

CHAPTER V – IMPEDIMENTS TO INSTITUTIONALISATION OF IRS AND REMEDIAL MEASURES IN DISASTER PRONE STATES

'An ounce of Practice is far better than tons of precepts and a forest of instructions'¹³⁸.



5.1 Having discussed India's disaster vulnerability, disaster response mechanism, IRS and Uttarakhand Case, it is prudent to discuss impediments in institutionalisation of IRS in the disaster prone states & remedial measures thereof. Accordingly, the aspects that possibly impede institutionalisation of IRS in states and suitable remedial measures are discussed in succeeding paras.

¹³⁸ 'The Report of High Powered Committee on Disaster Management', National Centre for Disaster Management, IIPA, Oct 2001', pp 18.

Institutionalisation

5.2. It is important to understand what exactly institutionalisation means and entail before focusing specifically on the issue of institutionalisation of IRS. As per Wikipedia institutionalisation refers to the *process of embedding something (for example a concept, a social role, a particular value or mode of behaviour) within an organization, social system, or society as a whole*. The term may also be used to refer to committing a particular individual or group to an institution, such as a mental or welfare institution. The term may also be used in a political sense to apply to the creation or organization of Governmental institutions or particular bodies responsible for overseeing or implementing policy, for example in welfare or development.

5.3 **Components of Institutionalisation.** What does institutionalization of a system involve? Institutionalization of a system or an SOP entails **dissemination** of pertinent information on the system to the stakeholders, **adaptation** of the system by the stakeholders followed by **implementation & reappraisal** with a view to further strengthening the system for optimal outcomes. Further breakdown of these three steps is follows:-

(a) **Dissemination.** Dissemination is a three step process - **sensitization of the stakeholders, communication of guidelines down to functional levels and seeking feedback.**

(b) **Adaptation.** Adaptation is also a three step process - **structuring the existing state / district machinery** as per IRS guidelines including, allocation of responsibilities to officials, **preparing of disaster response plans / SOPs** and **training in IRS** including conduct of mock exercises.

(c) **Implementation & Reappraisal.** Implementation and reappraisal would entail **using IRS in conduct** of various events not necessarily disaster

situations e.g. conduct of mega functions, rallies, elections or any other major events involving deployment of large scale human / material resources and multiple agencies. Grey areas can then be identified in conduct of such events and **lessons learnt can then be incorporated** by the disaster prone states/ districts to modify IRS to suit their own peculiarities and administrative set ups.

Challenges to Institutionalisation

5.4 It is therefore evident from the foregoing that to institutionalise a system like IRS these set of steps be taken at national, state and districts levels. However, there are numerous challenges to the process of institutionalisation. The major challenges to institutionalization of IRS in some of the states are embedded culture of reaction rather than pro-action, adhocism and misplaced priorities especially with regards to preparedness to deal with disasters. Though disaster response is a state subject, unfortunately many states continue to remain embroiled in their routine administrative / political matters leaving inadequate time and energy for strengthening of state response mechanism. Hence, disaster response mechanism in general and IRS in particular, have not been assigned the priority they deserves. In view of general lack of pro-activism, the status of institutionalisation of IRS in our country is as follows:-

- (a) The very **first challenge in institutionalisation is dissemination of the system guidelines** itself. While interacting with responders and officials at NIDM, NDMA and states it was learnt that neither is the system of IRS known / understood by functionaries in the upper echelons nor has it been disseminated down to the grassroots levels, in most cases. Hence, **institutionalisation of IRS is stuck in states, at the very first step of dissemination** in most cases. Actually, the NDM Guidelines – IRS issued by NDMA in July 2010 are not binding on the states. In fact, CAG has observed in their Report No 5 that the '*National Guidelines to formulate*

disaster management plans' issued by NDMA in 2007 have also not been complied with by the states¹³⁹. So is the case with the Guidelines issued by NDMA in 2010. Hence, not only should these guidelines be made binding on the states, to begin with there is a need to enhance awareness of IRS amongst the upper echelons of state hierarchy so that requisite importance may be assigned to IRS in disaster prone states. There is also a need of a constant exchange of information / ideas between the apex agencies like MHA, NDMA, NIDM and other major institutions involved in policy making and the SDMA/ state ATIs to disseminate the guidelines on disaster response with particular reference to IRS. There is also need to have increased interaction adopting a top-down approach. NDMA may seek feedback from 2-3 most disaster prone districts from each of the disaster prone states whether the IRS guidelines have been received & understood down to tehsil and block levels.

(b) Next major step of institutionalisation is **adaptation of the system** which is best done by a state agency responsible for disaster management. DM Act 2005 had mandated every state to have its own SDMA on the lines of NDMA and raising of SDRF to build response capacity at state level. Although all the states and UTs have formed SDMA not all have assumed responsibility of driving the capacity building effort. As regards SDRF, most of the states are yet to raise 3-6 companies of SDRF as requested by MHA. Also, in absence of a formal mechanism, the guidelines on IRS have not trickled down to the district and block levels resulting in lack of awareness of the subject at functional levels. Adaptation also entails training of responders and pre-nomination of officials / departments for role playing in case of a disaster as part of IRS. However, owing to lack of trained personnel in IRS further training of responders is a difficult proposition. State govts have to prioritize disaster response and ensure that adequate

¹³⁹ Report of the CAG on Performance Audit of Disaster Preparedness of India, Union Govt of India (MHA) 'Report No 5 of 2013', pp 28.

number of officials are trained on ToT basis in IRS in concert with NIDM / NDMA to expedite further training down to grassroots level. Once personnel are trained in IRS the third major step of institutionalisation can be executed to use & test IRS in various events.

(c) **Third major challenge is implementation and reappraisal.** Unfortunately, in view of the slow progress of first two steps of IRS institutionalisation, no states appeared ^{to} have reached the third & final step. There are no reports or feedback of IRS having been used in any of the disaster response situations in our country except in case of management of tri-centenary celebrations at Nanded (Maharashtra). As per Col Supanekar *'IRS was implemented by YASHADA during the Nanded Tri-Centenary Celebrations (Guru Ta Gaddi) at Nanded. The principles of IRS were used while preparing contingency response plans and deployment on-ground was done keeping IRS principles in mind'*¹⁴⁰. There are some reports of partial use of IRS in disaster response to Cyclone Phallin in Odisha last year. However, no details could be ascertained on the specifics of this case. As of now use of IRS is limited to conduct of selected mock exercises by NDMA or at NIDM as part of various training modules.

Progress, Impediments and Remedial Measures to Institutionalisation of IRS

5.5 **Primary Data.** In the course of preparing the research proposal and carrying out literature review, few informal interactions with personnel from the field of disaster management & officials, revealed that IRS is neither being used by states in disaster response nor most ^{of} them are acquainted with the system. Hence, in order to ascertain the progress of institutionalisation of IRS across the country and impediments to institutionalisation, Questionnaires were administered by personal interaction, by post and by e-mails. The details of Questionnaires sent

¹⁴⁰ Col VN Supanekar, Centre for Disaster Management, YASHADA, Pune while responding to IRS web query, 28 Feb 14.

and respondents have been covered in the 1st Chapter. Of over 500 addresses, only a total of 69 responded. To ensure that the study is comprehensive and representative of entire country, the sample of respondents has been drawn covering national, state and district levels, from amongst various categories/types and from maximum number of states. Graphical details of those responded are as follows refer Figs 5.1. 5.2 & 5.3):-

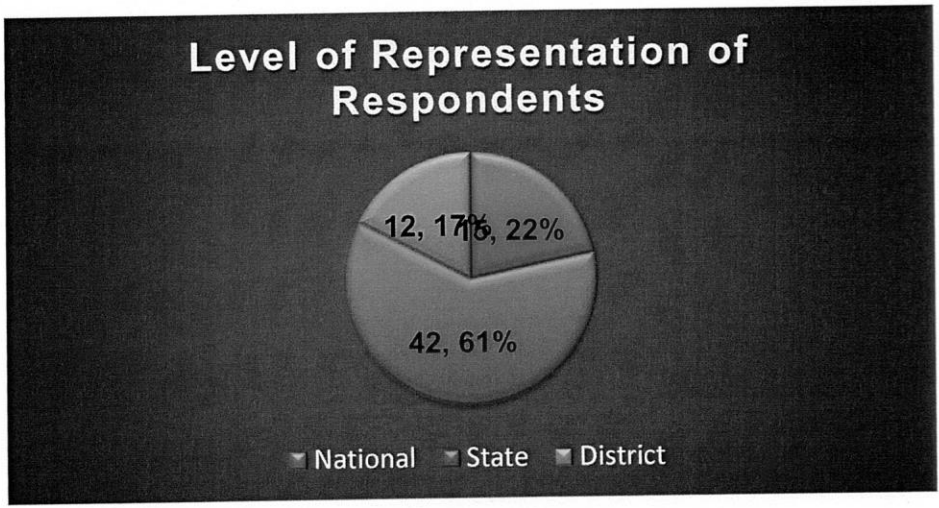


Fig 5.1 : Responders to Questionnaires in % Terms at Various Levels
(Source : Research analysis based on responses received)

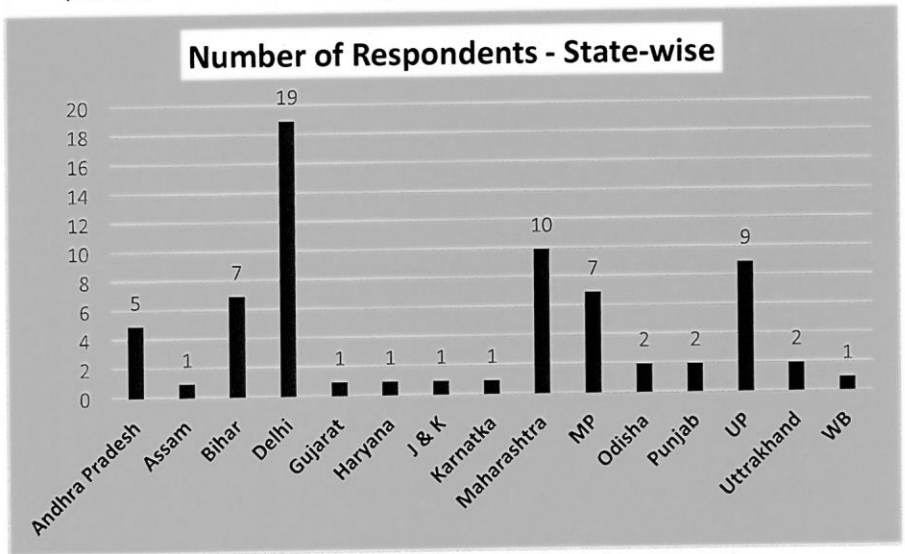


Fig 5.2 : Number of Respondents- state-wise
(Source : Research analysis based on responses received)

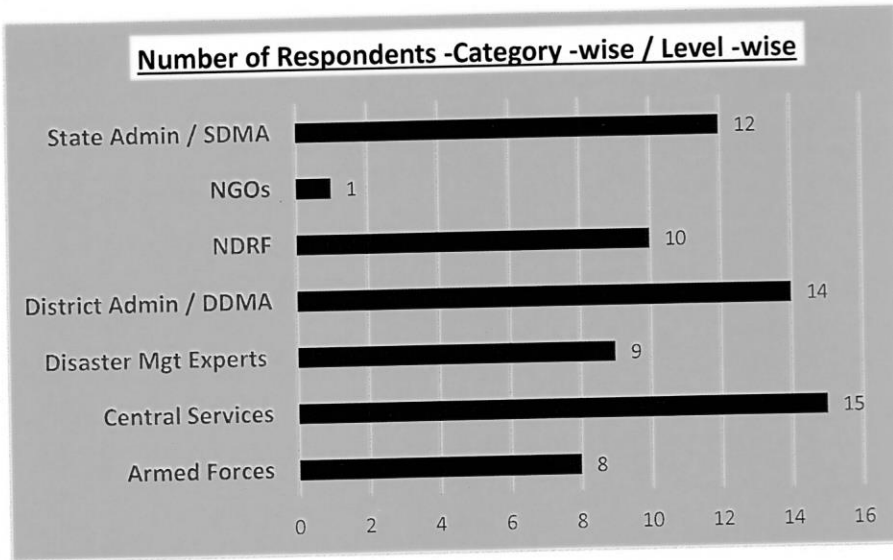


Fig 5.3 : Number of Respondents -Category -wise / Level -wise
(Source : Research analysis based on responses received)

