Disaster Response and Coordination Process at the National and Dzongkhag level

Department of Disaster Management
Ministry of Home & Cultural Affairs
Royal Government of Bhutan

Purpose

The Disaster Response and Coordination Process (DRCP) defines basic structures, roles, responsibilities, and coordination of response across National and Dzongkhag levels.

The purpose of the DRCP is to:

- Define a system of multi-agency coordination at the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) level.
- Identify national agencies and assign responsibilities for well-coordinated NEOC operations.
- Establish a multi-sectoral response organization to ensure a well-coordinated onsite response.

Context

Bhutan is vulnerable to various natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, landslides, forest fires, etc., hence the need for an effective strategy to lessen the impact of a disaster. Since disasters will continue to strike unabated with and without warning, the Nation as a whole, and the Government in particular, has to plan and prepare to respond to them effectively. The management and mitigation of the adverse consequences of these disasters will require coordinated, prompt, and effective response systems at the National as well as Dzongkhag levels. While many of the components of response activities are the same for different types of disasters, systems need to be developed considering the multi-hazard scenario for optimally utilizing available resources.

The Disaster Response and Coordination Process (DRCP) would be an essential part of this strategy and an ingredient of governance. The DRCP focuses on providing clarity about offsite coordination at the National EOC level and the constitution of an onsite response organization based on the Incident Command System. The DRCP will assist and equip various responding agencies at the National and Dzongkhag levels in organizing, responding to, and coordinating disaster responses. Much of this document is focused on multi-agency coordination and organization of onsite response teams using the DRCP.

The Disaster Response and Coordination Process (DRCP) establishes administrative structures for systematic, coordinated, and effective (NEOC) operations involving multiple national agencies and a well-organized multi-sectoral Incident Management Team. Incident Command System (ICS) principles are utilized throughout the DRCP in order to support the organization of onsite response activities through pre-established response-related functional roles, ensuring there is flexibility in adapting to responder expertise and/or sectoral jurisdiction. Implementation of the DRCP allows for greater efficiencies and more dynamic response options from the initial on-scene responders, as well as it provides for a smoother transition when additional personnel arrive from other agencies. Furthermore, drawing on principles of ICS, the National Emergency Operations Center (NEOC) transitions into the “National Disaster Response Coordination Committee” (NDRCC) during a Type III disaster to support the onsite IMTs at the dzongkhag levels.

SCOPE

Disaster Response and Coordination Process (DRCP) is the critical first step related to establishing organization structures for NEOC and onsite response organizations. This DRCP process will be used for immediate response actions to meet humanitarian assistance needs and to facilitate early restoration and recovery.

- It is a national-level multi-hazard approach for disaster response
- The DRCP describes the role, responsibilities, and actions of various agencies at the National level at the NEOC
- The DRCP recognizes that different national agencies have a role to play through a well-coordinated system rather than independent actions
- The DRCP allows for the commitment of various resources by multiple government agencies in a dynamic context.

Detailed processes and a training curriculum will be developed once the DRCP is finalized and approved.

The DRCP consists of the following sections:

I. Background on the ICS

II. Introduction to NEOC

III. Introduction to NDRCC at NEOC

IV. Details of onsite response organizations at various levels based on the ICS

V. Details of Positions and Functions for onsite response organization

VI. Disaster types and decision making chart

I: Background on Incident Command System

Much of the onsite response organization has been designed based on some principles of ICS, hence a brief background about ICS is provided. ICS is a temporary onsite management hierarchy with standardized procedures for managing incidents/disasters of any size without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries. It is designed to enable effective and efficient incident/disaster response by integrating a combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications within a common organizational structure. It is used to organize response operations for a broad spectrum of emergencies, from small to complex incidents/ disasters, both natural and manmade, as well as planned events. It is suitable for the civil administration for all types of incident/disaster response and can be used by all levels of government - National, Dzongkhag, Thromde, Dungkhag, and Gewogs, as well as private-sector and non-governmental organizations. It is normally structured to facilitate activities in five major functional areas: command, operations, planning, logistics, and

finance and administration. In addition, the organization can contract or expand based on the needs of the incident/ disaster.

In short, ICS is similar to the temporary organization that is established during elections which brings staff from various agencies together in order to achieve common objectives, communications, and to present a common picture to different agencies involved in the response.

ICS was developed in the United States in the 1970s. Its influence has expanded since that time and it is now fully institutionalized in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, and the Philippines. While not fully institutionalized, other countries utilizing ICS include: European Union (Spain, France), South Africa, Mexico, Ethiopia, Sri Lanka, and the ASEAN countries of Brunei, Indonesia and Thailand. ICS training has been provided to several SAARC countries which include: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and the Maldives.

