties and responsibilities or various other disaster management agencies have to be reflected

in National Disaster Relief Regulation (NDRR), as every detail could not be stipulated in the Act. In order to deal with disaster and emergency, the role of regulations is important. Regulations provide not only a formal basis for counter-disaster action but also support plans, organizational arrangements, preparedness measures and response action. Unfortunately, there is no NDRR formulated so far. So the functionality of NDRA is sometimes challenging. Similarly, the role, functions and the duties of all district disaster management related agencies, the problems of co-operation, coordination and mutual understanding among various district disaster management related agencies are not reflected in NDRA.

Disaster victims do not always receive immediate, efficient and effective rescue and relief services. Delayed relief-works often being serious and unpleasant result, and duplication of relief works has also been experienced, mainly due to the absence of dialogue and mutual understanding among related agencies. In addition, some of the district agencies try to shift their responsibilities to others, as there are no clear-cut job descriptions in the Act. Thus immediate amendment in NDRA is necessary, and clear-cut job description of all the disaster management related agencies is needed to aware the agencies in their duties. Though the functions and duties of the DNDRC are to coordinate between local committees, formulate district level plans and submit to the regional committee, monitor and report the natural disaster relief work. But the preparation of advance plan and submits to regional level committee is never done.

## **6.2 National Action Plan on Disaster Management (1996)**

The adoption of National Action Plan on Disaster Management in 1996 has a very serious implication on macro level development planning on disaster. Prior to the declaration of this plan there was not any systematic observation on the necessity of the preparedness aspects of the disaster, which could be possible only after it. As a result, it has pressured the government to adopt the integrated approach with the development sector to the issues of disaster management. Being the secretariat of the Central Committee, Home Ministry, Natural Disaster Relief Section is the nodal agency for disaster management in Nepal. This has responsibility to coordinate with all activities and agencies involved in the area of disaster management system. It is a central focal point. Formulation of national policies and their implementation, preparedness and mitigation of disaster, immediate rescue and relief works, data collection and dissemination, collection and distribution of funds and resources are the vital functions of this ministry. Even though, it has its network through out the country to cope with the natural disasters, the response of this ministry has always been put into questions. This ministry is not able to inter into the crux of the problems as this is general administrating body undertakes the responsibility to maintain peace in the Kingdom.

The NAP has specified priority groups, activities and executive agencies to be undertaken in the field of disaster management. So it is more progressive than other plans. It advocates the importance of local knowledge and skills as well as the



people's capacity and awareness along with technical measures to mitigate the disaster.

### **6.3 National Priorities on disaster management programme**

The responsibilities for disaster management were taken by the State in a very narrow limit for providing the immediate relief and rescue works at the time of disaster until a few years ago. Thus, the legal aspects on disaster management limit the comprehensive management of disaster effects. Ministry of Home Affairs and its network agencies are primarily responsible in the rescue and relief works with other few I/NGOs at local levels. Apart from the rescue and relief works, there is no visibility of preparedness and rehabilitation works compared to the extent of the present disasters.

### **6.4 Agriculture Perspective Plan (APP)**

There are policies in other disciplines influencing disaster management indirectly. The Government of Nepal's twenty-year Agriculture Perspective Plan (APP) has given clear priority to increasing agricultural production in the Terai with shallow tube wells playing a crucial role. The draught is another type of disaster begun in Terai and western hills of Nepal, almost 7 to 9 months without rain. As a result, people are getting famine. The APP has emphasized the shallow tube wells in those areas for irrigating winter crops. It has indirect impact on reducing the disaster due to draught. In the hills, the APP has suggested terracing and bond making and conservation practices. It also reduces the negative effects of the water-induced disasters.

### **6.5 Forestry Master Plan**

The Forestry Master Plan has underlined the importance of managing the degraded forests through the participatory approach. One of the many causes of water-induced disaster is the forest degradation. This plan has clearly outlined the processes for the management of forest resource reducing the disasters.

### **6.6 Water Resource Strategy**

Similarly, one of the objectives of the Water Resource Strategy of Nepal 2001 is to identify appropriate strategies leading to implementation of action initiatives and programmes designed at addressing issues, including those of landslides, soil erosion, sedimentation, flooding and watershed conservation (Water Resource Strategy 2001). Nepal Government Environmental Policy has directed to mitigate the adverse environmental impact of development projects and natural processes.

### **6.7 National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPA)**

A draft NAPA document address that temperature and rainfall changes affected the ecology of the mountain region, thereby greatly affecting the socio-economic activity of downstream population through the natural calamities and disaster.

Nepal is formulating NAPA with the involvement of multi-disciplinary team, which was coordinated by Ministry of Population and Environment (MOPE). The

document regarding the process for the NAPA preparation is in the endorsement pipeline by MOPE officials.

