

Cyclone Mock Drill, DDMA Alappuzha

(Report of the Independent Observer)

Drill date: 29th January 2018, Monday at Mararikulam North Village

Ref: (1) G.O.(Rt) No. 116/2017/DMD; dated 22nd December 2017
(2) Letter No: DM/53/2015/SDMA; dated 5th January 2018 from Member Secretary, SDMA Kerala to Chairperson, DDMA

Introduction

Mock exercises on various types of natural and anthropogenic hazards helps in inculcating a culture of preparedness and generate awareness. Mock exercises will help the District Administration to assess the preparedness, review the District Disaster Management Plans, Standard Operating Procedures and to evaluate the readiness of various departments to any disaster or emergency. This will also give the opportunity to coordinate the activities of various agencies for their optimum utilization and to use the feedback to identify the gaps and improve the capacities of the system to face an actual disaster situation.

District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) Alappuzha conducted a mock drill on cyclone in the Maraarikulam North village on 29th January 2018. State Emergency Operations Centre (SEOC) issued warning messages 24 hours prior to the cyclone hit time i.e. 12:15pm on 29th January. There were 10 messages which the SEOC issued to DEOC, Alappuzha. Each message was indicative of an action by the district administration and to follow the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).

Objectives

The objective of any mock exercise is to review the State/District Disaster Management Plan. The other objectives are

- Evaluate the Standard operating procedure (SOP) which is also available on SDMA website.
- Assess the Response mechanism in the district
- Enhance coordination among the emergency support functioning agencies
- Awareness creation among the officials and the public

Observatory Remarks

The observations made by the Independent Observer at the Site (Mararikulam North Village) is given below.

The Strengths

Preparedness

- 1 DDMA had made adequate preparations prior to the mock drill event. Table top exercise was held on 25th January 2018 at the Alappuzha Collectorate under the able chairpersonship of the District Collector. All the concerned departments were represented and a plan was made for the mock drill event. A handbook was made available to all the officers mentioning their responsibility in the mock drill.
- 2 Community was oriented and trainings were conducted at the field level on 23rd January 2018. The information on mock drill was also disseminated to the resorts & hotels on the beach side (particularly 100m from the shore) as it was the peak season for tourists who throng the place.
- 3 Pamphlets and information brochure on cyclone was prepared by DEOC in Malayalam and was circulated in large numbers in the communities. Mock drill was also used for educating the community.
- 4 Media release was also done widely so that the community would not panic due to the drill.
- 5 Stickers “Mock Drill – URGENT” was placed in all the official vehicles deployed for the mock drill, which gave priority in traffic; likewise, the district administration also provided badges for all officials deputed to the mock drill site.

Operations

- 6 Coordination among the stakeholder departments was evident during the mock drill. The following government departments actively participated in the drill
Revenue,
Police,
Fire & Rescue Services,
Health,
KSEB,
Fisheries,
Coastal Police,
Motor Vehicles Department,
BSNL
I&PRD
ITBP was also involved in the drill
- 7 HAM radio stations were functional throughout the drill.
- 8 Voluntary groups like NSS, NCC, SPC were involved in various activities at the relief Camps.

- 9 NGO (ADS) was also involved, mainly to engage the communities in the relief centres.
- 10 e-SMS services were utilized during the mock drill to send the messages to the officials concerned, which is a good practice.
- 11 All the relief centres had health care staff.

Gaps Identified & Action Suggested

1 Public Address & Alert system

Observation (Gaps Identified)	Suggested Action
Public Address System was not available at the site (Maraarikulam Junction). This made the public unaware about the operations happening on the ground. It also limited the scope of the site incident commander in giving orders to the officials who were far from him at site.	Hand held or battery operated microphones are suitable in such drills.

2 Documentation in the relief camps

Observation (Gaps Identified)	Suggested Action
<p>Four relief centres were opened for the drill.</p> <p>a) St. Augustine High School, b) St. Sebastain Janakshema Church c) Sanjose Parish Hall, Chethi d) St. Thomas Chethi</p> <p>The independent observer visited all the above mentioned centres during the drill. None of the centres had registers recording the incoming or outgoing community members taking shelter in these temporary relief camps.</p>	<p>The registers are very important to capture details of those who are admitted in the camps. One person shall be the in-charge of the relief camp. He/She may delegate the responsibility of records to another official or even volunteers.</p>

3 Basic services in the Relief centres

Observation (Gaps Identified)	Suggested Action
Relief centres (St. Augustine) did not have drinking water supply for the initial 45 minutes.	Basic services like drinking water, health facility, toilets may be made available in the relief camps.

4 Information to the Tourists

Observation (Gaps Identified)	Suggested Action
<p>Tourists were on the Marari beach and nearby areas as it is the peak season. They were not briefed properly by the officers who evacuated them. Announcement / Hoarding in English was not seen at site. This created a confusion and panic among the tourists at the mock drill site.</p>	<p>As tourists were very common in Alappuzha, especially at Marari beach, it would have been better if the organizers installed hoardings at the site or announce it over loudspeakers (in English) about the drill. In the present scenario of Kerala, it is also appropriate to have these messages announced in Hindi. Department of Tourism shall also be engaged in such drills, especially in the seasons.</p>