The Department of Disaster Management (DDM) has worked in close partnership with the Office for U.S. Foreign Assistance (OFDA) / USAID and United States Forest Service (USFS) since 2011 on implanting its own version of ICS. In partnership with the USFS (International Programs), DDM successfully conducted various training courses at the Dzongkhag and National level which included: Basic and Intermediate ICS, Integrated Planning, and All Hazards Incident Management Team trainings.

Benefits of ICS

ICS helps to ensure the safety of responders and the public, and provides for effective use of responding resources. It allows personnel from a wide variety of agencies to rapidly come together into a common management structure with common terminology. ICS provides for a unified and centralized response organization and establishes a way to coordinate various agencies and stakeholders who may otherwise work together sporadically.

Additional benefits of ICS include:

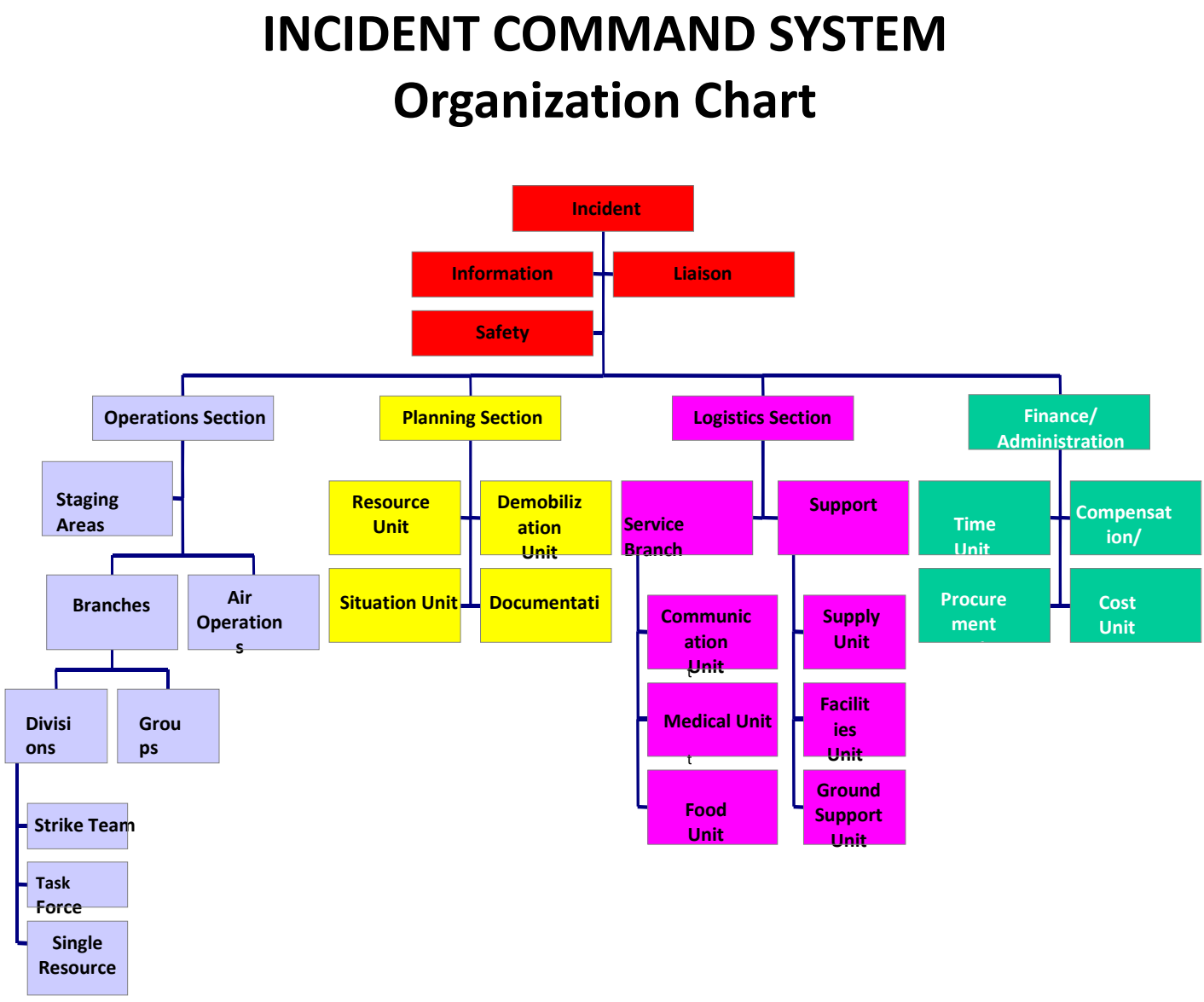
- Modularity: ICS is modular and can be expanded from Type I disasters at the Gewog and Thromde levels to Type II and III disasters at the Dzongkhag or National levels,
- Framework: ICS provides a common response framework for multiple organizations to quickly integrate and work together during disasters, emergencies and planned events,
- Organization: ICS promotes orderly responses by ensuring clarity of roles and responsibilities, effective use of resources, and information management, as well as coordination of participating agencies and stakeholders,
- Delegation of Authority: When required, ICS ensures participation of multiple stakeholders in decision making without eroding their local jurisdictional authority, even when regional or national-level officers are involved in supporting the incident response.