### **6.8 Local Self-Governance Act (1999)**

The Local Self-Governance Act (1999) is silent about the provision of disaster management. So there is no provision of flood and landslide related disaster prevention plan in this Act. Even the Act does not spell about the role of local institutions on disaster management. It has given mandate to the higher-level institutions to execute the rescue and relief programs through local institutions.

So clearly, local bodies have to work in the various disasters as instructed by the higher institutions. The Act has the provision of taking permission by ratifying the map while carrying out local level construction work.

There is no provision about the disaster and its consequences mentioned in this Act. Though disasters have to be mitigated at local level with the help of community based institutions but it is not reflected in the Act.

### **6.9 Building Act (1987) and Building Conservation Act (1993)**

Even in Building Act (1987) and Building Conservation Act (1993) have spelt about the management of natural disaster. But this act has not been able to be enforced in all parts of Nepal. Building Act spells for the construction of houses on the secure place whereas Building Construction Act spells about Do's and Don'ts while construction of houses. These provisions are made considering mitigation the damage of earthquake.

But there is no provision of mitigation of damage imposed by the flood and landslide related natural disaster. Till now there is no provision of separate Act to mitigate the damages imposed by floods and landslides.

### **6.10 Biodiversity Strategy (2002)**

The country's Biodiversity Strategy (2002) also listed several climate-related risks such as flooding and sedimentation as threats to biodiversity. And the report prepared for the UNCCD COP-4 (in 2000) addressed impact desertification of land degradation and climate change.

### **6.11 Formulation of a Comprehensive River Law**

The DWIDP, is planning to develop a preliminary draft of a Comprehensive River Law to provide the guideline for overall river management and administration in consultation with the concerned stakeholders.

This law is able to aware the stakeholders related to River management by specifying the its crucial phenomenon and ways to measures the mitigation.

### **6.12 Watershed Management Policy**

The watershed management policy is developed to conserve the watersheds. It envisions helping people meet their local needs by improving lands and increasing

agricultural productivity through proper conservation and mitigation of watershed resources in an integrated approach.

The major focus of this policy is implement integrated watershed management by linking forestry, agriculture, livestock, water and land use to help people better conserve and manage land and water resources. The policy emphasis on mobilising the local community as well as raising their awareness through user groups.

Not clear to delineate the roles and responsibilities of various institutions, duplication in the programs, and egoism among the organisation.

The Review of the Churia (Siwalik) Hills Project (HMG/ADB TA 3536-NEP) has given top priority to the sustainability of the agriculture production in the Terai region (flood prone areas). Further, it has also recognized the need for coordination in watershed management and reclamation of sand-casted farmlands as other major factors for improving the livelihood situation of the people living in the Terai regions (flood prone areas).

### **6.13 The Constitution of Nepal (1990)**

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal is the masterpiece of all laws and legislation. Unfortunately, it does not say anything about the right to get relief and protection from disaster in particular, it can be found under the right to life and individual liberty under article 12. Right to life has meticulous dimensions. The supreme court of Nepal has interpreted the right as to include the dignified life embodying the right to shelter, health, clean environment etc. So, in this view, it can be said that the human rights with respect to the disaster response, such as right to protection, right to rehabilitation, right to resettlement from any disaster can be defined under this constitution.

### **6.14 River Control Policy**

'River control policy' is developed by Department of Irrigation in 1997. It emphasis the need for a new comprehensive approach to flood mitigation and river control through use of local material, instead of relying solely on gabion-wires; incorporation of bio-engineering in river control facilities, combination of structural and non-structural measures, and capacity-building/institutional development of community organisations for flood mitigation measures.

This draft policy has also stressed the need for a more systematic approach to river control in the Terai and the establishment of river classification, design criteria and databases.

### **6.15 National Water Resources Strategy Formulation (2002)**

His Majesty's Government of Nepal with the support of World Bank and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is formulating a long term National Water Resources Strategy. This strategy also highlighted the importance of water induced disaster management. The focus of the water induced disaster management

during the first five years of the plan is to enhance institutional capabilities for managing water induced disasters. It is clearly said that in the following ten years, effective measures will be adopted to manage better water-induced disasters. The long-term goal of this strategy is to make Nepal's water disaster management system fully functional, effective and responsive as people's needs. The total program is expected to directly address the needs of the poor and marginalized people, thereby contributing to improved living conditions for the poorest sectors of the Nepali population. Altogether nine programs have been identified under this strategy.

#### **6.16 The Tenth Five-Year Plan (2003 –2008) in Disaster Management Context**

The tenth five-year plan has given high priority for water-induced disaster prevention. The major goals are envisioned as follows.

- Formulate policies; guidelines related to water induced disaster management.
- Collect information through participatory hazards mappings.
- Prepare flood plan management guidelines.
- Help to strengthening of inundation committee/other groups involving in the disaster.
- Mobilise external resources in water induced disaster prevention sector.
- Prepare master plan for river and landslides management.
- Prepare inventory of rivers flowing to/from neighbouring countries, and
- Strengthen institutional set-up to execute the in the efficient manner.