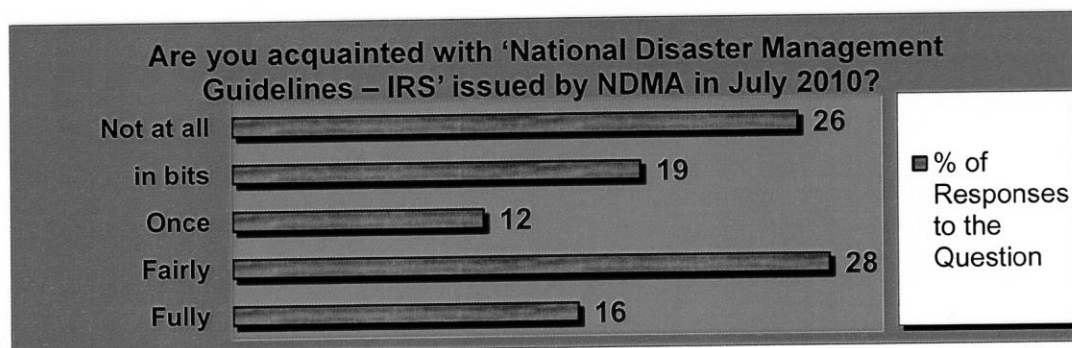
5.6 **Analysis of the Responders' Representation.** It is evident from the above illustrations that 15 states/UTs have been represented by the respondents, though bulk of the responders are from Delhi, Maharashtra, Bihar, MP and UP. Delhi's representation appears larger as those representing Central Services have also been counted in the category of Delhi. Central Service officers include the IAS, IPS, IFS, BSF and Ordnance Factories Services. Not only that, the respondents are also representative of a large cross section of stakeholders / experts from the field of disaster management. The Armed Forces category includes respondents from all the three services i.e. the Army, the Air Force and the Navy.

Analysis of Responses to the Questions in the Questionnaires

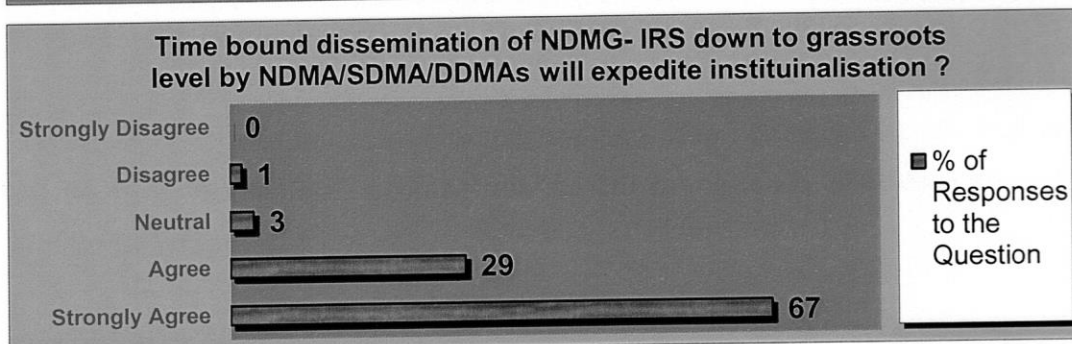
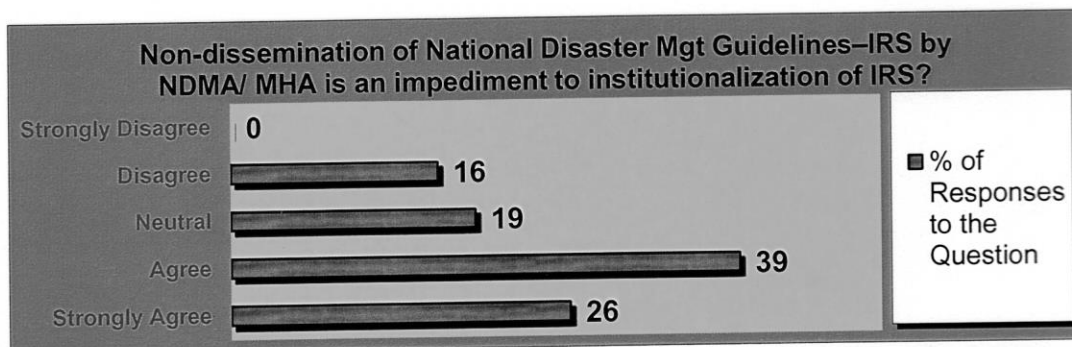
5.7 In order to prepare a very comprehensive Questionnaires, likely impediments and their remedial measures were worked out based on literature review and preliminary interactions/ study of the subject. The respondents were

then asked to rate listed factors which they felt could be possible impediments to institutionalisation of IRS in disaster prone states and suitable remedial measures. The responses have been analysed under the three steps of institutionalisation; dissemination, adaptation and implementation. The respondent were also asked to list out other possible impediments and remedial measures as per their own judgment. The questions asked and responses in percentage terms are displayed graphically and are covered in the succeeding paras.

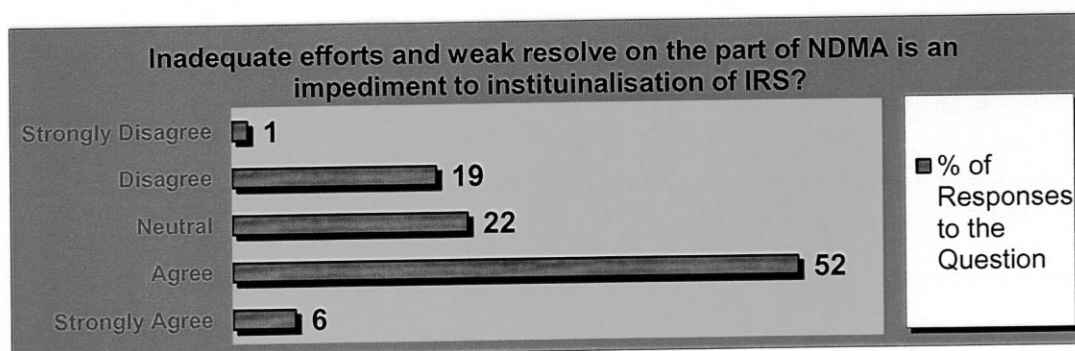
5.8 **Dissemination Efforts Made to Institutionalise IRS.** This particular aspect has been further analysed based on three steps; Sensitisation of Stakeholders, Communication of NDM Guidelines on IRS and Feedback.



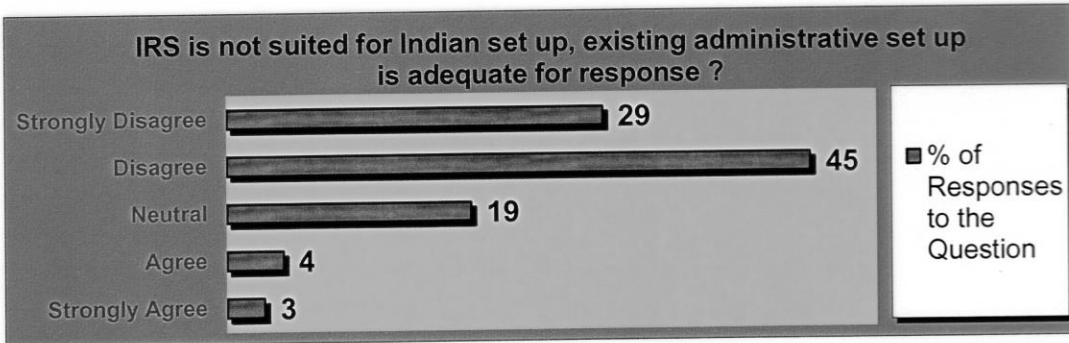
Finding & Remedial Measure. Mixed response, only 46% are acquainted with IRS balance had little or no idea – **need to sensitise and educate at least the disaster responders and stakeholders at various levels.**



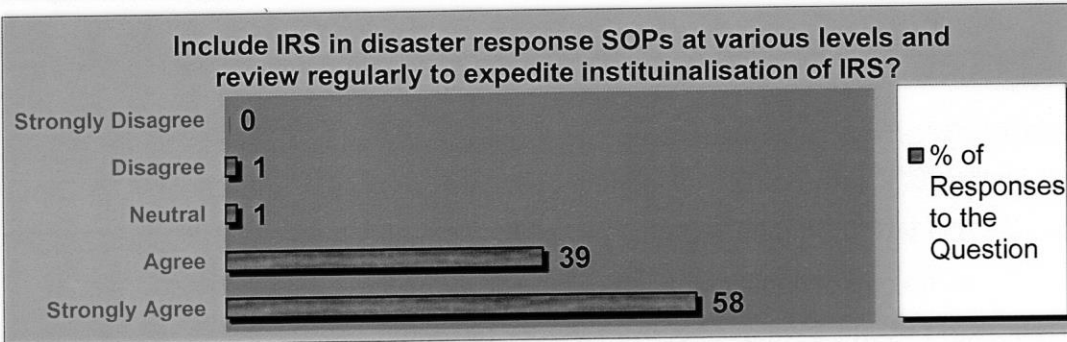
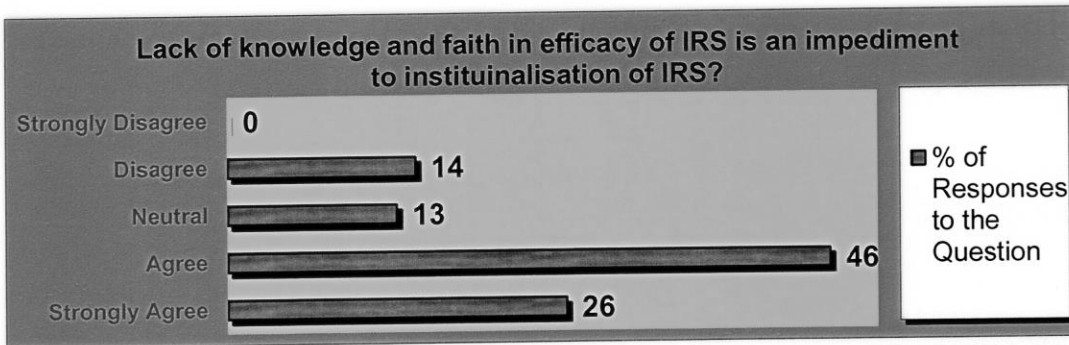
Finding & Remedial Measure. Clear response, 65% agree that non – dissemination of NDMG IRS is an impediment. In the 2nd illustration virtually all (96%) concur that the Guidelines published by NDMA be disseminated down to grassroots levels **need to find ways & means to disseminate these guidelines down to grassroots levels in a time-bound manner & obtain feedback to confirm.**