Principles of ICS

ICS is based on management principles which contribute to the strength and efficiency of the overall response system. The features include: management by objective, span of control, unity of command, standardization, command, planning/organizational structure, facilities and resources, communications and information management, and professionalism. ICS can be adapted to fit any need, if the principles are adhered to by all involved agencies and responders.

Relevance of ICS for Bhutan

Following diagram represents the classic ICS organization:



The classic ICS organization consists of an Incident Commander (IC), Command Staff, General staff positions divided into functional "Sections" reporting to the IC. Subordinate to the Section level are "Units" providing a further sub-layer as additional capacity. However, this classic ICS organization has been adapted to meet the requirements of our local administration and geographical divisions. Based on these ICS adaptations, Incident Management Teams (IMT) have been proposed at the Dzongkhag / Thromde / Dungkhag / Gewog levels since most of the disasters occurring in the country fall into either Type I or Type II response categories and use resources at the Gewog / Thromde(s) / Dungkhag and Dzongkhag levels. This adapted system will also ameliorate responding resource confusion, since there sources are often spread across different Sectors operating at the Dzongkhag, with separate divisional/ regional offices, including separate Police and Army units. Furthermore, using an adapted version of ICS will prevent duplication of efforts and confusion that normally arise from the common practice of multiple national stakeholders reaching out to the disaster affected Dzongkhags independently and unbeknownst to each other. Such traditional practices result in inappropriate use of resources and create a lack of integrated planning and communications, both of which are critical during disaster response.

Once adopted, ICS will provide an opportunity to establish a common and integrated command and control framework. It will be led by the civil administration which will bring together different responding agencies for a synergized response.

II: Introduction to NEOC and onsite Incident Response Management

Currently, the Department of Disaster Management is finalizing plans for establishing Emergency Operation Centres (EOC) at the National and Dzongkhag/ Thromde levels. In addition to establishing these facilities to coordinate and support response, specific roles and responsibilities will need to be established for ministries and departments along with an appropriate disaster response framework that will guide onsite and offsite actions. As disaster management and contingency plans are being formulated, the disaster response framework needs to be in place to guide the response section of these written plans. In this context, ICS will provide an appropriate framework for onsite response and support, and coordination through the EOCs.

Given the implications for a Type III disaster, the scope of the response will require significant inter-agency coordination and management oversight by the national leadership. In support of this response oversight, the National Disaster Response Coordination Committee (NDRCC) will be established and headed by the Honorable Prime Minister, ensuring the participation and coordination of various national agencies. This oversight and coordination will be part of the activities at the National Emergency Operations Centre. The National EOC will be located at the DDM, which will also be responsible for inter-agency coordination and reporting.

The Incident Management Team (IMT) is a significant part of the ICS structure which is given the mandate for managing the onsite incident response. When activated, the IMT will use ICS processes and tools to respond to the disaster. These tools and processes will be adapted for Bhutan context when this Disaster Response and Coordination Process is approved. These further adaptations to the ICS

structure will be facilitated through curriculum development and training with the support of US Forest Service. As an initial phase in this process, a pre-identified Incident Management Team (IMT) composed of professionals drawn from various sectors, divisions, and other stakeholders such as Police, Army, and Divisional/ regional offices etc. will be created and subsequently activated to manage any futuredisaster response for general hazards such as earthquakes, floods, and structural fires etc. which affect all sectors.

It should be noted that RNR/ health related disasters such as forest fire, avian influenza, and health emergencies require a different type of response therefore we may use the existing response process developed by the MoAF and Ministry of Health in consultation with relevant sectors, which has proved very successful in responding to past events.

Furthermore, the NDRCC and the IMTs at the Dzongkhag/ Thromde/ Dungkhag and Gewog levels are purely based on functions and jurisdiction and not on hierarchy of posts or positions.

