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GS Paper IV: Disaster Management

1. Building a Culture of Disaster Preparedness through Community Drills

a. Introduction

With heatwaves, extreme rainfall, floods, cyclones and landslides becoming increasingly frequent, there is a case for institutionalising disaster drills across schools, workplaces and local communities. India has substantially improved forecasting and early warnings, but last-mile preparedness and citizen response remain weak.

Disaster Management Act, 2005 provides the institutional framework through NDMA, SDMA and DDMA. NDMA already provides for school disaster-management plans, mock drills and hazard-specific village-level preparedness. Disaster management needs to move from a predominantly relief-centric approach towards prevention, preparedness and resilience.

BUILDING A CULTURE OF DISASTER PREPAREDNESS



b. Why Disaster Drills Matter

Early warning does not automatically mean early action

India's forecasting capabilities for cyclones, heatwaves and extreme rainfall have improved significantly. However:

Forecast → Warning → Understanding → Correct Action → Survival

A break anywhere in this chain reduces the effectiveness of sophisticated forecasting systems. Citizens must therefore know what action to take after receiving an alert.

First few minutes are critical

During flash floods, heatstroke, fires or landslides, professional responders may not arrive immediately. Basic knowledge of evacuation, first aid, cooling, water rescue and emergency communication can reduce preventable deaths.

Climate change is changing India's risk profile

Extreme-weather exposure is becoming geographically widespread. Hot days have reportedly increased by around 5–10 days per decade since the 1950s, while extreme rainfall events associated with flooding have increased substantially.

Preparedness therefore needs to become a routine public capability rather than an exceptional response to disasters.

c. What Should a Disaster-Drill Architecture Include?

- **Season-specific drills:** Schools, colleges, government offices and workplaces can conduct at least two drills annually—before the heatwave and monsoon seasons.
- **Heatwave preparedness:** Identification of cooling/shaded spaces, drinking-water availability, recognition of heat illness, medical-response protocols and thresholds for suspending outdoor activities.
- **Monsoon preparedness:** Practising evacuation to higher ground, alternative escape routes, head counts and safe behaviour around floodwater, submerged drains and electrical infrastructure.
- **Local safety points:** Every Panchayat and urban ward could designate accessible disaster-safety points equipped with water, first aid, toilets, backup lighting, communication and basic cooling facilities.
- **Disaster education:** Schools should shift from textbook knowledge towards demonstrable survival skills—local hazard mapping, evacuation, first aid and emergency communication.

d. Key Gaps in India's Preparedness

- **Implementation deficit:** NDMA guidelines already provide for mock drills, but compliance remains uneven.
- **Weak local capacity:** Panchayats, urban local bodies and DDMA often lack trained personnel and resources.
- **Low risk literacy:** Citizens may receive warnings without understanding the appropriate response.
- **Fragmented coordination:** Disaster response requires coordination among schools, health departments, fire services, police, local bodies and volunteers.
- **Inclusion deficit:** Evacuation plans and shelters may inadequately address the needs of persons with disabilities, elderly people and children.

Thus, India's challenge is increasingly not the absence of disaster-management frameworks but the implementation gap between plans and preparedness.

e. Global Lessons

- **Japan:** Repeated disaster education and evacuation practice contributed to successful evacuation of thousands of schoolchildren during the 2011 tsunami.
- **Bangladesh:** Its large network of trained coastal volunteers demonstrates the value of community-based early warning and evacuation.
- **Taiwan:** Multi-agency heatwave exercises show how drills can also prepare societies for increasingly severe climate-related hazards.

The lesson is that disaster resilience depends not merely on infrastructure but on institutional memory created through repeated practice.

f. Way Forward

- Institutionalise hazard-specific seasonal drills rather than generic mock exercises.
- Empower DDMA and local governments as the operational centre of community preparedness.
- Integrate practical disaster-management skills into school education and teacher training.
- Develop trained networks of community volunteers, drawing lessons from Bangladesh.
- Conduct inclusive evacuation planning with special provisions for vulnerable groups.
- Periodically audit drills and incorporate lessons into local disaster-management plans.

Conclusion:

India has made significant progress in predicting disasters; the next frontier is ensuring that citizens can act effectively on those predictions. A shift from *early warning* to early warning plus early action, backed by routine community drills, can transform disaster management from a government response mechanism into a whole-of-society culture of resilience.

Reader's Note — About This Current Affairs Compilation

Dear Aspirant,

This document is part of the PrepAlpine Current Affairs Series — designed to bring clarity, structure, and precision to your daily UPSC learning.

While every effort has been made to balance depth with brevity, please keep the following in mind:

1. Orientation & Purpose

This compilation is curated primarily from the UPSC Mains perspective — with emphasis on conceptual clarity, analytical depth, and interlinkages across GS papers.

However, the PrepAlpine team is simultaneously developing a dedicated Prelims-focused Current Affairs Series, designed for:

- factual coverage
- data recall
- Prelims-style MCQs
- objective pattern analysis

This Prelims Edition will be released separately as a standalone publication.

2. Content Length

Some sections may feel shorter or longer depending on topic relevance and news density. To fit your personal preference, you may freely resize or summarize sections using any LLM tool (ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, etc.) at your convenience.

3. Format Flexibility

The formatting combines:

- paragraphs
- lists
- tables
- visual cues

—all optimised for retention.

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4. Monthly Current Affairs Release

The complete Monthly Current Affairs Module will be released soon, optimized to a compact 100–150 pages — comprehensive yet concise, exam-ready, and revision-efficient.

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