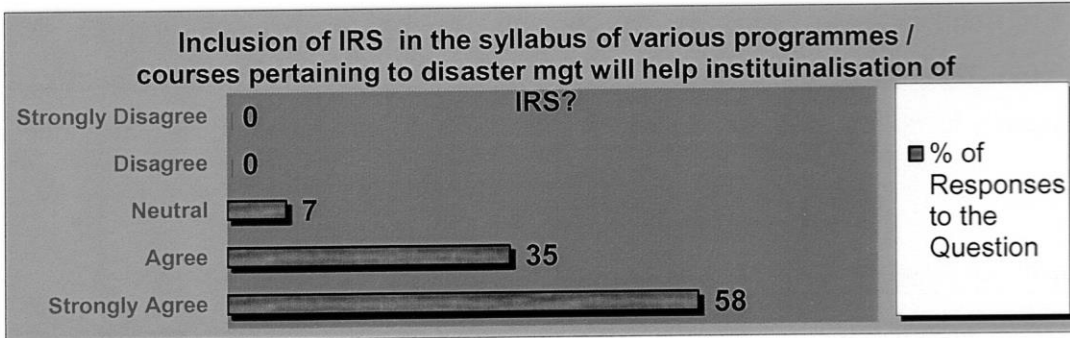


Finding & Remedial Measure. Clear response, bulk opine that a strong resolve is required to bring in change and implement an idea /policy – **NDMA has to strongly pursue the need to disseminate NDM Guidelines –IRS and ensure implementation of roadmap laid out in the 9th Chapter over next five years.**

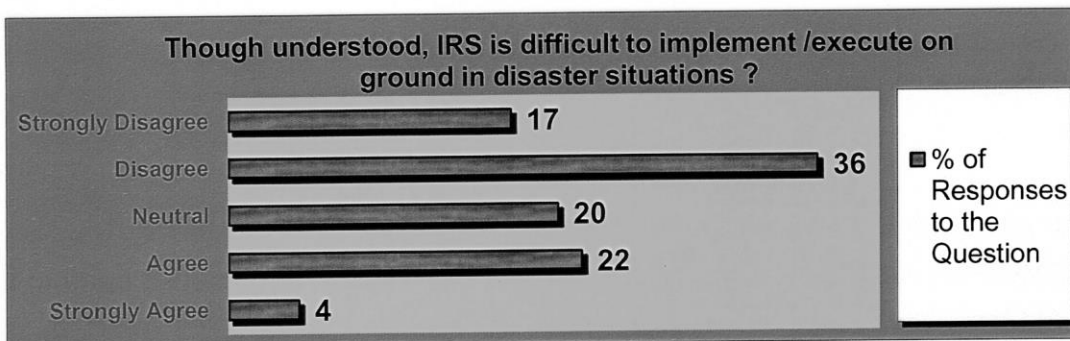


Finding & Remedial Measure. Absolutely clear mandate, bulk disagree with the suggestion of a status quo in response approach, except 26 % all accepted the need for a change in favour of a proper system– **Need to sensitise all, that we do need to systematise / professionalise our response to disasters and IRS should be tried.**





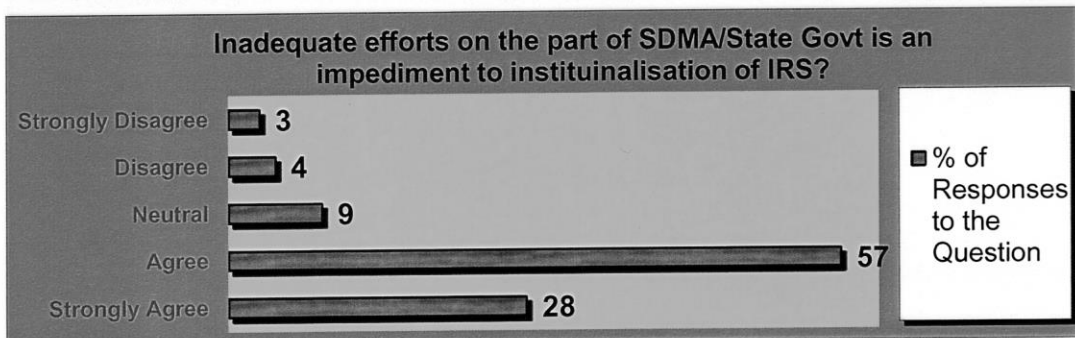
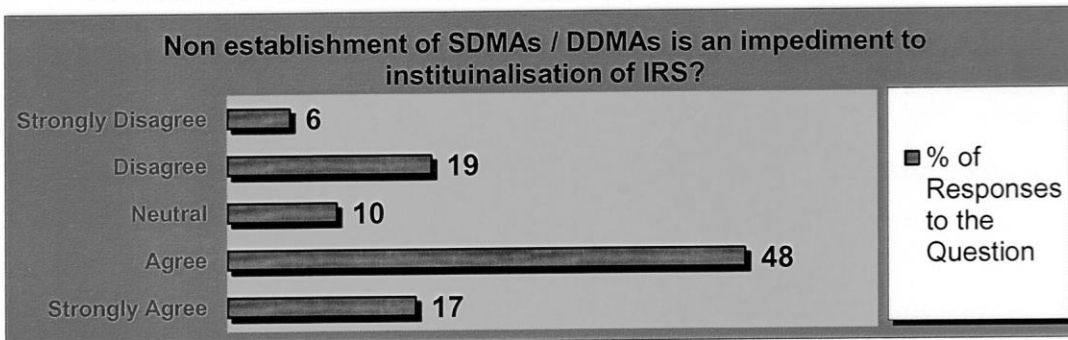
Findings & Remedial Measure. Again a clear response, nearly 2/3rd agree that lack of knowledge and faith in the efficacy in IRS is an impediment– till stakeholders are acquainted with the system, trained and use the system, it will remain a question mark. **Need to involve maximum functionaries and likely responders, train them in use of IRS to help build user confidence. Over 90 % responders agreed to the remedial measures of including IRS in disaster response SOPs at various levels and its inclusion in the syllabus of various programmes / courses pertaining to disaster management.**



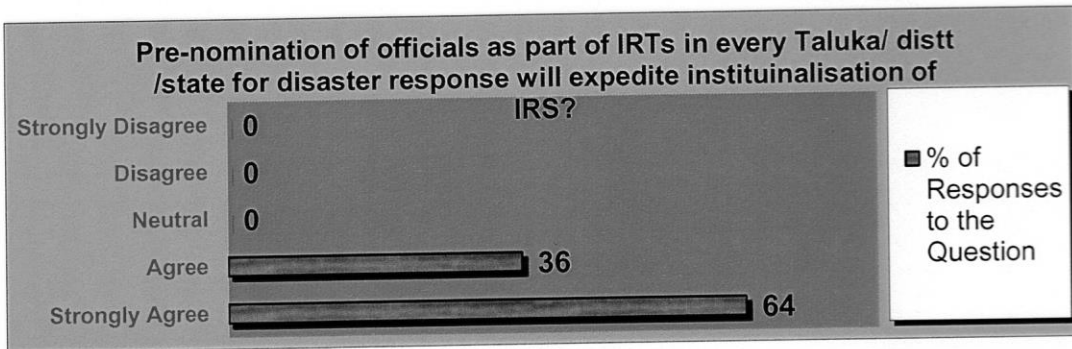
Finding & Remedial Measure. Mixed response to opinion that IRS cannot be implemented / executed. While 53% disagree with the comment that IRS cannot be implemented, there were sizable 22% who felt it is difficult to implement IRS in India – **the respondents are divided and the apprehensions about IRS appear genuine. While bulk accept the need for a proper system in response, respondents during interactions questioned the terminology and methods used in IRS, necessitating evaluation of the system and modifying it further to suit Indian administrative set up for better acceptance.**

5.9 **Adaptation Efforts Made to Institutionalise IRS.** This aspect has been analysed based on three steps; structuring of response mechanism at state / district levels & pre-nomination of officials for response, preparation of disaster response plans, and training in response / IRS.

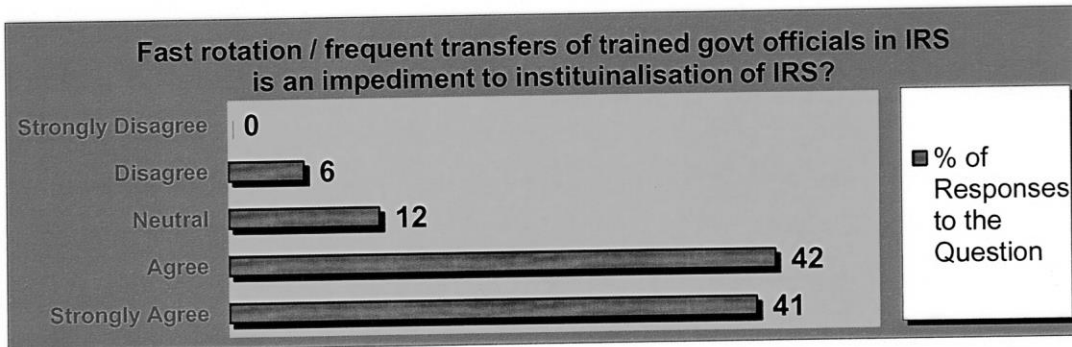
(a) **Structuring of Response Mechanism in the State and Pre-nomination of Functionaries at State/ Districts.**



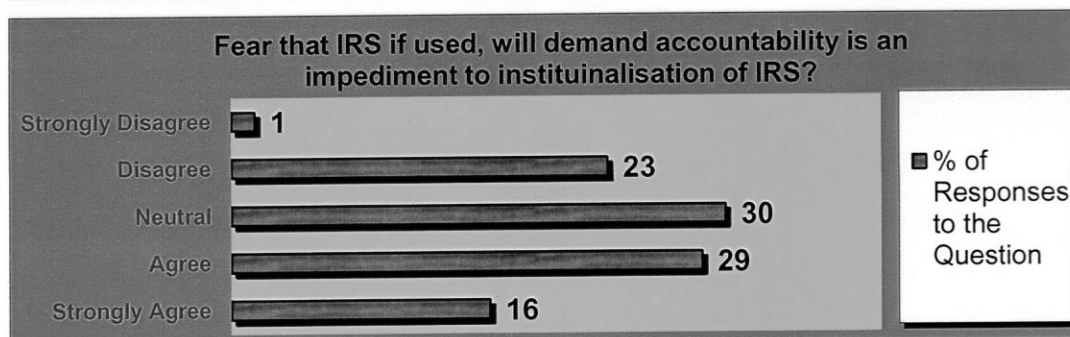
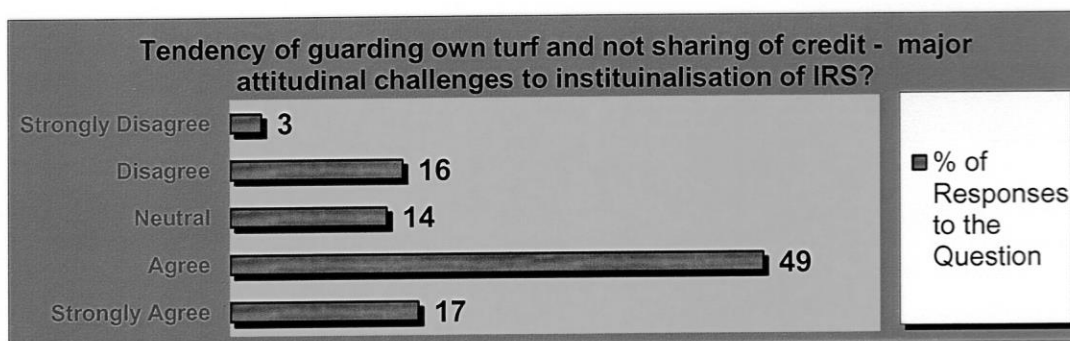
Findings & Remedial Measure. While over 25% disagree that forming of SDMAs and DDMA impedes institutionalisation of IRS, bulk are of the opinion that SDMAs and DDMA play an important role in designing response in the states / districts. As per NDMA all the states now have SDMAs but nearly 85% respondents felt that not adequate efforts have been made by the SDMAs to institutionalise response in their states. **Forming of DDMA in disaster prone districts must be expedited and the SDMAs / DDMA must play a pro-active role and provide necessary impetus to structuring disaster response.**