III. National Disaster Response Coordination Committee (National Emergency Operation Centre)

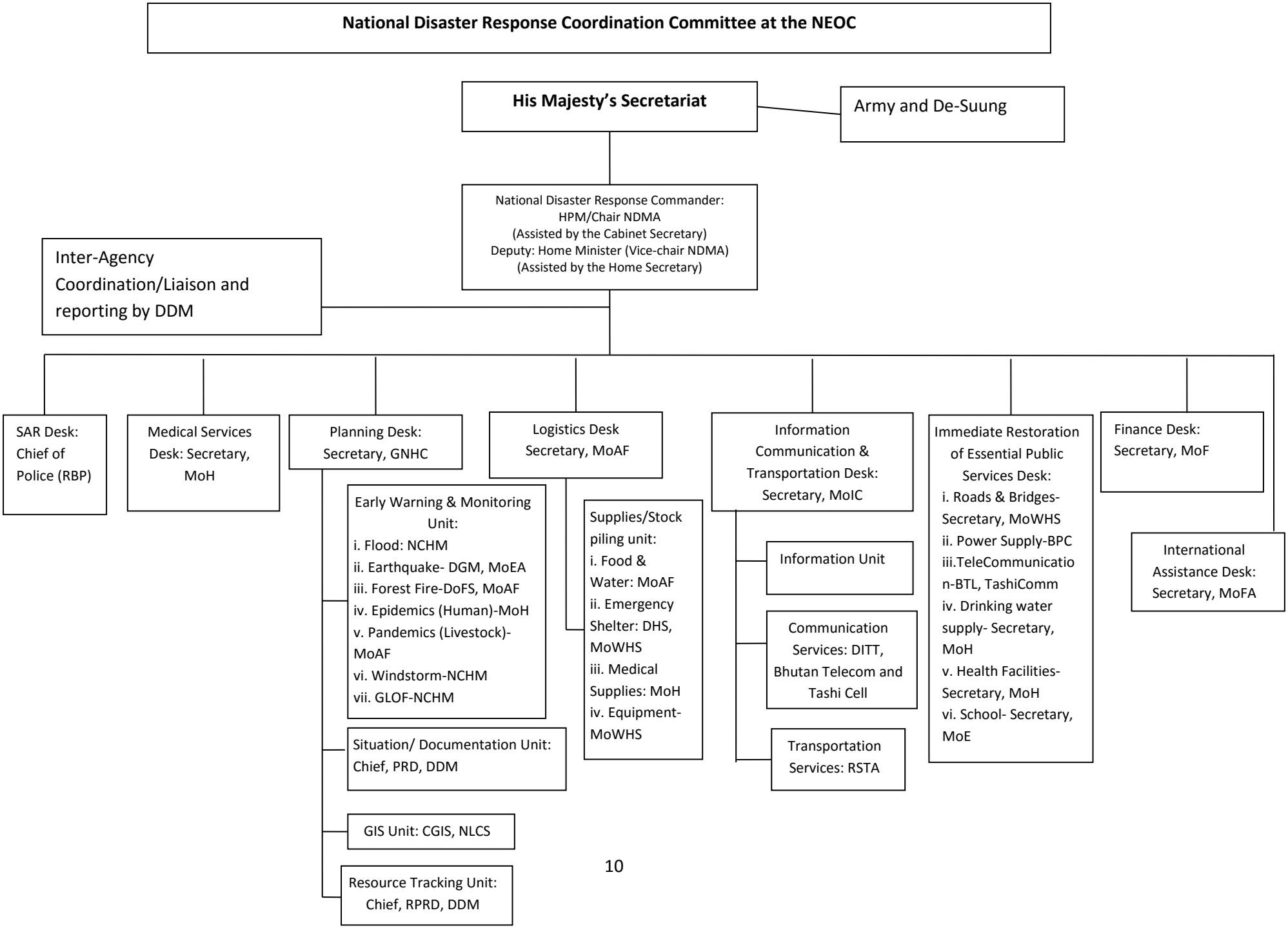
The National Disaster Response Coordination Committee (NDRCC) will include members of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) i.e. Secretaries from different ministries led by the Honorable Prime Minister. The Minister for Home Affairs will be the Deputy to the Honorable Prime Minister and support in leading the team of Secretaries to facilitate inter-agency coordination. The NDRCC will support the onsite Incident Management Team (IMT), especially during Type-III disasters. The NDRCC will locate and work out of the National Emergency Operation Centre (NEOC) which is located in DDM. The DDM is an integral part of the National Response Coordination Committee and will facilitate inter-agency coordination and reporting.

The NDRCC will support and guide Dzongkhag IMTs remotely, preventing the uncoordinated rush of resources from the national level to the incident site, unless required and ordered. At the same time, it will help in identifying specific roles and responsibilities of the ministries and other stakeholders participating in support and coordination at the national level. This will synchronize the onsite response and offsite support / coordination.

The NDRCC will provide direction and support to the affected dzongkhags through the NEOC, with overall responsibility over resources and policies without being in command of the incident scene.

