

Role of Communication Industry in a National Disaster Warning System

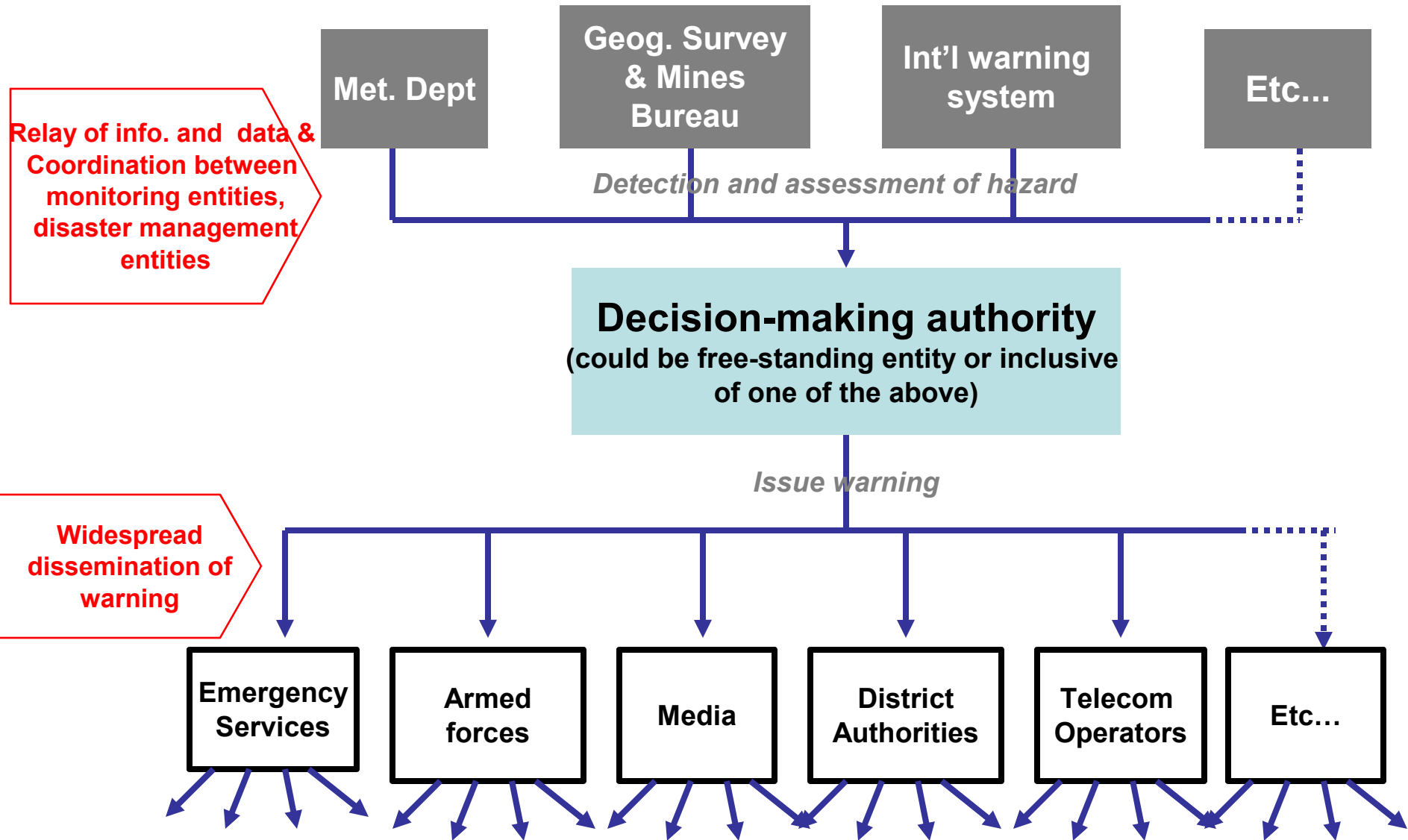
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Critical Role of Information in an effective DWS



Role of Communication Industry

1. DISASTER PERIOD

- Provision of infrastructure (**predominantly telecom**) for communication and dissemination
- Widespread dissemination of warning to public (one of several channels)

3. NON-DISASTER PERIOD

- Education and public awareness (**predominantly electronic & print media**)

DISASTER PERIOD

A. Provision of Infrastructure: Role of Telecom/Data Operators

- Communication of information and data among detection/monitoring agencies and with decision-making authority
 - need, **fast, reliable** communication links (Nat'l& int'l)– phones, leased lines, etc.
 - Networks can be **dedicated and independently managed**
- fixed and cellular operators must (according to licenses)
 - Provide **public emergency call services** to emergency organizations
 - Ensure **rapid restoration** of disrupted services in emergency situations
 - Provide **priority in service restoration to emergency organizations**
- **Network congestion** and crashing is common during disasters
 - **Solutions: load shedding? Call prioritization? Other?**
- Need to establish emergency plans and procedures, redundancy facilities, spare equipment, etc.
- Staff must be trained and able to implement emergency procedures rapidly and effectively

B. Dissemination of Warning

- Must ensure accurate warning reaches **all relevant** people
- Need for **public/private partnership**: Government cannot do it alone - integration with **existing** infrastructure through partnerships
- Need suitable, cost-effective, sustainable information dissemination systems
- Make use of technology to the greatest extent feasible (i.e.. Cost, practicality for Sri Lanka, etc)
- Warnings must be standard: international communication standards

Options

Telecom operators

- SMS; cellular broadcasting; facsimile; two-way radio; RTNs/VGKs; dedicated networks for emergency organizations
 - **Problems**– e.g: network coverage, language issue (SMS); ~75% of Sri Lankan households don't own fixed/mobile phone
 - other options?
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- Telecom operators need to be up-to-date on technological advancements that might improve emergency communications
 - Regulatory issues (e.g., community or local/low-power radio)
 - Who bears the cost?

Options (cont'd)

Electronic media: TV, radio

- Crawlers, news bulletins, weather radio, local/community radio, emergency alert system via TVs and radios
- **Problems** – TVs/radios have to be switched on
- other options?

Print media

- Newspaper reports
- **Problems** – only suitable for long-fuse disasters
- Other options?

Data operators

- Email alerts to key agencies/authorities/media (regional) and VGKs
- **Problem** – limited access in most of Sri Lanka *at present*
- Other options?

NON-DISASTER PERIODS

Public Education and Awareness

- What disaster risks are relevant
 - Recognizing and understanding risk of hazards (short-fuse hazards)
 - e.g landslides after heavy rain
 - Reducing impact of disaster via preventative/mitigation measures
 - What to do in case of disaster
- Via public awareness programs through local newspapers, television & radio segments, school curricula, etc.
 - More children like ‘Tilly’
 - Especially relevant in remote communities that warnings may not reach at time of disaster
- **Continuity** is important: regular programs

NON-DISASTER PERIODS

Industry education

- What can industry do to improve disaster warning capabilities?
- Industry must stay on top of technological advancements

- Dissemination of public information is the duty of broadcast and print media
- Efficient communication of information saves time; time saves lives

Discussion