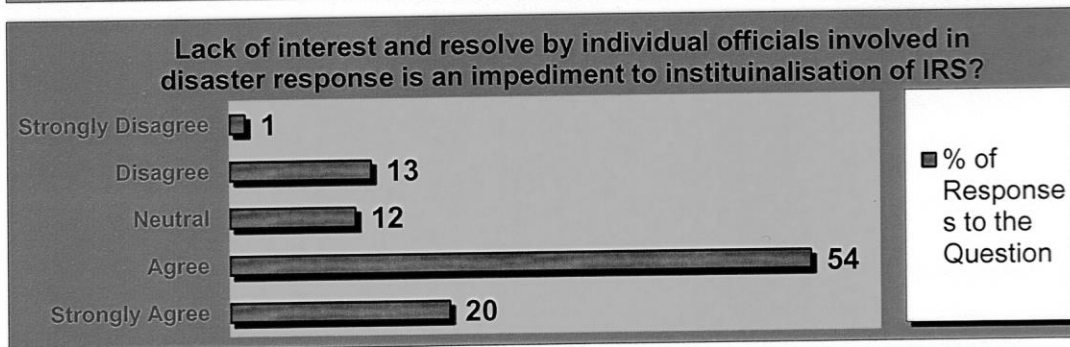
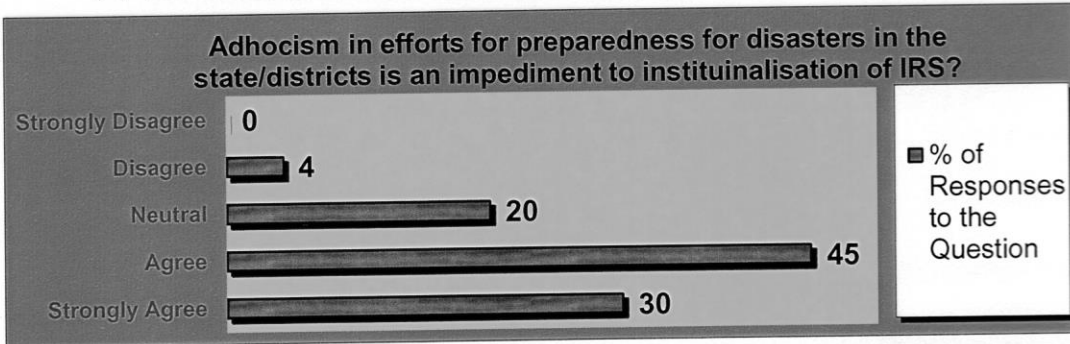
Finding & Remedial Measure. Clear response, all 100% agree to the need for pre-nomination of state / district functionaries as part of IRTs. This will facilitate their orientation, training and planning for emergencies besides practice in role of respective IRTs in various events not necessarily disasters- **States must pre-nominate IRTs in all their disaster prone districts/Talukas upfront.**



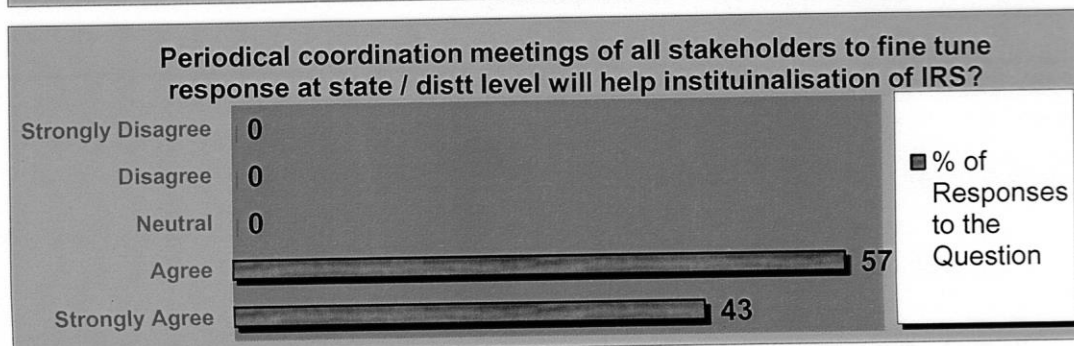
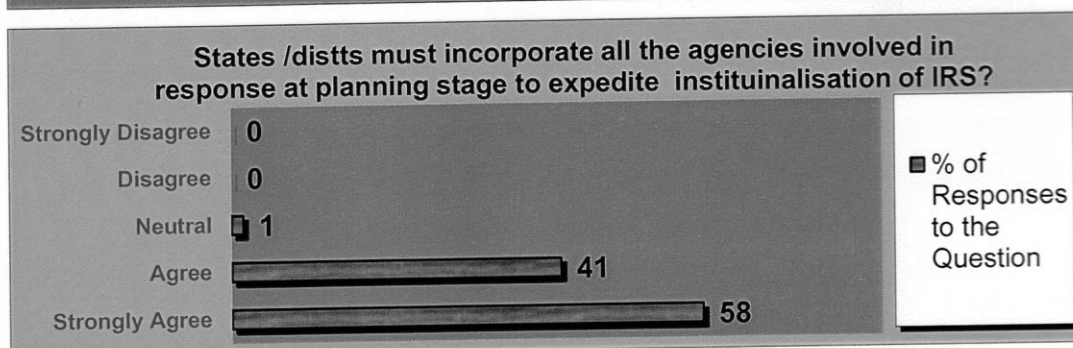
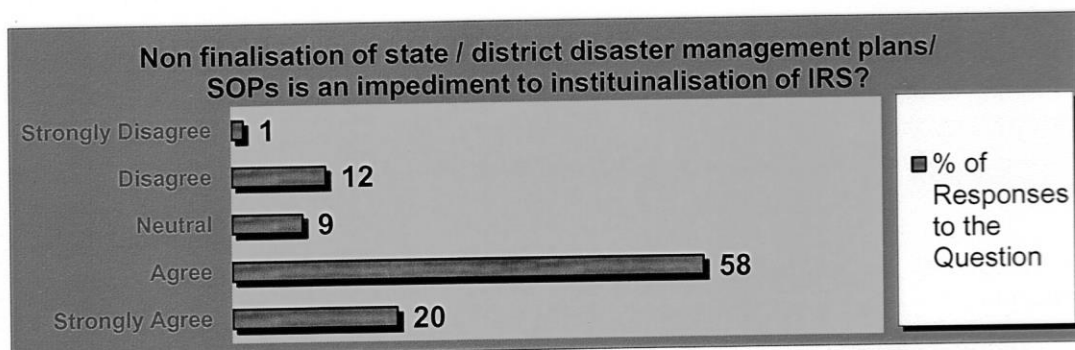
Finding & Remedial Measure. Nearly 83% feel that fast rotation of Govt officials is also an impediment to the entire effort. **Need to provide stability to the functionaries nominated as part of IRTs.**



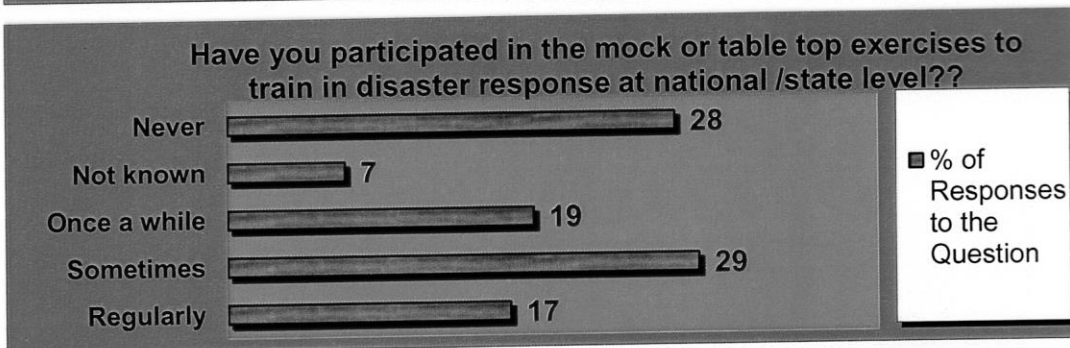
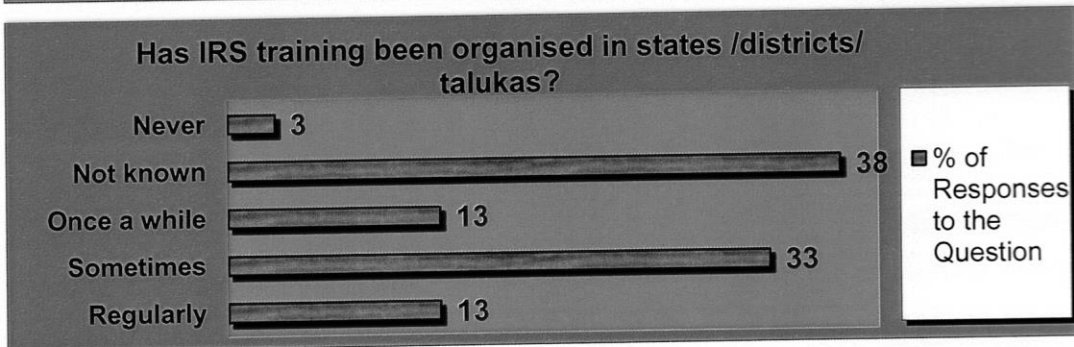
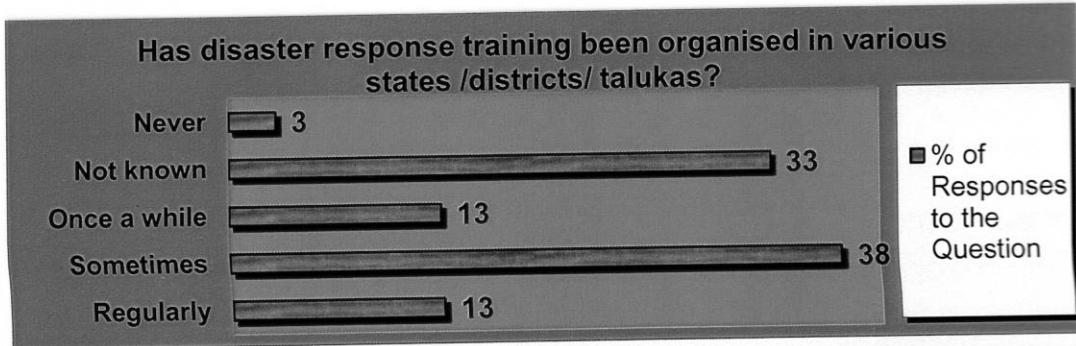
Finding & Remedial Measure. As regards attitudinal issues, over 66% felt that there is tendency of guarding own turf and not sharing of credit which are detrimental to functioning of response agencies in unison. As regards fear of accountability, the response was mixed. While 45% feel the resistance to adopt to IRS comes from the fear of accountability, nearly 53% were either non-committal or disagreed. **Need to sensitise the functionaries & responding agencies that disaster response is not a zero-sum game and responding as part of a system would make entire effort easier and could prove to be a win-win situation for all corroborating agencies.**