The NDRCC located at NEOC will support Incident Command at the Dzongkhag / Thromde level by:

- Making executive/policy decisions
- Coordinating with relevant national-level sectors/ agencies
- Monitoring, supporting, and coordinating with the IMT on response and relief operations. It is important to understand that the disaster is not managed from afar at the NDRCC- the IMT is in charge of the response under a delegation of authority
- Collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information, including disaster alerts and warnings


National Disaster Response Coordination Committee at the NEOC
His Majesty's Secretariat
Army and De-Suung
National Disaster Response Commander:
HPM/Chair NDMA
(Assisted by the Cabinet Secretary)
Deputy: Home Minister (Vice-chair NDMA)
(Assisted by the Home Secretary)
Inter-Agency Coordination/Liaison and reporting by DDM
SAR Desk: Chief of Police (RBP)
Medical Services Desk: Secretary, MoH
Planning Desk: Secretary, GNHC
Early Warning & Monitoring Unit:
i. Flood: NCHM
ii. Earthquake- DGM, MoEA
iii. Forest Fire-DoFS, MoAF
iv. Epidemics (Human)-MoH
v. Pandemics (Livestock)-MoAF
vi. Windstorm-NCHM
vii. GLOF-NCHM
Situation/ Documentation Unit: Chief, PRD, DDM
GIS Unit: CGIS, NLCS
Resource Tracking Unit: Chief, RPRD, DDM
Logistics Desk Secretary, MoAF
Supplies/Stock piling unit:
i. Food & Water: MoAF
ii. Emergency Shelter: DHS, MoWHS
iii. Medical Supplies: MoH
iv. Equipment-MoWHS
Information Communication & Transportation Desk: Secretary, MoIC
Information Unit
Communication Services: DITT, Bhutan Telecom and Tashi Cell
Transportation Services: RSTA
Immediate Restoration of Essential Public Services Desk:
i. Roads & Bridges-Secretary, MoWHS
ii. Power Supply-BPC
iii.TeleCommunication-BTL, TashiComm
iv. Drinking water supply- Secretary, MoH
v. Health Facilities-Secretary, MoH
vi. School- Secretary, MoE
Finance Desk: Secretary, MoF
International Assistance Desk: Secretary, MoFA

1. **National Disaster Response Commander:**
   The Honourable Prime Minister as the Chair of NDMA is the National Disaster Response Commander and the Head of National Disaster Response Coordination Committee at the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC). In this role, the Honourable Prime Minister will have overall authority and responsibility for coordinating and managing overall operations remotely and will oversee coordination of operations being carried out at the Dzongkhag/ Thromde level through the various agencies in the NEOC, assisted by the Cabinet Secretary. The Home Minister as the vice-chair of NDMA will be the alternate National Disaster Response Commander. The Home Minister will be assisted by the Home Secretary.

2. **Inter-agency Coordination/ Liaison and Reporting**
   The DDM will be responsible for inter-agency coordination/ liaison as well as synthesising the proceeding and reporting to the Honourable Prime Minister and the Home Minister. The DDM will also be responsible for informing the Dzongkhag / Thromde about the decisions taken by the inter-agency team and through this, the DDM will maintain a seamless communication between the onsite ICS team and the National level coordination process.

3. **Search & Recue Desk**
   Coordination of SAR from the national level will be carried out by Chief of Police (RBP). They will coordinate with the SAR response in the Dzongkhags and provide assistance as required for monitoring and assessing safety hazards or unsafe situations.

4. **Medical Services Desk**
   The Secretary, MoH will coordinate and provide support for medical services from the national level to the incident.

5. **Planning Desk: Headed by Secretary, GNHC**
   Responsible for coordinating with the Planning Section at the incident site in terms of collection, evaluation, and dissemination of information related to the incident, and for review of the Incident Action Plans and maintaining information on the current and forecasted situation, and on the status of resources assigned to the incident.

   5.1 Watch & Warning Unit
   The following relevant agencies will provide watch and warning services, as required, during a disaster:

   - Flood: NCHM
   - Earthquake- DGM, MoEA
   - Forest Fire-DoFS, MoAF
   - Human Epidemics -MoH
   - Livestock Epidemics -MoAF
   - Windstorm-NCHM
   - GLOF-NCHM

5.2 ***Situation/Documentation Unit*:** Chief, Preparedness and Response Division, DDM
Responsible for collection, organization, analysis of incident status information for updating the situation as it progresses for further reporting, and receive support and guidance.
Responsible for collecting, recording, and safeguarding all documents relevant to the incident.

5.3 ***GIS Unit***: CGIS, NLS
Responsible for providing GIS information and maps related to the incident.

5.4 ***Resource Tracking Unit***: Chief, Risk Prevention &Reduction Division, DDM
Responsible for maintaining the status of all assigned resources at an incident.

6. Logistics Section: headed by the Secretary, MoAF

- Responsible for coordinating supply of food and water, equipment required for incident operations/ relief.

6.1 ***Supplies/Stockpiling Unit***:

- Food & Water: MoAF
- Emergency Shelter: DHS, MoWHS
- Medical Supplies: MoH
- Equipment- MoWHS

7. Information, Communication & Transportation Desk, Headed by Secretary, MoIC

- **Information Unit:** responsible for public information management and interfacing with the public and media or with other agencies with incident-related information requirements.
- **Communications Unit: lead by DITT and supported by Bhutan Telecom and Tashi Cell-** responsible for coordinating communication services to the incident personnel.
- **Transportation Unit: lead by RSTA-**responsible coordinating the transportation of personnel and supplies.