The tenth plan specified very clear strategies. The strategies spelled out that water-induced disasters are damaging a lot of fertile agricultural lands, vital infrastructures, lives and properties etc. Poor and socially deprived people are mostly affected by such disasters causing adverse effect on 'poverty reduction'. So, proper management of water-induced disaster is considered as important activity for sustainable development of the country. In this context the following major strategies in this sector are envisioned which are hereunder.

- Formulate water induced disaster prevention policy and guidelines and institutional strengthening.
- Prepare the modalities for effective implementation of water induced disaster prevention/mitigation activities and create awareness for minimise the magnitude of disaster.
- Design integrated planning and management between DWIDP and Department of Soil Conservation and Watershed Management (DSCWM) by utilizing local skill, material and peoples' participation.

For achieving the above objectives on disaster management in line with the mentioned outputs, the tenth plan has developed its policies as follows:

- A long term disaster management action plan will be made, co-ordination between donors, the government, NGOs and the private sector will be established and the formulation and implementation of sectoral programmes based on the action plan will be made more effective.
- The study of environmental impact and disaster evaluation study of infrastructure construction projects will be made compulsory.

- Public awareness programmes will be launched to increase people's participation in the management of natural disasters including floods, landslides and earthquakes.
- The institutional strengthening of organizations involved in disaster management will be emphasized and Disaster Management Department will be developed as the central co-coordinating unit.
- On the basis of the evaluation of the past earthquake management and their effects, programmes like the mapping of earthquake prone zones, regular monitoring, early preparedness for and management of earthquakes, as well as the increase in awareness programmes of people living in such areas will be launched with a view to reducing the destructive effects of such earthquakes in the future.
- In order to manage water induced disaster and to enhance the capacity of organizations involved in the formulation of its policy action plan and programme, the participation of the people in watershed management and river control will be enlisted.
- A hazard map of flood, landslide, silt flow and glaciers will be prepared through the collection, exchange, storage and flow of information relating to water induced disaster and disaster prone areas will be classified.

*Major Programmes and Implementation Process:*

The tenth plan mentions the major programmes related to water-induced disaster are as follows:

- Formulate policy, rule, regulation and guidelines for the institutionalisation of water-induced disaster management as a regular program.
- Delineate water-induced disaster areas and prepare water-induced hazard maps.
- Develop and disseminate appropriate and low-cost technology through model construction works.
- Provide information regarding the probable disasters due to floods and landslides through the establishment of forecasting systems and public awareness.
- Build the strong coordination among agencies related with water-induced disaster management.
- Activate bi-lateral committees related with the inundation problems of Indo-Nepal borders.
- Implement work plan for the management of flood plains, and
- Implement the projects and programmes for water-induced disaster mitigation.

Enhancements of institutional capabilities to manage water-induced disasters are considered as short-term output. Similarly, effective measures to manage water related disasters and mitigate their adverse effect and functionality of water induced disaster management are regarded as medium term and long term output respectively.

Though the roles are clearly defined, but there is no proper coordination between watershed management and DWIDP. As usual the plans formulated by Tenth Plan

also not materialize properly. One of the important weaknesses in implementing such plan is due to lack of separate institution dealing on disaster management and prevention.

Another reason is there are not sufficient resources to execute the activities as spelled out in the Tenth Plan. It is general trend that the budget is always sanctioned at the final quarter of the fiscal year. So this is also on important obstacles to implement the plans.

In the nutshell, people have little knowledge about national policy, strategy and Acts. Both state and private sectors are responsible for it. To cope with disaster effects, people participation and the role of civil society and broad range of stakeholder's interaction are needed. Community based disaster management initiatives are still poor. There is no appropriate preparedness approach for disaster in advance mobilizing the human and natural resources.

In view of the complexities and diversities of disaster management in Nepal, a concrete, effective and practicable policy is needed for which political commitment and a pragmatic policy formulation is necessary in order to reduce the vulnerability and disasters faced by the people of Nepal.

### 7. Program Interventions on Disaster Management

#### 7.1 Department of (*Narcotics Control and*) disaster Management under Home Ministry

The realizing the urgency of the executive organization, HMG/N constituted a new department to deal in disaster towards the end of Ninth plan period (1997 -02) called Department of (*Narcotics Control and*) disaster Management. This is the central and highest government authority in the implementation of the disaster response programme in Nepal.

#### 7.2 Local Government (DDC/VDC):

District Administration Office (Chief District Officer -CDO), District Development Committee (DDC), Village Development Committee (VDC) and district level Red Cross Offices have been responding to the disaster situations at the district level. In the recent days, it has started the coordination with local NGOs, donor agencies for the resources to manage relief.

