

# Emergency Management in Federated Countries Workshop: international experts from federated countries meet in the spirit of ‘learning from each other’

This article, supplied by the International Engagement Section, Emergency Management Australia, outlines the objective, agenda and outcome of the Emergency Management in Federated Countries Workshop held from 20 to 21 February 2014 at the Australian Emergency Management Institute, Victoria. It explains the background to the workshop and the development of the future Forum Paper, currently being authored by the Forum of Federations. This article demonstrates and celebrates the enhanced outcomes achieved when governments work effectively together to achieve common goals – especially when those goals are within a complex policy area such as emergency management in federated systems of government.

## ‘Learning From Each Other’

This is the core principle of the Forum of Federations and the theme that underpinned the Emergency Management in Federated Countries Workshop held at the Australian Emergency Management Institute on 20-21 February 2014. Convened by the Forum of Federations in partnership with the Australian Government Attorney-General’s Department, the workshop brought together a number of experts and senior officials from Australia, Canada, India, Pakistan and the United States to exchange perspectives on emergency management in a federated system of government. Through presentations and a series of facilitated group discussions, preceded by shared country-specific information on institutional arrangements on emergency management, the workshop explored issues around the delineation of responsibility among levels of government in managing disasters, the impact federalism has on emergency and disaster response, best practice, intergovernmental co-ordination and co-operation, challenges and successes.

Outcomes of the workshop were captured in a Forum of Federations Paper, which will serve as a position paper on emergency management in federated countries to inform future Forum work.

Hosted at the Australian Emergency Management Institute, the workshop was co-chaired by Mr Chris Collett, Assistant Secretary of the Crisis Coordination Branch, Emergency Management Australia (Attorney-General’s Department) and Dr Rupak Chattopadhyay, President and CEO of the Forum of Federations.

## The Forum of Federations

The Forum of Federations is an international governance organisation that promotes intergovernmental learning and best practice through its partnerships with ten federated countries. The Forum organises a number of knowledge sharing events each year to explore innovative solutions to challenges posed by multi-level governance in federal, devolved, and decentralised countries. See [www.forumfed.org](http://www.forumfed.org).

## Federalism and emergency management

Emergency management has become increasingly complex; as the frequency and impact of disasters increases, so too has the need, and ways in which, countries mitigate and recover from them. In federated countries, the constitutional division of powers and responsibilities between the federal government and the state governments presents additional complexities. As in Australia, emergency management in any large federated country is the responsibility of the states/territories/provinces with the federal/national government playing a major role in building and promoting disaster resilience, co-ordinating national strategic emergency management policy, co-ordinating operational support to the states/territories/provinces and providing emergency relief and recovery resources.

With the complexities of federated systems of government come challenges and opportunities to co-ordinate between the different governance levels and improve strategies for disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery. In terms of response, the capability of state-level governments is critical. The federal government can provide support when local and state resources are overwhelmed.

Increasingly, modern emergency management policy also focuses on identifying and understanding risks and mitigating these risks through levels of government, community and individual action.

In addition, comparisons were made between the participating countries of the paradigm shift from a response and recovery focussed approach to an holistic framework in the PPRR spectrum. In Australia, the Federal Government is leading a national shift towards a whole-of-government, resilience-based approach to disaster management, which focuses on building community resilience through reducing community risks to disasters. Although Australia was the only country represented at the workshop that did not have a disaster management Act, the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience*, endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments, provides the underpinning national level governance of emergency management.

Another common theme identified was that of all participating countries re-balancing funding towards preparedness and mitigation rather than response and recovery, acknowledging that risk reduction is not visible and resilience cannot readily be measured at the whole-of-nation level.

## Workshop outline

The Emergency Management in Federated Countries Workshop provided a platform to build an international knowledge network encompassing the common challenges and innovative solutions for co-ordinating and managing natural disasters in federations. Key themes identified and discussed throughout the workshop included:

- the mismatch between responsibility/ownership for risk with the capacity to make decisions/changes
- funding responsibilities across levels of government
- engagement with the private and third sectors
- consistency across jurisdictions
- the role of the military and civil-military co-operation in disaster response
- policy paradigm shifts towards more sophisticated and whole-of-government approaches
- land use planning and its role in risk management, and
- growing community expectations.

## Institutional emergency management arrangements

In preparation for the workshop, countries circulated an overarching information paper outlining their institutional emergency management arrangements, the assignment of operational and policy responsibilities in their country, existing emergency management structures, and the capacity and mandate of agencies dealing with disasters. An understanding of these enabled participants to attend the workshop with

a broad awareness of each country's arrangements and the differences and commonalities between them.