8. Immediate Restoration of Essential Public Services Desk

The coordination for restoration of essential public services will be carried out by the relevant sectors as follows:

i. Roads & Bridges-DoR, MoWHS
ii. Power Supply-BPC
iii. Tele Communication-BTL, TashiComm
iv. Drinking water supply- PHE, MoH
v. Health Facilities-MoH
vi. School- DSE, MoE

9. **Finance Desk: headed by Secretary, Ministry of Finance**,

- Responsible for all incident costs and financial considerations.
- Responsible for tracking costs, analyzing cost data, making cost estimates, and recommending cost-saving measures.
- Responsible for financial concerns resulting from property damage, injuries, or fatalities at the incident.
- Responsible for fiscal matters involving hiring, purchasing goods and services, and establishing local sources for obtaining equipment and supplies.

10. International Assistance Desk: headed by Secretary, MoFA

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs will coordinate with international agencies and countries in case of requirement of international assistance.

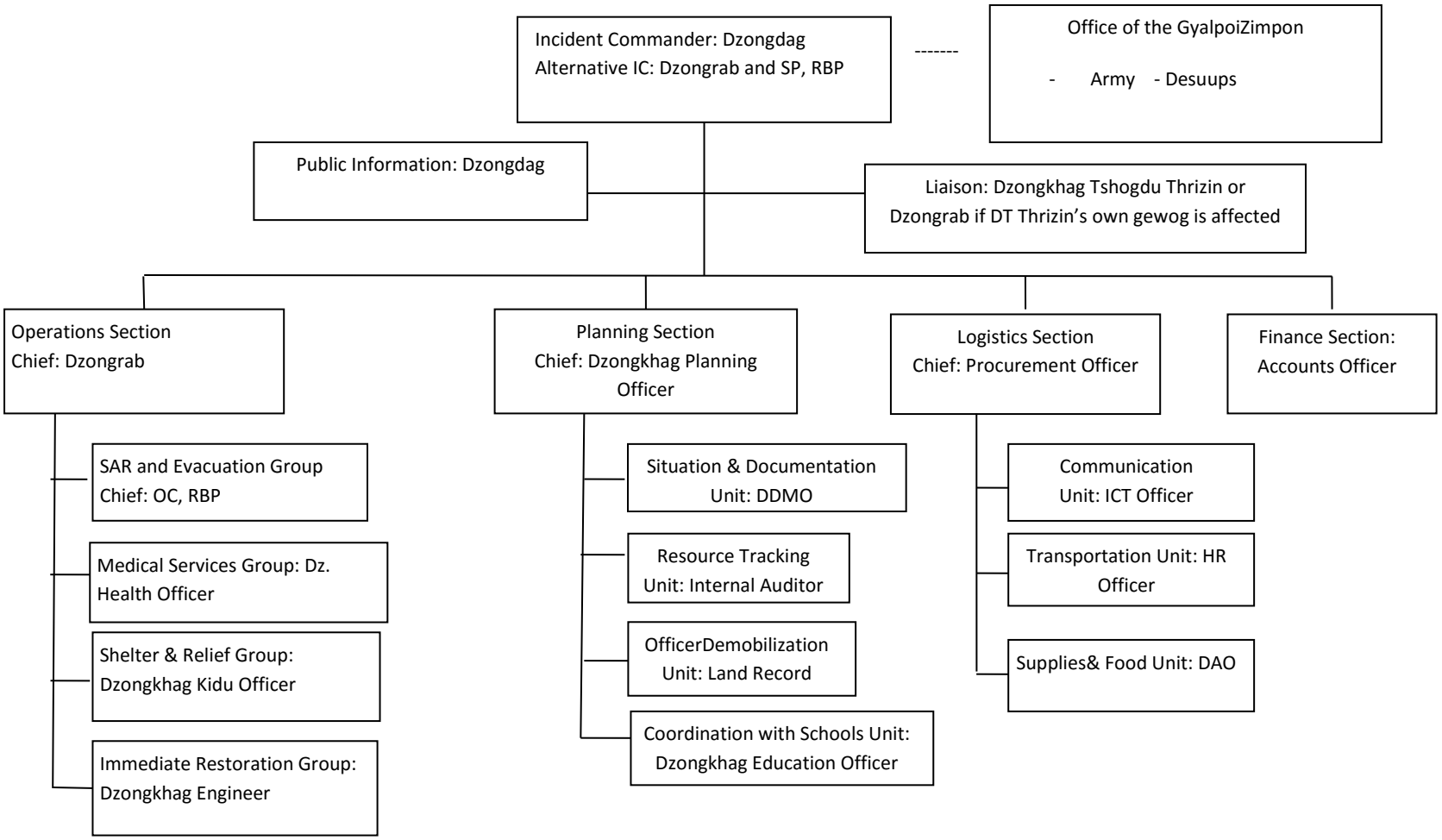
The support of Desuups/ Dratshang/ NGOs/ CSOs/ Corporations/ Regional Offices/ Private businesses and communities will be coordinated through the NDRCC at the national and the IMTs at the dzongkhag level.