#### 7.3 Department of Water Induced Disaster Prevention (DWIDP)

Department of Water Induced Disaster Prevention was established as the name of Water Induced Disaster Prevention Technical Centre (DPTC) in October 1991, a joint undertaking of concerned agency of HMG/ Nepal within the Ministry of Water Resource as a leading agency and Japan Cooperation Agency (JICA). DPTC has been extended the Disaster Mitigation Support Project (DMSP) since September 1999. This project has promoted into *Department of Water Induced Disaster Prevention - DWIDP* on February 1999. Activities, which have been done by DWIDP since 1992 on water induced disaster mitigation, are listed in three sections as Sabo engineering, Landslides Prevention and Protection, and River Embankment. Main objective of this project is to promote the counter measures for the Water Induced Disaster by HMG/N and Communities.

#### 7.4 Nepal Red Cross

It is the oldest and the most popular organization in responding to the disaster situation in Nepal. It has the branch offices in all the districts and reached the disaster sites most earlier than to any other organizations. However, the response activities were limited mainly on the rescue and relief works. In the last few years, it has demonstrated the success model of the "Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP) Programme" in the areas affected from the landslides and floods. Most of other international organizations join with Nepal Red Cross in the time of disaster relief works to avoid the duplication. Disaster management is one of their core programme issues.

### **7.5 Oxfam Nepal**

The Oxfam is committed to support such poor and disadvantaged people to bring about positive and sustainable change on their lives and reduce their vulnerability to flood disaster through the river basin program. The aim of the Oxfam has a long term program to improve the livelihoods of the vulnerable people living in Terai region of Nepal using the rights based approach.

### **7.6 Lutherans World Service/Nepal**

Lutheran World Service Nepal has its Disaster Preparedness Project since 1996 focusing disaster preparedness, response and mitigation in the grass root level. These activities are Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP), strengthening of strategic relationships, building cooperative partnerships and launching School Earthquake Awareness Training (SEAT) program. Recently, it has further focused and extended its Disaster Preparedness Project in several districts.

### **7.7 Action Aid Nepal**

AAN is responding the emergencies like flood disasters and earthquake disasters but limited to relief and rehabilitation till now. It has further realized that the preparedness and capacity building of community based organizations to cope the disaster situation. In the process, AAN will enhance the capacities of the disaster-affected communities ensuring development infrastructures will not increase the vulnerability situations. Most of thematic initiatives are in the process of providing disaster preparedness as the crosscutting issue within other theme papers.

### **7.8 United Mission to Nepal**

The United Mission to Nepal (UMN), as one of the largest non-government service agencies in the country, includes the large number of skilled personal and other facilities, which can be helpful in any disaster response situation. Mainly United Mission to Nepal involved in the education health 'rural development, industrial development etc. UMN has taken few steps on the disaster management activities within their working areas in Nepal. UMN adopted UMN policy and operational guideline for disaster response.

### **7.9 UN Disaster Management Secretariat in UNDP**

After the 1993 floods, landslides and debris flows, UNDP established a full time UN Disaster Management Secretariat (UN-DMS) to support the government disaster response efforts. The major objective of the program is to increase disaster management capacity of the government agencies, I/NGOs, the disaster-affected communities and assistance to UN disaster Management Secretariat Communities.

### **7.10 International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD)**

The major Disaster Management work under ICIMOD includes the regional workshops, trainings, hazard mapping using GIS and Preparation of a Climatic-Hydrological Atlas of Nepal using the available information. In May 2000, there was the regional workshop on the flood forecasting in the region. ICIMOD has initiated



the regional cooperation on the disaster management programme since the last few years (May 2002).

### **7.11 CARE Nepal**

Care Nepal is widely involved in agriculture and natural resources management programs focusing the livelihood of the disaster-affected people within the flood and landslide prone areas. More specifically, it has been implementing the watershed management programme in the Terai and middle hills focusing to reduce the impacts of landslides/flood disasters. CARE Project in Mahottari district is focusing on the flood mitigation and preparedness.

### **7.12 DP Net**

The Disaster Preparedness Network (DPNET) is envisioned as a loose association of individual organizations working in the disaster programme. This forum is used to share the information on disaster management, resource sharing, provide feedback to government on the policy and practice changes. It has around 22 member organizations including INGOs, UNDP, Government Red Cross and local NGOs. Nepal Red Cross Society is working as the Secretariat of the Net since 1999. The network aim to assist individuals and organizations to prepare for responding any disaster. The major role of the DPNet is to enhance the capacity and improve the performance of its member organizations to implement and sustain disaster preparedness programme.

### **7.13 DPTG**

The Disaster Preparedness Task Group (DPTG) is the next loose forum within an Association of International NGOs (AIN) with an aim to assist and strengthen the capacity of International/National Non-Governmental organizations and Government to prepare for and respond to disasters. It aims to enhance better coordination among AIN member organizations pursuing common understanding on disaster management policies (preparedness, relief and rehabilitation).