(b) **Planning and Preparation of Response Plans.**

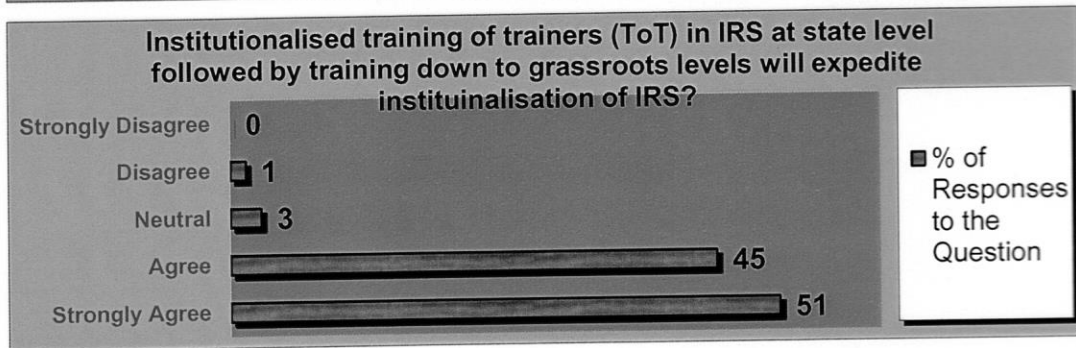
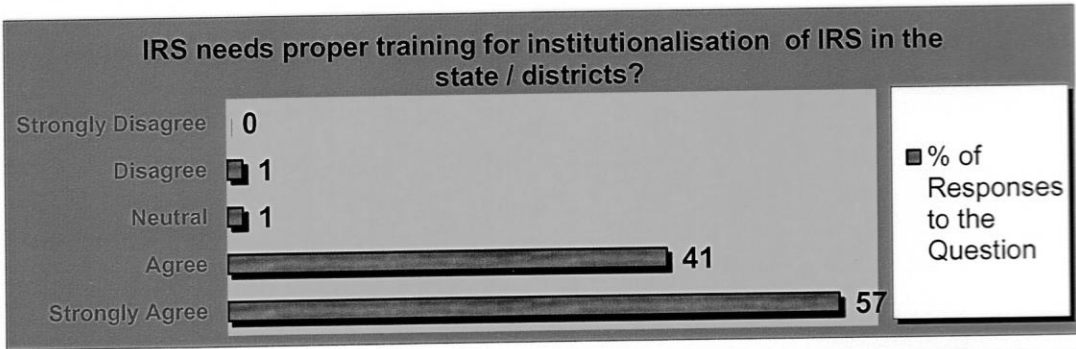
Finding & Remedial Measure. Clear verdict – 75% feel adhocism is the bane of our country especially when it comes to disaster response. Connected to this is the lack of interest by individual officials in response, over 74% feel that the functionaries responsible for response must give adequate priority to fashioning the response. **Need to sensitise all concerned to become proactive, systematise response and accord requisite priority to preparedness for response.**



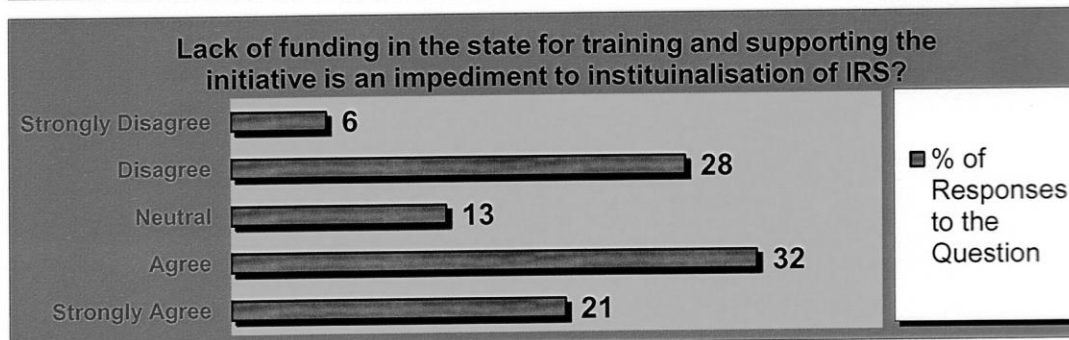
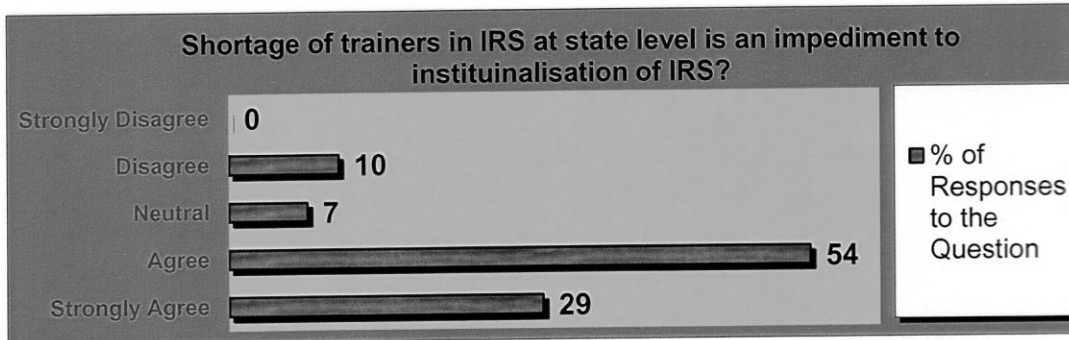
Finding & Remedial Measure. Over 78% opined that non preparation of disaster response plans at various levels is a major impediment. It was learnt that even if the plans exist in the offices the contents are not known to the responders. **Need to ensure that disaster response plans are prepared, disseminated comprehended down to the grassroots levels. Nearly all respondents also agreed to the need to incorporate agencies such as Armed Forces, NDRF, NGOs and community in the planning process. Respondents also concur with the need to have periodical coordination meetings to fine tune response plans.**

(c) Training of IRTs / Functionaries in Response / IRS.

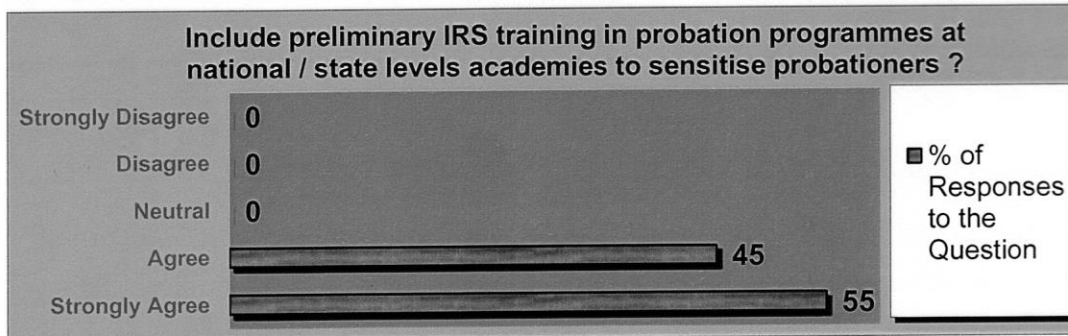
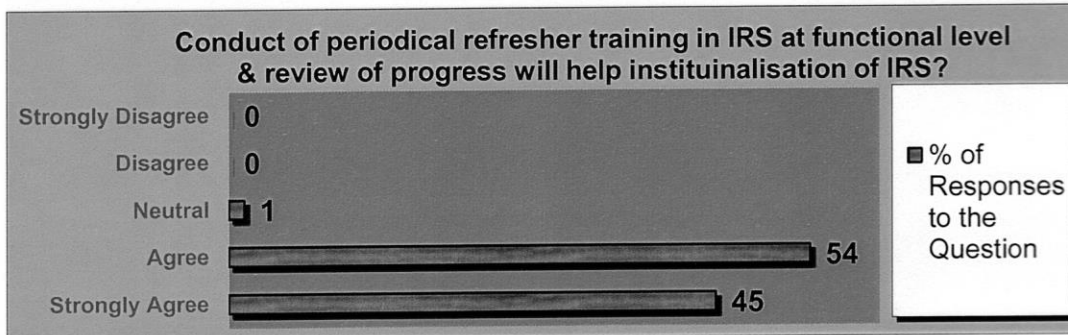
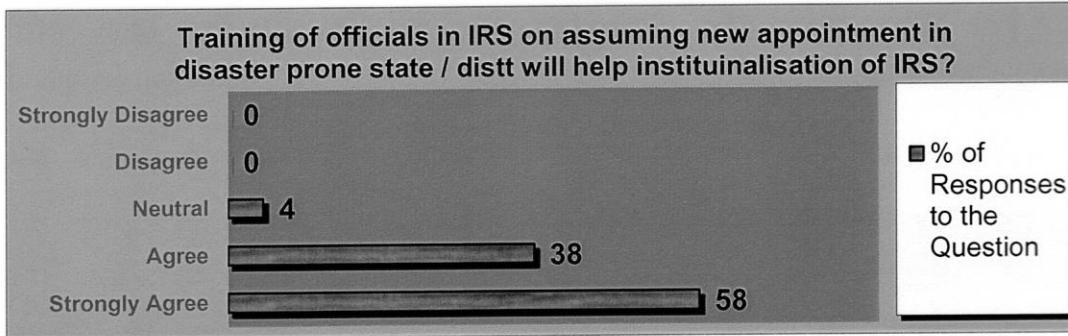
Findings & Remedial Measure. On the questions about conduct of training and mock exercises in the states, it is apparent that training in either disaster response or in IRS has not been conducted regularly. In fact a large numbers were not even aware of any such training in their states. While only 27% participated in mock exercises, 28% had never participate. **There is therefore a need to organise disaster response training at various levels in the disaster prone states, on a regular basis. Both the frequency of training programmes and mock exercises must be increased.**



Finding & Remedial Measure. Virtually all agreed to the need for training in IRS as a prerequisite for institutionalisation of IRS in disaster prone states. **There is therefore need to institutionalise IRS training down to grassroots level.**

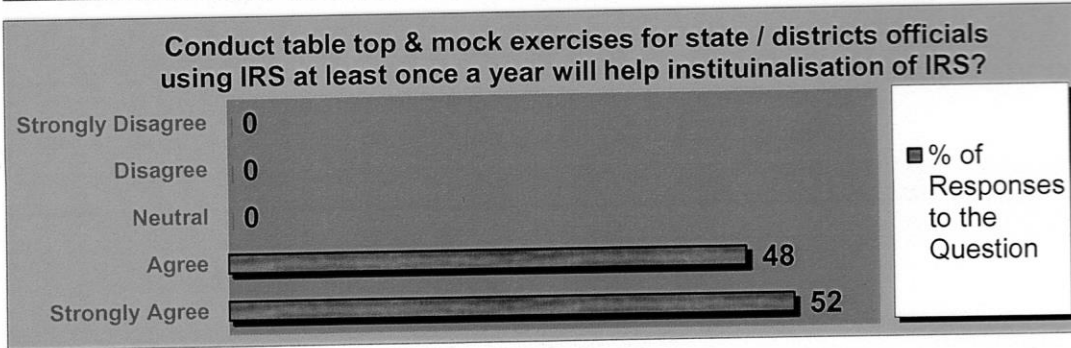
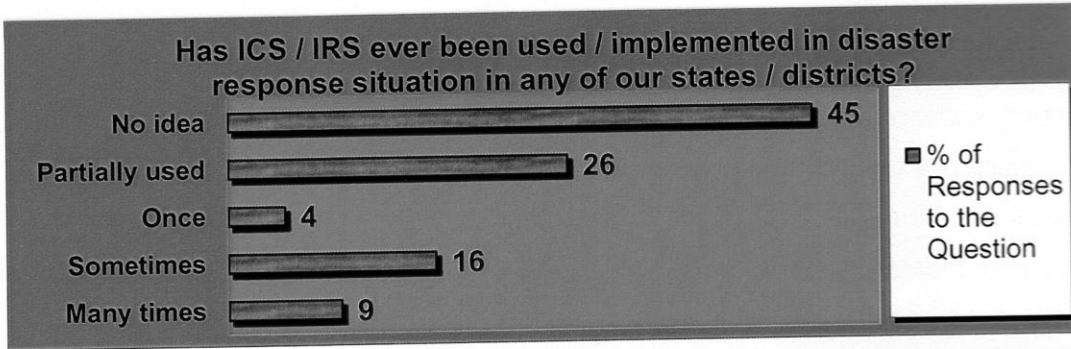


