**FOGGS**

| *Country Overview* | |
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| *India* | |
| *Legislative framework for armed forces' use for civil protection* | **Disaster Management Act (2005)**<br>**National Policy on Disaster Management**<br>**Armed Forces Act (1970) – Aid to Civil Authorities**<br>**Manual of Indian Military Law, Chapter VII**<br><br>-The above Act of the Indian Parliament is described as "An Act to provide for the effective management of disasters and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto". It is an all-encompassing piece of legislature dealing with all types of natural disasters and regulations concerning them at national, state and local level. It can be invoked by either the central or a state government depending on the area affected by disaster.<br>-The second is a policy put in place by the Ministry of Home Affairs, to promote a culture of prevention, preparedness and resilience at all levels through knowledge, innovation and education.<br>-The "Aid to Civil Authorities" chapter in the Armed Forces Act empowers the Government of India to call on the armed forces for tasks, which are non-military in nature and under normal conditions handled by civilian authorities. For some exceptional circumstances, even state governments or local governments can call the military for help.<br>-The Manual of Indian Military Law, Chapter VII – Aid to Civil Authorities, specifically deals with natural disasters. It provides for the role of the armed forces under the command of the central government in dealing with calamities. |
| *Key civilian authority/ies* | **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)**<br>**State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs)**<br><br>NDMA is responsible for framing policies, laying down guidelines and best practices for coordinating with the State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs) to ensure a holistic and distributed approach to disaster management. Owing to the federal structure of government in India, the central government at national level leads and sets down the guidelines, but the implementation is handled by each state government, including disaster management. |
| *Armed forces branch(es) primarily involved* | **National Disaster Response Force** (First line of relief)<br>**State Disaster Response Forces** (each state is empowered & required to raise their own SDRF – currently 24 out of 28 states have done so)<br>**Indian Armed Forces** (any and all branches can be called depending on intensity and geographical distribution of the calamity) |
| *Cases of use / Good practices* | • **Extensive Covid-19 response operations**<br>When the spread of virus was slow in 2020, due to a nation-wide lockdown, the army had helped set up quarantine facilities and assisted in the evacuation of Indian citizens stranded abroad. Special military medical teams were sent to neighbouring nations to help establish Covid testing facilities.<br><br>In the wake of the second wave, or more aptly the tsunami of Covid-19 in March 2021, all branches of the Indian Armed Forces were called upon to provide "aid to civil authority". Treating the Covid wave as war, operation "COJEET" was launched. The Air Force was deployed to ferry oxygen and critical medical supplies from donor countries across the world. The Indian Navy also brought in medica supplies from neighbouring countries. The Indian Army created dedicated Covid hospitals for civilians across the nation.<br><br>• **Flood Relief**<br>Northern and North-eastern areas of India see regular heavy rainfalls, resulting in floods almost every year. Recent major examples include Maharashtra in 2021, Kashmir in 2014 and Uttarakhand in 2013. In each of these situations, the Army and Air Force were deployed to rescue civilians, build temporary shelters, and to rebuild infrastructure destroyed in the floods. |

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| | • **Assistance to neighbouring countries**<br>In the aftermath of the Nepal Earthquake of 2015, the Indian Armed Forces launched Operation Maitri (*Friendship*) to help and rescue civilians, provide supplies and also rescue Indian citizens.<br>During Cyclone Sidr in Bangladesh in 2007, the Indian Army supplied medicines, food, blankets and tents to the civilians rescued from affected areas.<br>Most recently, in 2020, Sri Lanka called for help from India to control fire onboard an oil tanker. The Indian Navy sent three action ships and a Dornier aircraft, after which the fire was doused. |
| *Follow-up questions / concerns* | • In India's federal system, with its three levels (district, state, central), what factors like scale, intensity etc. of disaster affect the decision of who calls in the army – the district collector, the chief minister, or the prime minister?<br>• India does not have a policy on armed forces providing humanitarian relief to other nations, hence on what basis are the decisions taken for international assistance and who is empowered to take such decisions?<br>• The Indian Armed Forces have come under criticism at international fora for their handling of the North Eastern crisis and Kashmir. What steps have been taken to ensure there is no abuse of power by armed forces when dealing with civilians?<br>• In almost every major disaster in the territory of India in the last 20-25 years, the armed forces have to be called in by civilian governments. Perhaps the time has come for India to dedicate more resources to civilian handling of disaster relief? |

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