### **7.14 Other NGOs**

Other NGOs working to reduce the impacts of flood disasters/landslides in the disaster prone districts are:

- The National Society for Earthquake Technology -Nepal (NSET) in Kathmandu has taken responsibility for promoting awareness of earthquake risk and implementation of seismic risk reduction project in Kathmandu valley.
- NCDM basically works on policy research and capacity building on Disaster Management
- Rural Service Organization (RSO) in Rautahat district, working -water induced disasters
- People Welfare Campaign (PWC) in Chitwan district, working -water induced disasters
- Campaign Service Centre (CSC) in Nawalparasi district -water induced disasters

- Friend's Service Council (FSC) in Rupandehi working on the water induced disasters,
- MADE Nepal working in six disaster prone districts (Rautahat, Bara, Chitwan, Nawalparasi, Rupandehi and Kapilbastu) on natural resource management to reduce poverty by improving the livelihoods of the disaster-affected -people,
- Nepal Environment Welfare Society (NEWS) along the Mahakali river basin in Far-Western region working on the water induced disasters
- Environment Conservation Society (ECOS) in the Karnali river basin areas.
- Local NGO working on Disaster Preparedness Project in Sindhuli district with AAN, called CDPS (Community Development Programme, Sindhuli).

### **8. AAN Analysis of Disaster Context and Position on Disaster Management**

#### **8.1 Condition**

Due to its topographical variation and geological characteristics along with torrential rain during monsoon season, Nepal is highly vulnerable to various forms of disasters, in particular, floods, landslides, soil erosions, debris-flow, glacial lake outburst and earthquakes. These phenomena cause loss of lives and property, besides posing severe hazards to the physical infrastructures thereby causing disruptions in the social and economic development of the country. The fear of such disasters put people, particularly the poor and excluded, at constant psychological pressure and uncertainty.

#### **8.2 Consequences**

Ecological, physiological, metrological, geological and socio-economic factors contribute to the high incidence of natural disasters in Nepal. A total of 64 out of 75 districts are prone to disasters, especially the districts in the hills and mountains. Natural disasters annually claim more than 1100 deaths in Nepal and they are one major factor affecting the livelihoods of poor people. There are many reasons for the increased occurrence of disasters in recent years. When poverty and lack of choices for alternative sources of income lead poor people to exploit its environment, forests, soil, wetlands and water sources, the risks of disasters increase. Unplanned urbanization contributes to the disaster risk of marginalized urban poor who often live on unsafe land. Disasters leave poor people with still fewer assets and repeated disasters push them into desperate poverty.

#### **8.3 Rights Holders**

Nepal is prone to various forms of disaster. Thus, significant number of people are affected by one or another form of disasters every year. In 2003, floods and landslides alone affected almost 10,500 families in 62 of Nepal's 75 districts. The poor are often hit harder by such disasters, as their capacity to cope with such hazards is low. The disasters are not only just a threat to life but also to livelihoods of poor people. As there is a lack of clear policy of compensation for disaster victims, the victims are often left with nominal or no compensations. There is very less awareness that the victims of disaster have the right to rehabilitation, not only relief.

#### **8.4 Stakeholders**

Several governmental and non-governmental agencies have been involved and working actively in disaster management programmes across Nepal. However, apart from rescue and relief works, very little initiatives have been taken to promote proper disaster preparedness and rehabilitation. The rights of disaster victims have not found the deserved place in the development discourse of the country.

## 8.5 Approach

Nepal's varied geography, lack of proper infrastructure planning and high incidence of poverty make the country extremely vulnerable to the devastating effects of both natural and human-made disasters. Such disasters increase poor people's vulnerability which consequently decreases their livelihood opportunities and ability to cope with economic and other hazards. Realising disaster vulnerability as one of the contributing factors to aggravating and perpetuating poverty, AAN has recognized 'Emergency and Disaster Management' as one of its cross-cutting themes.

Emergencies and Disaster Management programme is directly linked with the poverty reduction strategy as one of the major factors affecting the livelihoods of the poor people. Any type of disaster becomes more serious when local coping capacity is inadequate. Disasters will accelerate poverty with increasing trend of the indebtedness among the poor and women headed families. At this junction, Action Aid must address emergency and disaster management work in order to eradicate such poverty. A more strategic and rapid response to disasters and integration of disaster mitigation efforts into the regular development plan is strongly essential. AAN believes that poor people have a right to protection, to human security and to access appropriate assistance to survive and recover from disasters. Based on this belief, AAN will work towards building capacities to ensure a more strategic and rapid response to disasters- before, during and after they occur.