IV: Onsite Incident Response Management

A. Onsite Incident Response Management Team at Dzongkhag Level

The Dzongkhag Incident Response Management Team will be led by the Dzongdag with Dzongrab being the alternate. The IC will liaise with office of the Gyalpoi Zimpon, Army, and Desuups for effective coordination with these entities. Various positions in the team will be occupied by the officers present at the Dzongkhag level and together they will respond to a disaster in a well-coordinated manner using the resources that are available within the Dzongkhag.

Onsite Incident Response Management Team at Dzongkhag Level



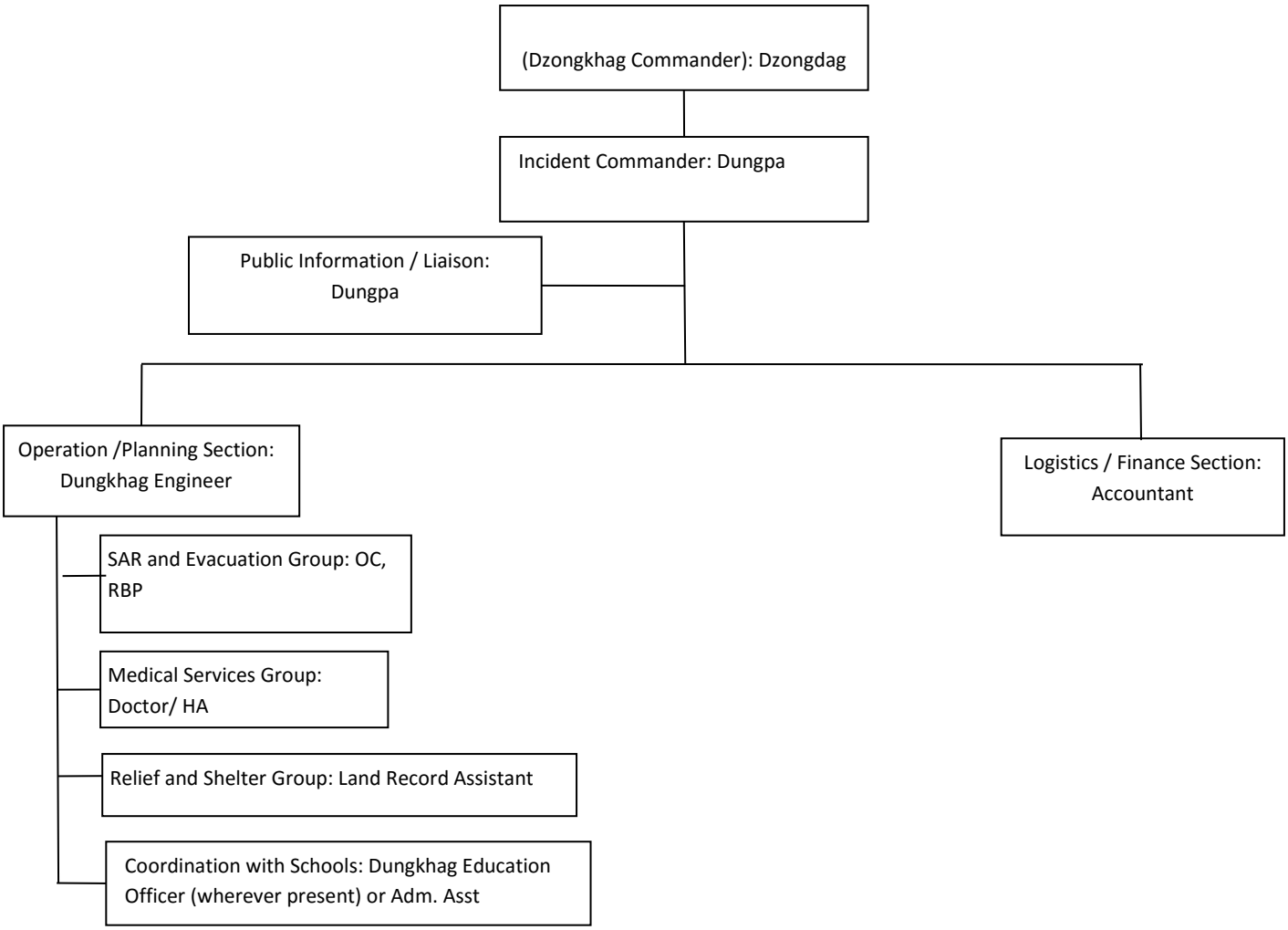
Transportation Unit leader to liaise with RSTA Base In-charge

Note: The support of Desuups/ Dratshang/ NGOs/ CSOs/ Corporations/ Regional Offices/ Private businesses and communities will be coordinated through the NDRCC and IMT at the national and dzongkhag level. As per Section 41 of the Disaster Management Act 2013, the Dzongdag (chair of DDMC) has the authority to 'requisition necessary human and material resources from any agency, CSO, private sector or person' for the purpose of response and relief operations.