5 Pre-identified relief centres

Observation (Gaps Identified)	Suggested Action
<p>a) List of relief centres (presently schools) are not mentioned in the District Disaster Management Plan (DDMP).</p> <p>b) Mostly schools are considered as relief centres.</p> <p>c) Relief centres did not have an identification.</p> <p>d) Who goes to which relief centre was not clear.</p>	<p>a) It would be appropriate to pre-identify the relief centres and include it in the DDMP.</p> <p>b) Schools are to be discouraged as relief centres. Community halls/Auditoriums and upcoming cyclone shelters may be used. If this is not possible in a particular context, school functioning should not be hindered due to any relief centre.</p> <p>c) The concerned officials can notify the centres and display the same in the local language and in English eg: “Cyclone Relief Centre / സൈക്ലോൺ പുനരധിവാസ ക്യാമ്പ്”</p> <p>d) Clarity may be made with respect to the allocation of relief centres to the camps. According to the drill St. Augustine High School, St. Sebastain Janakshema, Sanjose Parish Hall, Chethi, St. Thomas Chethi had 230, 237, 104 and 157 people respectively. Some centres</p>

	had more people whereas others had less. This may affect the basic services provided in the centres.
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6 VHF radio sets were not utilized during the drill.

Observation (Gaps Identified)	Suggested Action
Very High Frequency (VHF) radio sets were not utilized during the drill. It is understood that these radio sets which were provided some years back are defunct presently.	Repairing of VHF sets and training of operating VHF may be needed.

7 Standard Operating Procedure for cyclone in the District Disaster Management Plan (DDMP)

Observation (Gaps Identified)	Suggested Action
A separate portion for Cyclone SOP has not been included in the DDMP. In the SOPs mentioned in the District Disaster Management Plan of Alappuzha district SOP of cyclone was not seen.	Amendments may be made as appropriate covering the coastal hazards

8 India Disaster Resource Network (IDRN) database portal

Observation (Gaps Identified)	Suggested Action
IDRN web portal (www.idrn.gov.in) of resources at the district level could have been used to ascertain the resources available within the districts. Alappuzha has 239 records as on 1 st Nov 2015 in this portal. The resources available are threefold viz. critical supplies, human resources & equipments	Log in to idrn.gov.in and update the resources available in the district. This can be used at the time of any eventuality. Mock drill is an opportunity for the same. As the last update was in the year 2015, it is suggested to add/edit the details online.

9 Target population for evacuation was not known

Observation (Gaps Identified)	Suggested Action
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Though direction was given to evacuate people who reside 100 metres from the shore, the exact number was not made available to the first responders. Roughly 500 was the target given, but the actual evacuated community members came up to 728.	When there is a warning and a possible affected area is figured out, (100 m inside and 4 KM long coast in this case) DEOC may use scientific methods/models to ascertain how many will be affected. So this number becomes the target for the first responders.
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10 Special care to the vulnerable groups

Observation (Gaps Identified)	Suggested Action
Vulnerable groups were involved in the drill which is appreciated, however, facilities were not up to the minimum standards to be provided in the relief centres. Small children were evacuated but milk was not provided at the relief centre. Persons with disabilities were evacuated but shelters were not disabled friendly.	All the relief centre shall be made friendly to the disabled, children, aged, pregnant women and bed ridden people.

11 Use of Emergency kits

Observation (Gaps Identified)	Suggested Action
None of the evacuated community members had emergency kit in their hands. Many were asking for water and snacks after coming to the relief camp. Had there been emergency kits made available with them, their primary need of water would have been settled.	Mock drill can also bring behavioural changes and use of emergency kits can be practiced in such case. Find the details of emergency kit in www.sdma.kerala.gov.in .

12 Details of Fishermen in the Sea

Observation (Gaps Identified)	Suggested Action
Details of fishermen in the sea were not captured during the mock drill.	As cyclone affects the fishermen in the sea the most, the details of those in the sea should have been captured and tried to communicate with them.

PERSONAL INTERVIEWS

Independent observer interviewed the following tourists who participated in the drill to know their response.

a) Interview with Tourists (Names – Iurii Syvak, Iurri Pavlyshak, Anna Bolchuk, Rostysla V Diachak from Ukraine)

Verbatim

“We felt it was a real cyclone. Police chased us from the beach side and bus stations and wherever people were, but they did not communicate that it is a drill. Hence we were scared, however, later we realized it was a drill”. Syvak further told that “it is good to note that such drills are happening in the state of Kerala, the evacuation was quick and professional, we appreciate it”

b) Interview with the Ward Member (Ward No: 14)

Verbatim

“Lack of coordination was evident in the evacuation and subsequent services like health. I brought a lady who was sick to the relief centre (St.Agustine school). But there was a delay in getting the service of an ambulance and health worker. Even when we took the patient to the nearby hospital, (Chettikad Taluk Hospital), hospital staff did not pay heed to the complaint as they were busy with their routine activities and human resources were less. There should be sustained efforts from the administration and should not end by this drill.”

c) Interview with NGO representative who is also residing at Mararikulam (Mr Renish ADS)

Verbatim

“As maraarkulam attracts tourists, new comers to the village/beach did not know what was happening. Local community members should have been involved to evacuate people from their houses as they are more familiar with the scenario than the police or any other forces. Government vehicles were used for evacuation, private vehicles also could have been used as the situation demanded to evacuate large number of people. Scenario only covered in-land drill, in-sea was not handled”

General

- a) Few of the drivers of the official vehicles were not wearing seat belts while driving the vehicles, especially for mock drills.
- b) Some of the vehicles used for the evacuation of community members and tourists were rashly driven (high speed). This may be avoided as the evacuated people are being brought to the relief centres and not to a hospital (where there is an emergency). This shall be oriented to the drivers prior to the exercise.

Note:

Operations at the District EOC is not covered in this report as the independent observer was placed at the site (Mararikulam) as directed by DDMA.

Report Submitted by

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(Independent Observer)