## 8.6 Key Strategies

- Improving the ability of vulnerable communities to cope with disasters through community-based disaster preparedness strategies
- Establishing and capacity building of alliances and networks for effective disaster preparedness and response
- Hazards mapping and vulnerabilities assessment of the disaster prone areas and advocating for the necessary mitigation measures
- Providing immediate relief and rehabilitation to the most needy poor people in post-disaster situations
- Promoting the rights of the disaster victims on proper compensation and rehabilitation

## 8.7 Operation

AAN will provide enough information to the International donors and planners on disaster impacts on the lives of the people as a major cause of poverty in the country so as to increase responsibilities of international donor communities to supplement in delivering basic humanitarian services. Thus, AAN broadly executes disaster management programme through Creation of Information Base/MIS, Capacity Building, resource mobilization for programme implementation and Building the Alliances for policy influencing.

a) In order to implement the Emergency and Disaster Management Programme, AAN has first developed its guiding principles as follows:

- Advocating the need for the effectiveness of the disaster response including the short and long-term plan with government, donors, non-governmental organizations and the public,
- Hazards mapping and vulnerabilities assessment of the disaster prone areas and advocate for the necessary mitigation measures,
- Establishing the co-ordination systems among the agencies working in disaster management,
- AAN will adopt and apply the standards set by the Red Cross, Sphere Project for its operation and Nepal government rules and regulation.
- AAN recognizes the preparedness should be one of the primary activities to reduce the disaster effects,
- Strengthening the organizational capacity at national and local levels for effective disaster preparedness,
- Improving the ability of vulnerable communities to cope with disasters through community-based disaster preparedness strategies,

b) Considering the above guiding principles, AAN has set up the following strategic positions in order to execute the Disaster Management Programme:

- **POOR PEOPLE ARE ASSURED OF APPROPRIATE ASSISTANCE TO SURVIVE AND RECOVER FROM DISASTER:** Rights to life and livelihood (food, shelter, health & sanitation, water, clothing etc.) of each individual and community should be secure in circumstances of any emergency and disaster.
- **PEOPLE AFFECTED BY DISASTERS AS CITIZENS WITH RIGHTS - PEOPLE HAVE RIGHT TO PROTECTION TO HUMAN SECURITY AND TO ASSISTANCE BASED ON THEIR NEEDS:** Ensure government/agencies accountable to act immediately in emergency and disaster.
- **PROMOTE LONG TERM AND SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS THROUGH THE INTEGRATION OF HUMANITARIAN WORK AND ON-GOING DEVELOPMENT WORK:** Follow the human rights and humanitarian laws responding emergency and disaster, ensuring minimum Sphere Standards in emergency and disaster responses. Apply the "Do no harm" principles. Reduce vulnerability of the poorest and marginalized by the regular development interventions.
- **RIGHTS TO PARTICIPATE - PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE AFFECTED BY DISASTER IN DECISION MAKING:** Work together with other stakeholders to fill the gaps. People affected by disasters particularly the most marginalized, can be actively involved in assessments, decision-making, and negotiation of their rights with the stakeholders.
- **CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS AT ALL LEVEL UPHOLDS SUCH RESPONSIBILITY AND GROW THE CAPACITY:** Educate, organize and mobilize the people towards reducing the risk through preparedness and mitigation of the hazards and secure sustained livelihood with dignified lives and addresses policies issues to assert the rights of the people in difficult circumstances (i.e. emergency and disaster). Develop resilience capacity of the community to cope with the hazards.

### **c) Strategic Objectives on Emergency and Disaster Management:**

Considering the above guiding principles and strategic positions, five broader specific objectives are developed as follows:

- *Capacity Building:* Ensure preparedness and availability of trained human resources in its working areas to assist the local government and communities in the event of major disasters,
- *Building alliances:* Build the strong alliance and networks of the NGOs/CBOs and also with local government agencies (CDO/DDC/VDC) in order to have the effective respond during the rescue, relief, rehabilitation and preparedness works; and for the collaborative works,
- *Policy Influencing:* Influence policy makers and media advocacy people for the rights of the disaster-affected poor people integrating Gender and Rights perspectives in the disaster works,
- *Emergency Response:* Respond and support vulnerable communities by implementing the relief, rehabilitation and preparedness works as and when necessary,
- *Knowledge Management:* Share the key learning and practices with other country programs especially within AA Asia.

### **d) Implementation Approach on Emergency and Disaster Management Programme:**

For achieving the strategic objectives, the implementation approach will proactively engage in disaster management through a Rights Based Approach where the Vulnerable and victims of emergency and disaster can access the proper assistance, followed by the capacity building in enabling the people to access and control over the resources and opportunities. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person. The International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights appears to be concerned with many of the constituents of vulnerability: it protects the right to adequate food, nutrition, shelter, clothing, education and health and medical services.