Findings & Remedial Measure. 83% felt shortage of trainers is a major impediment. On being asked about the need of funds for conduct of training, while 53% felt funding is an issue, nearly 34% disagree with this argument - **need to train as many trainers on TOT basis as possible who could further impart training down to grassroots levels. As regards funds required for supporting the initiative, states must manage the initiative on their own. MHA / NDMA may provision funds on case to case basis to the deserving states based on a pre-decided criteria.**

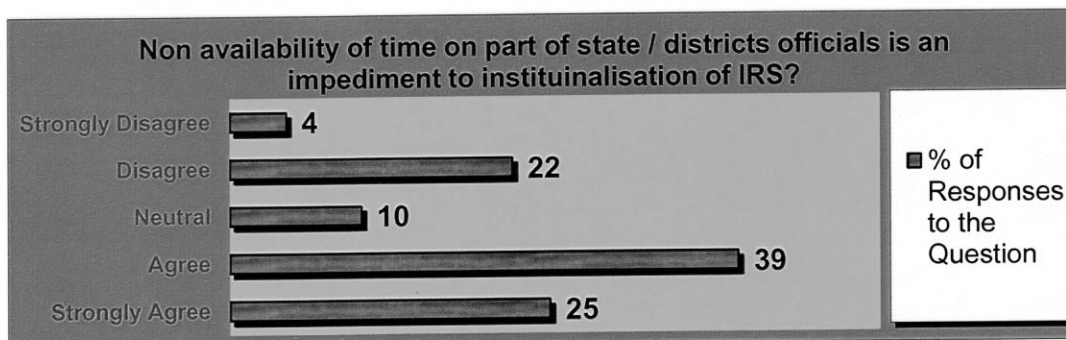


Findings & Remedial Measure. Bulk felt that officials be trained in IRS on assuming new appointment in disaster prone states / districts. Respondents also feel that conduct of periodical refresher training in IRS at functional level & review of progress will help institutionalise IRS. Respondents also recommend that preliminary IRS training be included in probation programmes at national / state levels academies to sensitise the probationers right at the beginning of their career.

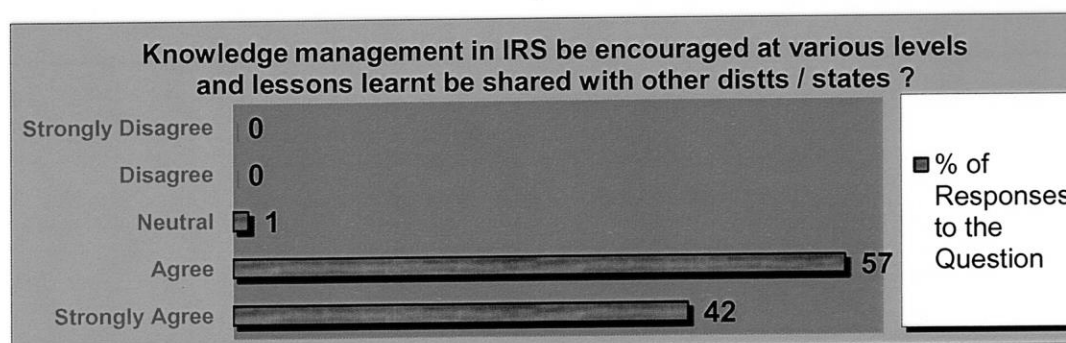
5.10 **Implementation Efforts to Institutionalise IRS.** This aspect has been analysed based on; use of IRS in any of the events, disaster situations or even in table- top exercises being conducted by NDMA across the country.



Findings & Remedial Measure. Only about 29% opined that IRS has been used in disaster situations, bulk either disagreed or had no idea. – **Respondents are in total agreement to the idea of using IRS in conduct of table top exercises /mock drills at least once in a year to give practice to functionaries in IRS in the states.**



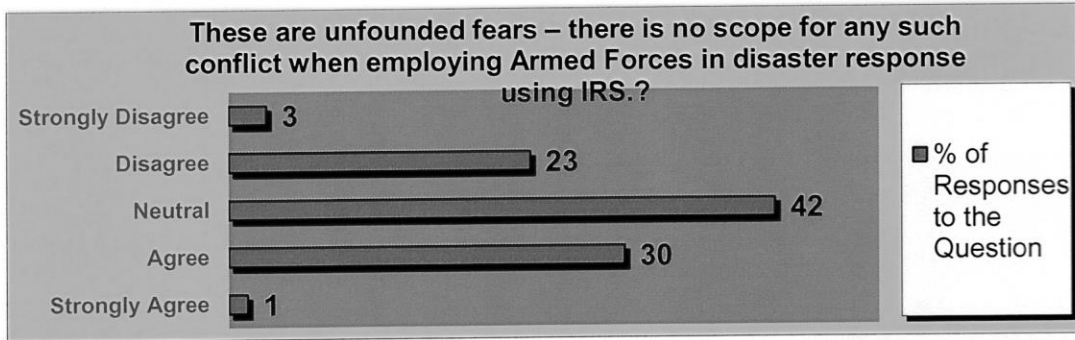
Findings & Remedial Measure. While 22% disagree, over 64% feel that owing to various commitments, the state / district officials are unable to spare time to focus on IRS institutionalisation / disaster response. This is a genuine problem as most of the time the functionaries are embroiled in routine functions— **The state govts must have a strong resolve to ensure the functionaries accord required priority to preparedness - a stitch in time saves nine.**



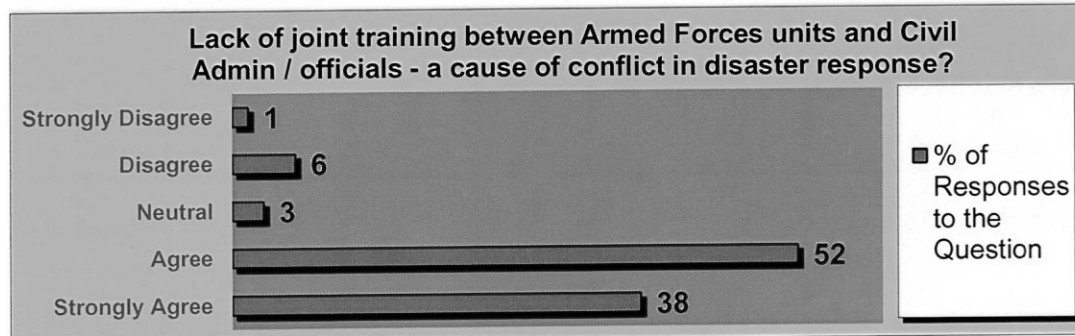
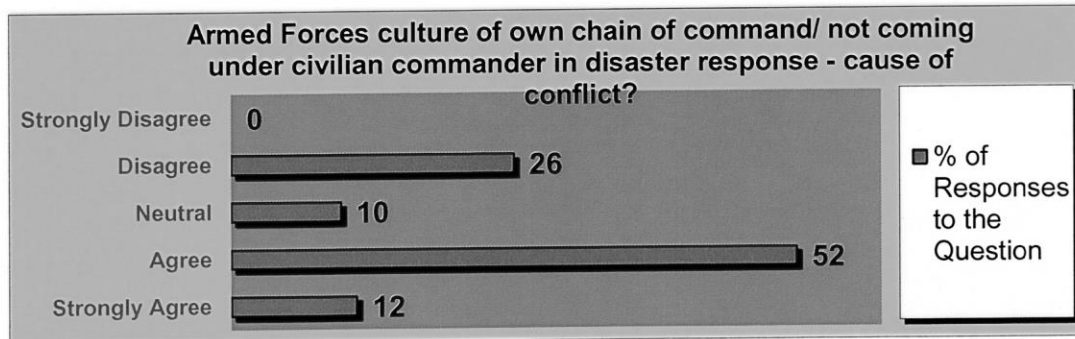
Remedial Measure. All respondents agreed to the need to encourage knowledge management in IRS at various levels including sharing and acting on lessons learnt to strengthen efforts to institutionalise IRS.

5.11 Causes of Possible Conflicts when Deploying Armed Forces in Disaster Response (IRS). NDM Guidelines – IRS also cover the need to resolve conflicts that might arise during the course of response esp between the Armed Forces and civilian agencies. Hence, the respondents were also asked to rate various factors which might be the possible causes of conflicts when deploying Armed Forces in state / districts where IRS is to be used. The same have been

compiled in form of numerous graphs as follows:-

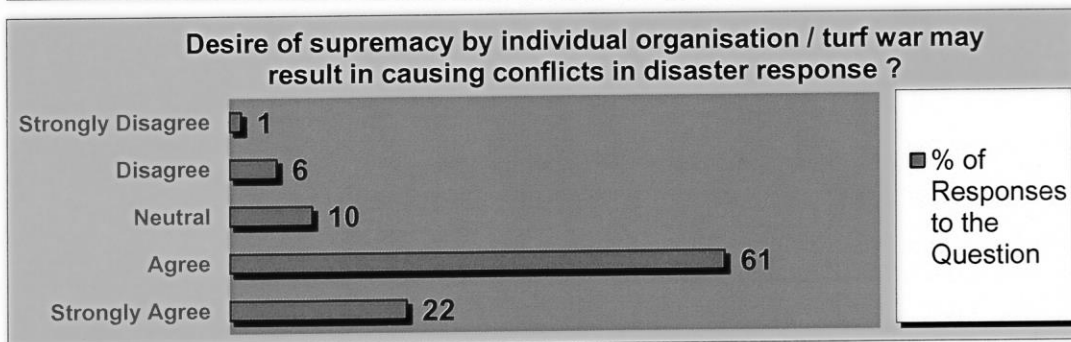
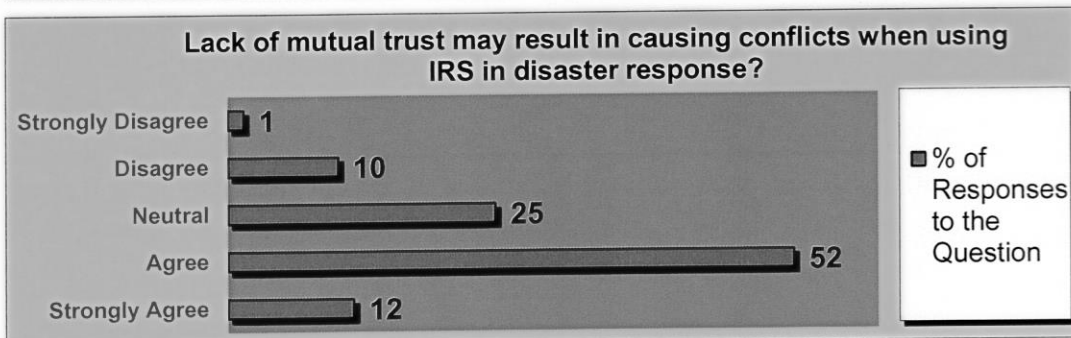
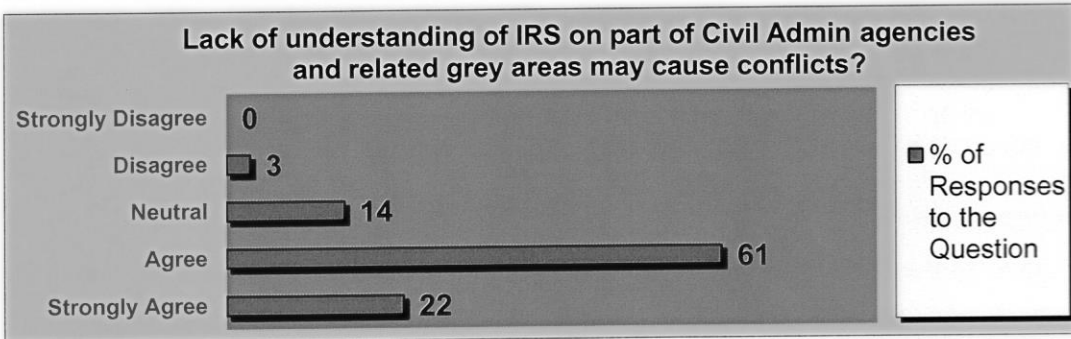


Finding & Remedial Measure. Mixed response – while 30% agree that the fears of such a conflict are unfounded, 42% were non-committal and 26% felt that the fears are for real. Hence, the need to address these conflicts if and when these do arise.