Of the countries represented, all share a similar three-tiered structure of national/federal, state/territory/provincial and local/municipal/district government, with primary responsibility for disaster management assigned to the state/territory/provincial governments. In the case of the US, a four-tiered system, which includes a tribal level, recognising a trust relationship between Indian tribes and the US state and federal governments, and their right to self-govern.

Traditionally, emergency management in Canada has focused on preparedness and response. It is now recognised that addressing the modern hazard-scape requires all levels of government to deal with risks, hazards and vulnerabilities through prevention and mitigation as well as prudent recovery measures. Greater attention or investment in prevention and mitigation can prevent disasters or significantly reduce the social, economic and environmental costs and damages when events occur. Forward looking recovery measures allow communities not only to recover from recent disaster events, but also to build back better in order to help overcome risks and vulnerabilities in the future.

Under the 2007 framework, *An Emergency Management Framework for Canada*, federal, provincial and territory governments work together to develop national strategies to help each level of government advance their emergency management activities. The Canadian Council of Emergency Management Organisations (CCEMO) works to develop consensus and provide a voice for provinces and territories in order to develop a proactive national agenda. All levels of government have longstanding relationships with numerous domestic stakeholder organisations, such as the Canadian Red Cross, St John Ambulance and the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs.

The *Disaster Management Act of Pakistan 2010* establishes the framework for emergency management in Pakistan. The National Disaster Management Commission (NDMC) is the apex policy making body in Pakistan, headed by the Prime Minister and including the Chief Executives of all provinces, key ministries and departments. Its functions include approving the *National Plan* and *Plans of Ministries*, finalising guidelines for federal and provincial governments, taking measures for prevention of disasters, mitigation, preparedness and capacity building. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is responsible for the preparation of the *National Plan* to be approved by the NDMC, laying down guidelines for policy formulation, co-ordination, implementation and monitoring of the entire spectrum of disaster management.

The NDMA's primary role is to facilitate and co-ordinate, however it intervenes whenever a disaster is beyond the capacity of local/provincial authorities. Otherwise, disaster management is devolved in Pakistan, and each province has its disaster

management authority and is responsible for disasters within their capacity. Local emergencies remain the responsibility of local or district governments.

In Australia, the Federal Government plays a significant part in building and promoting disaster resilience. It co-ordinates and provides operational support in emergency response to the states and territories and provides a national emergency relief and recovery framework on a cost-sharing basis with the other levels of government. Australia's emergency management arrangements bring together the efforts of all levels of government, private industry and volunteer agencies to deliver co-ordinated emergency management across all hazards. These arrangements are based on a high level of trust and co-operation between the community and emergency managers, building on common experiences dealing with disasters.

The United States Federal Government has legal authorities, fiscal resources, research capabilities, technical information and services, and specialised personnel to assist local, tribal and state agencies in responding to and recovering from emergencies and disasters. When an incident occurs that exceeds or is anticipated to exceed local or state resources – or when an incident is managed by federal departments or agencies acting under their own authorities – the federal government uses the National Response Framework (NRF) to involve all necessary departments and capabilities, organise the federal response, and ensure co-ordination with response partners.

The Federal Emergency Management Authority (FEMA) leads and supports the United States approach in a risk-based comprehensive emergency management system of preparedness that includes prevention, protection, response, recovery, and mitigation. Each state government has legal authority for emergency response and recovery and serves as the point of contact between local and federal governments. For certain types of federal assistance, tribal governments can opt to work with the state. Local government has responsibility for the safety of its people, knowledge of the situation and accompanying resource requirements, and proximity to both events and resources (within local government are emergency services departments that are capable of responding to emergencies 24 hours a day).

Following three mega disasters in 1999, 2001 and 2004, a paradigm shift in India's disaster management arrangements occurred. The *National Disaster Management Act 2005 of India* provides the framework for government agencies responsible for emergency management. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is responsible for laying down guidelines and approving plans prepared by ministers or departments. The National Executive Committee (NEC) is responsible for preparing the *National Plan*, co-ordinating and implementing national policy and NDMA guidelines and giving direction regarding the mitigation and preparedness measures to be taken by different ministries, departments and agencies. The National Institute of Disaster Management (NIDM) leads training

and capacity building, research, documentation and development of the national information database on disasters. It also provides assistance to state governments in the formulation of state level policies for disaster management and the development of education materials. The State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) and District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) are responsible for implementing disaster management policies and ensuring measures for the prevention of disasters and mitigation of their effects.

## Innovative policy case studies

Adding additional insight into recent policy initiatives, each country presented an innovative policy case study which closely examined a policy initiative that has moved emergency management forward across their federated system of government. Presentations identified the gap which was addressed by implementing the initiative, key considerations in its design and implementation, the role of the different levels of government in its implementation nation-wide, challenges, funding considerations and how it changed the way emergency management is governed in that country. A summary of each country's initiative follows.