Action Aid Nepal considers all sorts of Disasters as Poverty Perpetuating Events where the basic needs or basic rights of poor people overlooked. AAN ensures all the Humanitarian Aids supply delivered to the affected people are based on Rights Perspective. Therefore it seeks active involvements of the poor people (women, children and Dalits) in decision making ensuring full access and control over the support/services delivered to them.

### **e) Disaster Response Strategies:**

Within the frame work of the above guiding principles, strategic positions and objectives, AAN Nepal has developed its disaster respond strategies in the following three phases:

## **Phase -1: Disaster preparedness/mitigation (pre-disaster)**

*Disaster Preparedness* is the strategic response of AAN to reduce the risks and vulnerabilities of the communities living on the disaster prone areas. Thus, AAN will strategically works in building capacity (preparedness) of the government, the relief agencies and disaster-affected people to manage the disasters proactively.

*Disaster Preparedness* includes measures related to advocacy on policies and practices changes, different hazard assessment, vulnerability assessment, awareness raising, information management and stockpiling of relief/rescue materials as contingency plan for the potential disaster. Mitigation, as the parts of preparedness, includes the construction of the catchments ponds, check dams, river embankment, forestation etc. All these measures focus to improve the livelihoods of the disaster-affected people in sustainable ways. AAN will carry the preparedness and mitigation measures in following ways:

- i) Mass awareness through Street drama, film shows and poster pamphlets:* AAN will promote awareness among people of their rights and the responsibilities and obligations for emergency preparedness and response. Similarly, will create opportunity to learn and share the information regarding disaster preparedness, mitigation and response. For this AAN will mobilize the media, theatre groups and other means of mass communications available in Nepal.
- ii) Capacity building Training, workshops, Seminar:* AAN will develop a thorough understanding and seek to increase the capacity of those stakeholders with such responsibilities in Nepal. AAN will foster the opportunity to learn the skill and capacity building opportunity including shared learning at national and regional level in disaster management. For this AAN will organize training workshops, demonstration camps exposure etc.
- iii) Community Based Disaster Preparedness (CBDP) programme implementation:* AAN will focus on preparedness in disaster management than making response to post disaster situation. For this AAN will always have the strategy to enable the community prepared with potential risk, hazards and mitigating the disaster. The preparedness includes analysing the capacity and vulnerability in long term work and using that analysis build local resilience, readiness and long term recovery. AAN will ensure all its DA program have CBDP component and developed preparedness plan.
- iv) Issue based research and media campaigning:* AAN will carry out policy mapping for rights based approach to emergency and disaster management, find gaps and scope to improvement and disseminate the outcomes through media to take it further for policy advocacy in favour of poor and marginalized.
- v) Policy Advocacy and inputs for restoring Humanitarian Standards and Rights:* Policy Advocacy and inputs for restoring Humanitarian Standards and Rights that's routinely denied in emergency and disaster situation will also be the area of

intervention for AAN. This will include the conflict resolution, peace building and developing the necessary code and conduct through expertise sharing and skill transformation. AAN will also provide inputs from the experience of other country programs similar to Nepal.

*vi) Linkage and networking at national, regional and international levels:* AAN will endeavour the *Linkage and networking* at national, regional and international levels to secure additional capacity to reduce the vulnerability and overcome the disaster impact in Nepal. For this AAN will be close with the national, regional and international networks and agencies working in the issue.

*vii) Strengthening the local government offices/agencies (CDO/DDC/VDCs):* The local agencies like District Administration, District Development Committee, Village Development Committee; District Red Cross etc will take part in the process of disaster management jointly with AAN activities. AAN facilitate to regularize their services to the disaster victims as planned in disaster management act. This is the part of the Good Governance activities. Thus, the good governance is the major cross cutting issues in all steps of the preparedness programme.

**Phase -2 Disaster Relief support (*during disaster*):**

The disaster response Relief and Support includes any activities intend to save the lives of the people during the disasters; these activities are rescue operation, medical and food aid for short period, assessment of the situation for the immediate and long term response includes communication and transport, temporal settlement, security, health camps etc. The effectiveness of the response depends on the contingency plan prepared ahead. ActionAid Nepal involves on Disaster Relief too if the people are in difficult circumstances and no other parties are there to respond at the time of strike e.g. the program area DA/DI Districts.

**Phase -3 Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (*Post Disaster -short term response*):**

With the recommendation of the assessment team during the disaster, the short-term rehabilitation and long term rehabilitation programme is set up. It focuses the programme directly for permanent settlement, livelihood support, repair and maintenance, reconstruction, Institutional strengthening, ensuring the rights of the peoples in Disaster Situation etc.