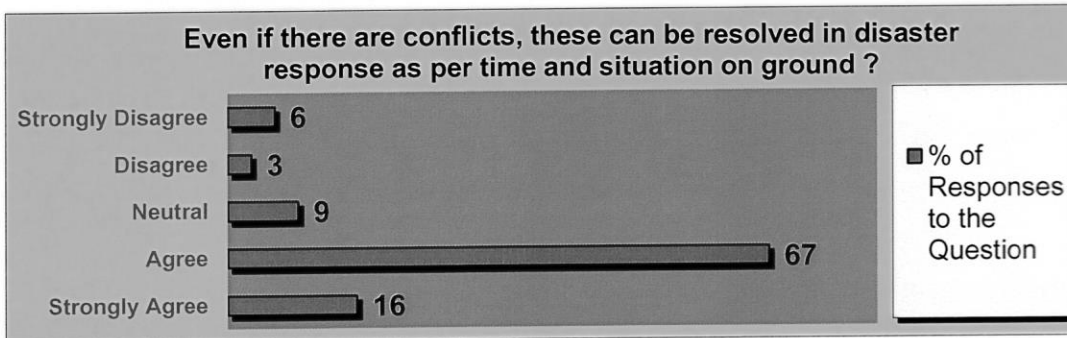
Findings & Remedial Measure. As regards the likely causes of conflicts, majority agreed that the Armed Forces have their own chain of command and they have a culture of working under their own commanders. Also, lack of joint training between the Armed Forces units and civilian responders may result in lack of understanding

and cause conflicts – **The conflicts are only natural due to different working culture and a very strict chain of command followed by the Armed Forces. These issues can be mitigated to an extent by organising joint training and exercises at the grassroots levels in disaster prone states / districts.**



Findings & Remedial Measure. Most of the respondents also agreed to three more likely causes that may result in conflicts as per the illustration above – **There is therefore a need to acquaint all the agencies / responders in disaster situations with the fact that IRS in no way violates the area of specialisation / jurisdiction of individual responding agencies. In fact the causes of mutual**

trust and desire of supremacy are likely to be addressed better with IRS in place.



Findings & Remedial Measure. Finally, over 83% are of the view that even if conflicts do arise these can be resolved with some amount of efforts. **Hence, we must go ahead with IRS and try it out in disaster response in our country.**

5.12 As evident from the foregoing findings, there are a number of issues that are impeding institutionalisation of IRS in the states, but none of these appear insurmountable and can be addressed by a strong resolve at various levels.

Inputs from Interactions and Unstructured Interviews

5.13. A number of interactions and unstructured interviews gave a new insight in to the subject. The officials & respondents are more vocal about their views and come up with frank opinions and ideas when speaking in person. Hence both, a large number of grey areas and suggestions emerged during the course of this exercise. To elicit views of some of the disaster management experts a web query was also ~~posted~~ posted on the net which was responded to very well by a large number of experts from the disaster management fraternity¹⁴¹ (refer Appendix A). Numerous apprehensions also surfaced during the course of the interactions with the respondents as also discussions in response to the web query posted on the

¹⁴¹ Disaster Management Community, Solution Exchange, United Nations, New Delhi, se-drm@solutionexchange-un.net.in, <https://in-mg61.mail.yahoo.com/neo/launch?.rand=20n2bcdl96pdk#mail> .

net. The grey areas and views of the respondents are covered in the succeeding paras.

5.14 **Divergent Views on ICS / IRS**. During the course of interaction and web discussions a number of experts and officials came up with views that question the need of ICS / IRS in India and put a question mark on the efficacy of the system. The same are covered as follows:-

(a) **Suitability of an Imported System for Own Administrative Structure**. Ms Mishra while agreeing that *IRS could be a very effective, systematic, well-coordinated and planned system for response rather than current ad-hoc response*, questioned¹⁴² *evidence of it being successful in last 10 years since propagated in India*. Many of the officials she interacted feel that ICS/IRS is an imported idea and is being implemented with modification without the basic infrastructure or notified guidelines which does not really build their confidence as the civilian scenario is quite different from the originators of the IRS. The apprehensions about comprehension and usage of IRS at grassroots level are not misplaced. The question raised in the web discussion was replied by the initiator of the query that though ICS is copied from the USA, it is not a purely imported idea, just that it is an unfamiliar idea in the civilian domain. In effect, ICS is copied from the system used by the Armed Forces. The primary functions used by the ICS / IRS are Command, Intelligence, Planning, Operations, Logistics, Administration and Finance. These are also the very same functions as used by the Armed Forces world over including by the Indian Army. If Armed Forces are able to conduct SAR missions or relief functions efficiently in disaster situations it is because they use a system akin to ICS / IRS. Most UN organizations also use similar system while rendering

¹⁴² Abha Mishra, UNDP, Responding to IRS relate Query posted on the Web for Disaster Management Fraternity. <https://in-mg61.mail.yahoo.com/neo/launch?.rand=20n2bcd196pdk#mail>, 22 Feb 14 at 2300hrs.

humanitarian aid world over. Hence, IRS or a similar system is in use world over and in our country.

(b) **Idea of Adoption of ICS in India**. Dr Janki Andharia¹⁴³ is quite sceptical about adoption of ICS in India and asks that '*someone may like to explore the process of how ICS was brought in the country and with what objectives and analyse it systematically- in terms of what transpired in ICS project*'. She argues '*whether the same outcomes would have been better achieved through alternate means*'. Dr Andharia responding to the web query on IRS responded by wondering '*why - we did not invite our own (armed forces) to train those - given that there seems great similarity in approaches- as the respected Brigadier points out*'. She emphasises the need for governance be it routine or disaster response, '*the solution lies in good governance*¹⁴⁴'. The argument is also supported by Dr Rautela who says that how can we expect good response in emergency times when the governance during normal times is not up to the mark¹⁴⁵.

(c) **Need for Existing System vs New System**. Dr Satendra¹⁴⁶ argues that *our existing system is time tested and has delivered in emergencies but needs to be further strengthened with IRS approach*. He feels that *there really are no major impediments to implementation of IRS in India just that it takes time for any system to be adopted*. Hence, IRS will take its own course before it is institutionalised fully in our country. He however feels that *IRS needs further customisation to suit specific requirements of disaster prone states*.

¹⁴³ Dr Janki Andharia, HoD, JT Department of Disaster Management, TISS, Mumbai, in a tele conversation, 28 Feb 14.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Dr Piyush Rautela, Executive Director, DMMC, Dehradun, in an unstructured interview at DMMC, 28 Feb 14.

¹⁴⁶ Dr Satendra, Executive Director NIDM, responding in an unstructured interview, 24 Feb 14.

(d) **IRS - Theoretical Model.** Mr Bhaskaranand while discussing the need for IRS in the state of Uttarakhand commented that as on date ICS / IRS is a theoretical system as there are no reports of its use and success in disaster response in India¹⁴⁷. He however agrees that there exists scope for improvement and a system which can better our response to disasters can be adopted if found suitable.

5.15. While interacting at NDMA Mr Sinha gave some very valuable inputs while demystifying IRS. *There are certain mental blocks people have with regards to IRS and feel the system is quite alien beyond comprehension.* Mr Sinha emphasised that *IRS is a logical way of giving shape to your response and it ensures that not everybody does everything.* He also highlighted that the following merit attention¹⁴⁸:-

(a) **Inclusion of IRS in National Disaster Response Plan (NDRP).** Shri Sinha mentioned that *the National Disaster Response Plan (NDRP) is under preparation and is likely to be finalised in due course.* He added that *IRS has been included in the response plan to ensure its operationalization in the states*¹⁴⁹.

(b) **Innovative Ways to Implement IRS.** Mr Sinha suggests that *new innovative ways must be found to implement IRS in the country.* He opined that *USAID / NIDM need to be innovative and find newer methods of capacity building to drive the effort further*¹⁵⁰.

(c) **Pre-nomination of IRTs.** It is imperative that IRTs be formed at various levels and pre-nominated officials are trained in IRS. They must be put

¹⁴⁷ Bhaskaranand, IAS, Secretary Disaster Management Uttarakhand Govt, in an unstructured interview, 28 Mar 14.

¹⁴⁸ JK Sinha, Member NDMA, Steering the effort to institutionalise IRS in the country, in an unstructured interview, on 26 Feb 14.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

through mock exercises for effective response. When demitting office on transfer or on some other grounds, they must hand over charge of IRT position to the new incumbent for keeping the IRT intact for future response.

5.16. **Lack of Ownership of IRS.** A major area of concern is ownership of IRS. While disaster response is a state responsibility, in most cases states have not assumed the ownership of integrating IRS into state disaster response mechanism. *Often the training / mock exercises in IRS are only organised by the states if funds and trainers are provisioned by NDMA to them for conduct of such activities*¹⁵¹.

5.17 **Lack of Political Will & Bureaucratic Support.** On interacting with the states and officials at NDMA / MHA / NIDM / in the field, it was felt that while some states are very proactive in their approach to preparedness and capacity building for disaster response, some lag behind a great deal. Apparently, some states tend to only react and work in the wake of a disaster. Such states normally switch off in the aftermath of a disaster once the normalcy is attained indicating lack of vision owing to weak political will and bureaucratic resolve. Few states are reportedly doing well to build their response capacity ~~and~~^{eg} Odisha, Gujarat, Bihar, Tripura, Sikkim, Nagaland, Mizoram¹⁵² etc.

5.18. **Lack of Requisite Importance to Disaster Response Training.** Mr Sukumaran opines¹⁵³ that, *IRS is non-existent/non-operative in India, because it has not percolated down to functional levels. IRS is limited to table top exercises and not taken seriously as DMs/ SDMs are not available/interested for training on IRS because of their busy schedules.* It has been observed that required importance to training activities in disaster response is not given in most of the states. In many a cases the officials detailed to attend IRS modules and other

¹⁵¹ Shivaji Singh, Senior Consultant, NDMA, in an unstructured interview at NDMA, 26 Feb 14.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Anil Kumar Sukumaran, State Planning Consultant, Lucknow, <https://in-mg61.mail.yahoo.com/neo/launch?.rand=20n2bcd196pdk#mail,> 22 Feb 14.

disaster response courses have nothing to do with disaster response in their state / district, resulting in waste of efforts. The officials being detailed to attend these courses must be of sufficient seniority to be able to comprehend the nuances of IRS and then enable their line departments to get acquainted with the system.

5.19 **Restricted Participation in IRS Training**. Ms Abha Mishra¹⁵⁴ also argues that as of now *the training / sensitisation in IRS have been restricted to the Govt officials and involvement of the Armed forces or civil society is not known*. This argument is well taken and from the details available from NIDM and NDMA, it is evident that bulk of the personnel trained are from the Central / state Govts with only a handful from NGOs and the Armed forces. In fact it is very important to enlarge the scope of IRS training by casting the net wider. Mr Sukumaran in web¹⁵⁵ discussion argues *there is need to enlarge the scope of training and involvement of entities other than Govt functionaries. Participation of various stakeholders in training, development and institutionalization of IRS will only make IRS more acceptable and executable in the times of emergencies*. Additionally, training in IRS needs to be made mandatory in various probation academies at national and state levels to ensure the probationers are exposed to the nuances of IRS in the beginning of their career¹⁵⁶.