**India's National Disaster Response Force (NDRF)** is a specialised response agency tasked with evacuations, search and rescue during natural disasters. The NDRF was created in 2009 by India's National Disaster Management Authority, in recognition that police, paramilitary, civil defence and fire services were ill-prepared to conduct specialised disaster response to disasters. At present, the NDRF consists of ten battalions consisting of Border Security Force, Central Reserve Police Force, Central Industrial Security Force and Indo-Tibetan Border Police. With a volunteer base of over 850 000 community volunteers, the NDRF restores roads, rail and other communication networks. More information can be found at <http://ndrfandcd.gov.in/>.

**Canada's all-hazards National Public Alerting System (NPAS)** provides emergency management organisations throughout the country with the capability to warn the public of imminent or unfolding hazards to life using radio, cable television and satellite television. A multi-jurisdictional approach using public/private partnerships for public alert collection and broadcasting processes, the NPAS initiative is an innovative and cost-effective means of ensuring authoritative warning messages reach as many Canadians as possible, as quickly as possible, in the event of a threat to their life or safety. While the approach lists many advantages, challenges include a lack of broadcaster participation under a voluntary system. Visit [www.publicsafety.gc.ca/index-eng.aspx](http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/index-eng.aspx) for further information.

The **USA National Preparedness System** is an organised process for the whole community – from families, to faith based groups, business and all levels of government – to move forward with preparedness



Forum of Federations Emergency Management in Federations Workshop participants.

activities with the aim of achieving the national preparedness goal 'A secure and resilient nation with the capabilities required across the whole community to prevent, protect against, mitigate, respond to, and recover from the threats and hazards that pose the greatest risk'. The system, detailed at [www.fema.gov/national-preparedness-system](http://www.fema.gov/national-preparedness-system), identifies and assesses risk, estimates the level of capabilities needed to address those risks, builds or sustains the required levels of capability, develops and implements plans to deliver those capabilities, monitors progress, and reviews and updates efforts to promote continuous improvement.

**Pakistan** has recently implemented the Cash Transfer Programme, under which the provincial and federal governments of Pakistan have provided cash assistance for human, property and income loss and injury as a result of the impact of disasters. As part of the program, cash compensation is paid in monthly instalments to help vulnerable families, particularly families headed by women, to rebuild their houses and livelihoods. The provincial and federal governments of Pakistan are currently jointly improving upon the program to ensure the speedy delivery and transparency of cash transfers as a means of disaster relief.

**Australia** presented the Council of Australian Government-endorsed national disaster resilience initiative. The *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* emphasises understanding and communicating risk within government and the community. A broad and sophisticated work program is well underway, involving a wide range of projects to better identify and address risks, improve community engagement, build national capacity and improve recovery arrangements. One example is the development and publication of State Natural Disaster Risk Assessments. These assessments are underpinned by a nationally-agreed methodology for risk assessments, and are now informing ongoing mitigation work across jurisdictions. Further information on the *National Strategy for Disaster Resilience* can be found at: [www.ag.gov.au/EmergencyManagement/Pages/NationalStrategyForDisasterResilience.aspx](http://www.ag.gov.au/EmergencyManagement/Pages/NationalStrategyForDisasterResilience.aspx).

## Implications for emergency management

The discussions and presentations that took place at the workshop informed the development of an academic Forum of Federations Paper outlining key discussions and learnings at the workshop. The Paper, authored by Dr P.G. Dhar Chakrabarti, Distinguished Fellow, Energy and Resources Institute, New Delhi, will form the basis of future international discussions on emergency management. The Forum's Secretariat and the Indian Government are consulting with the intention of holding the Forum's next international conference in India in 2014/15. The paper, *Workshop on Emergency Management in Federal Countries* will be presented at the Conference and will be available on the Forum of Federations website [www.forumfed.org](http://www.forumfed.org).

The workshop presented an opportunity to collaborate with a network of federated countries on emergency management, both at the workshop and externally, through the Forum of Federations network of partner governments. With a view to widen the network further, the workshop participants also considered new opportunities for engagement, including the possibility of holding an event in the margins of the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in 2015.

As Mr Roger Wilkins AO (Secretary, Australian Government Attorney-General's Department) observed (Federalism and the Emergency Services, September 2009), *'real policy outcomes are enhanced when governments work together to achieve common objectives. Effective emergency management in a federated system requires sophisticated co-ordination and co-operation between the state and federal governments'*. The Emergency Management in Federated Countries Workshop also demonstrated inter-governmental co-ordination and co-operation on an international level: governments 'learning from each other' to reduce the threat that natural disasters pose to lives and property.

A podcast on the workshop can be found at <https://itunes.apple.com/au/podcast/emergency-management-australia/id786783889>.