### **9. Monitoring and Evaluation / Expected Outputs of the Programme**

As Alps, we will have regular monitoring and evaluation (M&E) using the Participatory review and reflection process. The programme outputs are measured at the end of the year 2008 at community, national and international levels in the process of monitoring and evaluation. These expected outputs are:

#### **9.1 Community level**

- People at vulnerable areas starts claiming their rights related to disaster response (preparedness, rehabilitation and rescue/relief supports),
- People at vulnerable areas become more aware on the consequences of emergency and disaster preparedness. They will be trained to combat with emergency and disaster through adequate preparedness at VDC level committee/networks,
- Linkage and coordination, Networking at VDC/DDC level to cope with emergency and disaster is strengthened,
- Disaster management committee will be functioning at DDC/VDC level.

#### **9.2 National level**

- There will be Central and District level Coordination Units including the government, I/NGOs, UN agencies, and people's representatives.
- Central Coordination Unit will ensure the integration of the disaster management programme into the regular development plan.
- The Natural Disaster Relief Act will be again amended and formulated its regulations for effective programme implementation. As a result, there will be a strong legislation to ensure rights of poor and marginalized communities and compensation of loss and damages. Such compensations activities will be made transparent and accountable
- There will be effective networks at the national level to lobby, influence and advocacy to the government to combat emergency and disaster management in Nepal.
- Information sharing of the meteorological station with all the stakeholders for saving the lives of the people living in the disaster prone areas as of preparatory works for early warning systems.
- Media will start advocating the disaster issues in favour of the disaster-affected and victims.

#### **9.3 International level**

- International donor communities will observe the level of disaster situation closely and raise funds for long term disaster preparedness programme including relief and rehabilitation works,

- Information sharing at cross border level before the disaster if any indications prevails (early warning mechanism),
- Few of the natural disasters like flooding have cross border effects; it needs exchange of the regional cooperation to minimize the effects of the disaster on both countries. Thus, Regional level experts developed and mobilized at the cross country level,
- Regional level linkage and coordination will be made to develop alliances for working together on disaster management programme,
- Adequate policy measures will be taken to advocate rights of poor and vulnerable women and children.

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## **ActionAid**

ActionAid (AA) is an international development institution registered as a global organisation in The Hague, the Netherlands in September 2003. The AA International Secretariat is based in Johannesburg, South Africa. Founded in the United Kingdom in 1972, AA is a secular and non-political organisation working with over nine million of the poorest people majority of them living in the developing world in 42 countries across Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. It is committed to improving the quality of life of the poorest and the most excluded people so that they can live a life of dignity.

AA has been working in Nepal since 1982. Its mission here is to eradicate poverty by facilitating the process of empowering the poorest and the most excluded women, men, girls and boys. The work of ActionAid International Nepal (AAIN), hereafter referred to as ActionAid Nepal (AAN), over the years has undergone various changes informed by its engagement at the community and other levels. Its scope of work has thus grown in content, coverage, commitment, and capacity to work in a complex situation over the period.

AAN changed its approach from direct service delivery to partnership mode with local NGOs in 1996. Similarly, it adopted rights based approach in 1998 with an aim to creating an environment in which poor and excluded women, men, girls and boys can exercise their rights, and address and overcome the causes and effects of poverty caused due to injustice and inequity by actively engaging themselves in all aspects of development activities.

Currently, AAN's long-term partnership programmes at field level are being implemented mainly in Achham, Baglung, Baitadi, Bajhang, Bajura, Banke, Bardiya, Chitwan, Dadeldhura, Dang, Darchula, Dhanusha, Dolakha, Doti, Jajarkot, Jumla, Kailali, Kanchanpur, Kapilvastu, Kaski, Khotang, Nawalparasi, Mugu, Parbat, Parsa, Rasuwa, Saptari, Sarlahi, Sindhupalchok and Siraha districts, as well as in some urban areas of Biratnagar, Damak, Dharan, Inaruwa, Itahari, Kathmandu, Lahan and Lalitpur municipalities. Besides these, AAN has several short-term engagements with about 40 NGOs, CBOs, Alliances, Networks and Forums across the country.

AAN's rights holders are the poorest and the most excluded people particularly women, children, Dalits, ex-bonded labourers, victims of natural disasters and conflict, landless poor, people with disability, urban poor, and people living with HIV and AIDS. In 2003, AAN prioritised five themes based on the local context and needs - Education, Food Security (including Natural Resource Management), Conflict Management and Peace Building, Gender Equity, and HIV and AIDS. It also works on Disability, Emergency & Natural Disaster Management, Globalisation & Corporate Sector, Media Advocacy and Urban Poverty.

AAN works at the grassroots level to address the immediate conditions of the poorest and the most excluded people and at the national level with various advocacy programmes in order to influence public policies and practices in favour of its rights holders.

As a chapter of AA International, AAN is also actively engaged in advocating at the regional and international levels on issues such as Education, HIV and AIDS, Food Security, Gender Equity and Governance that cut across globally, to campaign for pro-poor policies and to enable the poor and excluded women, men, girls and boys to secure their rights.

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