5.20 **IRS Training**. A few respondents commented while interacting that *ICS / IRS training is quite theoretical and needs a complete reorientation*¹⁵⁷. Maj Rahul who has himself undergone IRS training at NIDM and in Uttarakhand state recommends that *training must also include a practical leg to facilitate trainees understand and experience the nuances of IRS in the field*. The respondents acknowledged that unless the users are convinced of the efficacy of IRS in field the process of taking it forward cannot be realised. IRS is a system for use at

¹⁵⁴ Abha Mishra, UNDP, Responding to IRS related Query posted on the Web for Disaster Management Fraternity.

¹⁵⁵ Anil Kumar Sukumaran, State Planning Consultant, Lucknow
<https://in-mg61.mail.yahoo.com/neo/launch?.rand=20n2bcdl96pdk#mail>, 22 Feb 14.

¹⁵⁶ Prabodh Pathak, Consultant at NIDM and OIC IRS Training, in an unstructured interview, Jan 14.

¹⁵⁷ Maj Rahul Jugran, Manager State EOC, DMMC, Dehradun, in an unstructured interview, 28 Feb 14.

functional or tactical levels. Hence, the *training must focus on the critical mass*¹⁵⁸ on ground through well trained trainers in respective states.

5.21 **Administrative System and Support to IRS Approach.** Mr Dash questions¹⁵⁹, *to what extent our system is supporting such a new approach and of equal importance is also the question-to what extent we are able to incorporate field learning into IRS evolution in an Indian context?* He argues that, *IRS officers trained in one district when transferred often do not find a similar approach in the new district, and after sometime lose their acquired skills and perhaps their interest too.* Significance of the second question is to be seen in the backdrop of the US system developing over many decades and through a continual process of evolution based on practitioner's feedback. He opines, it is establishment of such a mechanism that builds on learning from application in local context, which is necessary for moving this process forward.

5.22 **Need for Skill Development to Exploit IRS.** Dr Mankar¹⁶⁰ on the IRS query from Disaster Management Community responded on 24th Feb that *IRS / ICS are good tools. As tools they work well only if used with skill. IRS will not work if inputs and processes are faulty or if outputs are not acted upon.* She asserts that *we must assess the system that plans to implement IRS. Is it geared to utilize it optimally? Does the current system need change? Will IRS work effectively with our present system etc. This will decide whether IRS is a success or a failure. Inputs on success of IRS or its failure may have more to do with who is using it or how it is being used rather than about IRS itself.*

5.23 **Need for Streamlining and Simplifying IRS Application.** Col Srivastava¹⁶¹ while responding on the net on IRS query feels that *there is a need*

¹⁵⁸ Dr Piyush Rautela, Executive Director, DMMC, Dehradun, in an unstructured interview, 28 Feb 14.

¹⁵⁹ Biswanath Dash, Jamsetji Tata Centre for Disaster Management, TISS, Mumbai
<https://in-mg61.mail.yahoo.com/neo/launch?.rand=20n2bcd196pdk#mail> 23 Feb 14.

¹⁶⁰ Dr (Gp Capt) Suchitra Mankar, Doorstep Health Services Pvt Ltd., Pune,
<https://in-mg61.mail.yahoo.com/neo/launch?.rand=20n2bcd196pdk#mail>, 25 Feb 14.

¹⁶¹ Col Sanjay Srivastava, UNDP, Ranchi,

to streamline the system and standardize the procedures. While being part of ICRS Pilot Project in Hyderabad and Cyberabad the project team has recommended that the GOI needs to come out with a pan- India national policy guidelines (which NDMA has issued) and sincere effort to implement it. He feels that it is very important to simplify IRS further for better comprehension and execution at functional levels. This, he argues, would be possible only if something like NDMA Act 2005 is enacted and implemented to legitimise the system.

5.24 **Suitability of IRS Manuals and Military Jargon.** Mr Sukumaran in the web discussion¹⁶² argues that the ICS Manual published by LBSNAA, unfortunately read like another military manual which talks about formation with lot of military jargons like Staging Area, Area Command and so on. While Armed Forces would be at ease to operate / use ICS / IRS, it is area administrators like District Magistrates, Sub-Divisional Magistrates who operate as Incident Commanders for District and Taluka/Tehsils, respectively. Unfortunately, community and NGOs have been limited as receivers in the IRS and hence it is not comprehensive. That explains the absence of participative community based/centred disaster reduction practices in India. He also reiterates that *IRS manual is one amongst several documents that needs to be re-written/modified to suit practical purposes.* The jargon used in the IRS is apparently unfamiliar to most civilians and hence we need to find ways and means to overcome this by either getting used to the system or devise fresh terminology in next few years.

5.25 **Problem of Accountability / Assuming Responsibility.** Maj Rahul at Uttrakhand state EOC acknowledges that officials in various line departments are bogged down with their routine issues and are reluctant to accept additional roles / responsibility required of disaster response or IRT. He adds that *there is neither a legislation in the DM act which makes this added responsibility binding nor are*

<https://in-mg61.mail.yahoo.com/neo/launch?.rand=20n2bcd196pdk#mail>, 25 Feb 14.

¹⁶² Anil Kumar Sukumaran, State Planning Consultant, Lucknow

<https://in-mg61.mail.yahoo.com/neo/launch?.rand=20n2bcd196pdk#mail>, 22 Feb 14.

there any incentives for officials to take on the additional burden of IRT¹⁶³. There is therefore a need for incorporating IRT responsibilities in the state disaster management policies/ plans and make it binding on the pre-nominated officials.

5.26 Maj Gen VK Datta at NDMA feels that there are numerous reasons that impede institutionalisation¹⁶⁴. Few important ones are listed as follows:-

(a) **Disaster Response Plans.** In many cases disaster management plans do not exist, even if those are there are not updated. In many cases these plans are very generic and do not cover response and there is no mention of IRS whatsoever. In many cases plans are neither understood nor disseminated down to the functional levels.

(b) **Need to Form DDMA's.** While SDMA's have been formed, DDMA's are yet to come up in many of the disaster prone districts.

(c) **Need for Better Comprehension of the System.** IRS is not understood either at higher level or at lower levels and hence not included in their training and response to disasters in the states. Dr Satendra¹⁶⁵ strengthened this argument by adding *that the upper echelons in the states need to be sensitised and made aware of IRS as a preparedness solution to not just for disasters but all sorts of major / mega events.* Educating and making aware the senior ranks in states will ensure requisite impetus to IRS institutionalisation it deserves.

(d) **Lack of Equipment / Wherewithal.** The fire department and civil defence organisations in states are not equipped to deal with disasters. To

¹⁶³ Maj Rahul Jugran, Manager State EOC, DMMC, Dehradun, in an unstructured interview, 28 Feb 14.

¹⁶⁴ Maj Gen VK Datta, Senior Specialist in Disaster Management and Counter Terrorism, NDMA, New Delhi, in an interview, Nov 13.

¹⁶⁵ Dr Satendra, Executive Director NIDM, responding in an interview at NIDM, 24 Feb 14.

add to this observation, Dr Satendra¹⁶⁶ also recommends need to *equip relief agencies with requisite wherewithal to respond as part of IRS and not feel constraint due to non-availability of necessary tools and material required for professional response. As Col Supnekar¹⁶⁷ puts it, 'IRS in isolation will not be effective if we do not have efficient EOCs and failsafe communications'.*

(e) **EOCs as Only Communication Centre / Night Duty Rooms.** There are few EOCs in states/ districts and most of these are used night duty rooms or as radio / telecommunication rooms.

(f) **Lack of priority to IRS / Disaster Response by District / State Machinery.** The district administration and officials in many cases lack resolve to adopt IRS and where they like to adopt do not have enough time from routine functions / VIP duties.

(g) **Lack of Continuity of Training.** Those nominated and trained in IRS in states may not have much to do with disaster response. Even if trained, lack continuity and get transferred / rotated.

5.27 **Institutionalisation of IRS.** As per Mr Balaji¹⁶⁸, for any new system or for that matter *for adaptation of any system one requires legislative support, training support, a robust institutionalization mechanism backed by resources and administrative support at various levels. With regards to IRS, the NDMA has issued the guidelines (which fall in legislative domain) and LBSNAA / NIDM / State ATIs have played a key role in adaptation of IRS courses, training the trainers and responders. NDMA used the tools in training responders through periodic mock*

¹⁶⁶ Dr Satendra, Executive Director NIDM, , responding in an interview at NIDM, 24 Feb 14.

¹⁶⁷ Supanekar, Col VN, Centre for Disaster Management, YASHADA, Pune while responding to IRS web query on 28 Feb 14.

¹⁶⁸ Balaji Singh, Chowhan, Independent Consultant, New Delhi, in response to a web query on IRS, se-drm@solutionexchange-un.net.in, 01 Mar 14.

exercises held at district / municipality level. He however, stresses that *efforts in institutionalization domain were weak and hence the IRS is yet to become a reality on ground*. He recommends that *to realize the potential of IRS and see it become a reality on ground, the MHA / NDMA could pursue the following:-*

- (a) Ensure districts and Municipalities have pre-identified IRTs formed (with back-ups) on the basis of IRS.
- (b) The IRTs are trained and equipped with knowledge and skills to use IRS. The district and Municipality level IRTs use the IRS regularly in planned events / parades etc.
- (c) A dedicated department to be set up in MHA to monitor the progress on IRS implementation.
- (d) A well designed database system which could register, track and mobilize the IRS trained personnel.
- (e) A well accepted mechanism for movement of IRS trained personnel from one state to another to respond to disasters.
- (f) Formulation of simplified procedures to use the IRS on small events such as accidents, fires etc
- (g) Continuous research to modify and upgrade the system and training tools.

5.28 **Idea of Dedicated / Professional IRT on the Lines of US IRTs.** USA has dedicated IRTs of professionals which get inducted in the disaster affected area, carry out the task and demobilise. However, in India the IRTs are to be pre-designated from amongst the administrative machinery at District / state, as the

case may be. The idea of creating professional IRTs on the lines of USA was also posed to disaster response experts. Dr Satendra argued that *employing IRTs composed of professionals from outside state alongside existing administration in an emergency situation may complicate the issue* and may prove to be counter-productive¹⁶⁹.

5.29 **Need for Technology based Operational Response within IRS.** While interacting at NIDM, Dr Ghosh¹⁷⁰ recommended that we need to focus on operational response issues within IRS. He felt that entire response should be resource knowledge based. The response should be automated based on extensive use of EOCs. A state / district should visualise all possible scenarios of disasters and work out SOPs to deal with those, controlled and monitored at EOCs using geo-spatial intelligence solutions.

5.30 Disasters recognize no boundaries. India being a large country with most of our states prone to some or the other disasters, we do need a system which uses standard procedure and common terminology. IRS fits the bill as it has been modified to suit our administrative set up at functional levels. All we need is to communicate/ disseminate the system down to grassroots levels and facilitate its adaptation. The system will be best used when it is comprehended in the upper echelons and integrated in the administrative system with a top down approach. The states must be allowed leeway to customise its use to suit their peculiar administrative requirements. Finally, we must use it in organizing all types of events / functions/ conduct of major exercises eg elections to give hands-on experience to our functionaries. Yes, training & involvement of all, be it the Govt functionaries or civil society in IRS is of paramount importance and needs no emphasis.

¹⁶⁹ Dr Satendra, Executive Director NIDM, responding in an interview, 24 Feb 14.

¹⁷⁰ Dr Chandan Ghosh, interactions at NIDM, New Delhi on 25 Feb 14.