

C
363-34
HET

**ASSESSMENT OF DISASTER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES
IN SRI LANKA: LESSONS FROM 2003 FLOOD AND LANDSLIDE**

A PROJECT REPORT PRESENTED BY

N D HETTIARACHCHI

to the Board of Study in Earth Sciences of the
POSTGRADUATE INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE

*In partial fulfilment of the requirement
for the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

of the

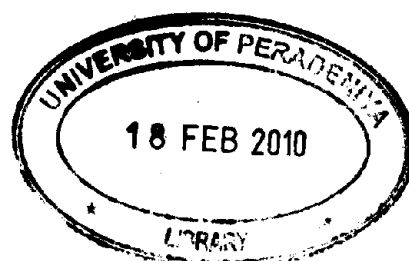
UNIVERSITY OF PERADENIYA

SRI LANKA

2008

i

627037



**ASSESSMENT OF DISASTER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES
IN SRI LANKA: LESSONS FROM 2003 FLOOD AND LANDSLIDE**

N D Hettiarachchi

Postgraduate Institute of Science

University of Peradeniya

Peradeniya

Sri Lanka

Disasters have been closely interlinked with the human society and environment since the dawn of the civilization. The rapid martial-intensive growth patterns of the twentieth century have adversely affected the environment, which in turn has made many countries especially in developing countries more vulnerable to disasters. Over recent decades, there has been an alarming increase in the frequency of disaster occurrences each year and the magnitude of their social, economic and environmental impacts. It is currently revealed that disasters are becoming more frequent, more intense and more devastating and have struck the world more seriously.

Disaster events in Sri Lanka have shown a clear increase in the last two decades. The country is seen to be exposed to risks from disasters like floods, landslides, cyclones, droughts, coastal erosions and recent event of tsunami. It is also prone to civil conflict, accident, deforestation and environment degradation as human made disasters. May 2003 flood and December 2004 tsunami are indicating very high magnitude and intensity and they have resulted in causing immense damages to the country ever reported in the history.

This situation prevailing in Sri Lanka has compelled the government to take risk mitigation actions related to natural disasters along with human made disasters. 2003 flood and 2004 tsunami highlighted the government to persuade for establishment of a comprehensive

mechanism to cope up impact of such events and to reduce risks in possible threatening events.

The study, taking into account these facts, points up to assess the existing disaster management situation and to find issues of the current policies, legal and institutional structures, procedures and operational arrangements of various organizations. The severe problems of the disasters, the country is experiencing frequently, is addressed to by various government and other agencies in different manner. The policy, practice and existing structure are not successful at all to address issues and challenges relating to disaster management in Sri Lanka. Over-lapping, inadequate coordination, lack of scientific involvement and not defining the roles and responsibilities are the main constraints to be addressed.

Sri Lanka must, therefore, develop or modify policies, laws, organizational arrangements and plans at all levels to integrate disaster risk reduction. It is useful to note that legislation and institutionalization are not providing all the answers to disasters. What is needed is a plan that the government to be deeply committed to address issues of, ensuring community participation; effective early warning; preparedness for effective response at all levels; strengthening coordination among stakeholders; capacity building and knowledge management; and developing a culture and integrated approach for disaster management. This is the responsibility of entire country and national commitment should be expanded to the creation of a safer Sri Lanka through disaster reduction.