B. Onsite Incident Response Management Team Structure at Dungkhag level:

The Dungkhag Incident Response Management Team will be led by Dungpa and monitored by Dzongdag. Due to a shortage of human resources and smaller scale of response, Operations and Planning will be combined in to a single section and Finance and Logistics will also be combined in to a single section. However, when the scale of response escalates to Type II then the organizational structure discussed for Dzongkhag will be adopted.

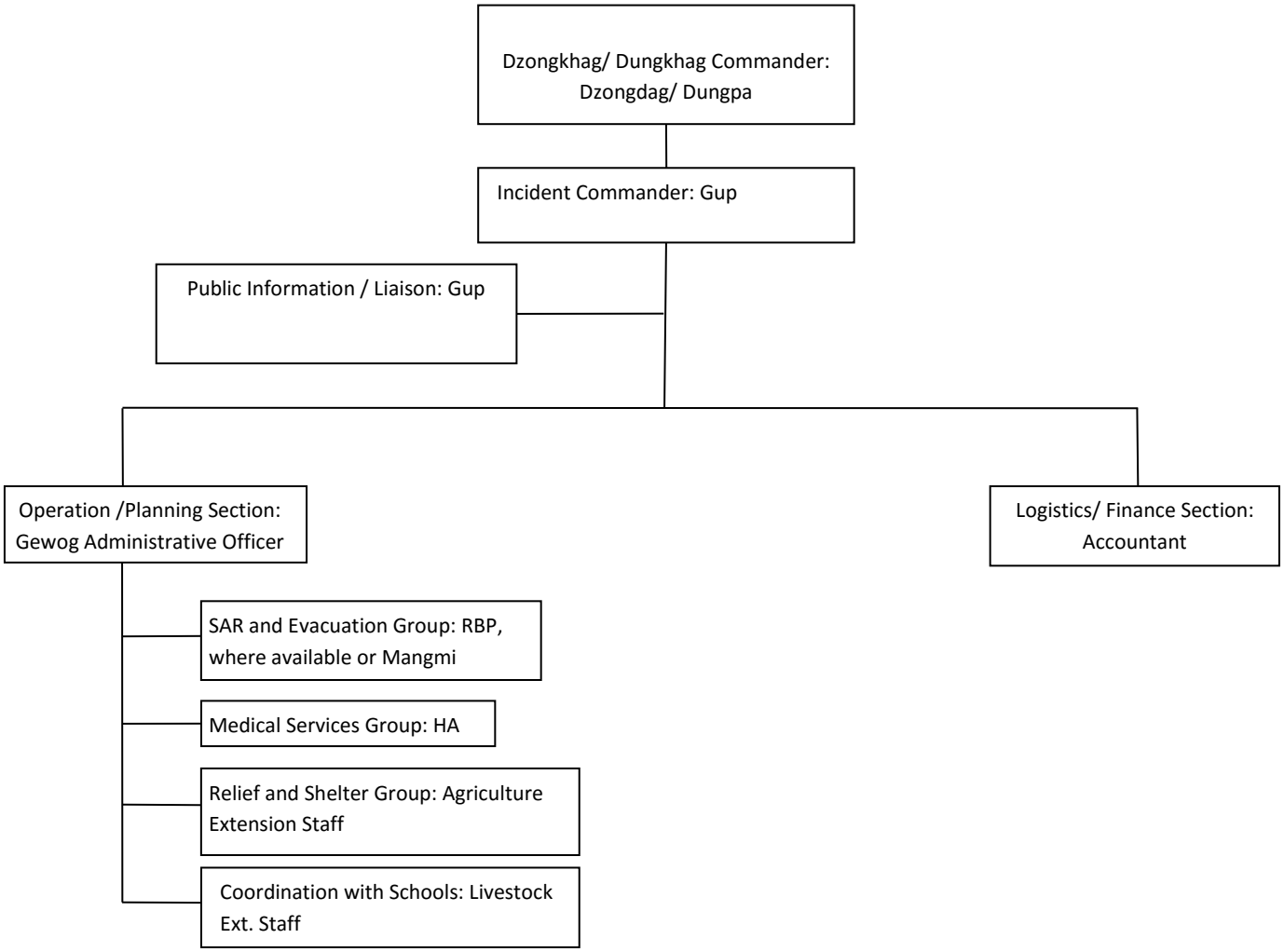
ICS organization at Dungkhag level



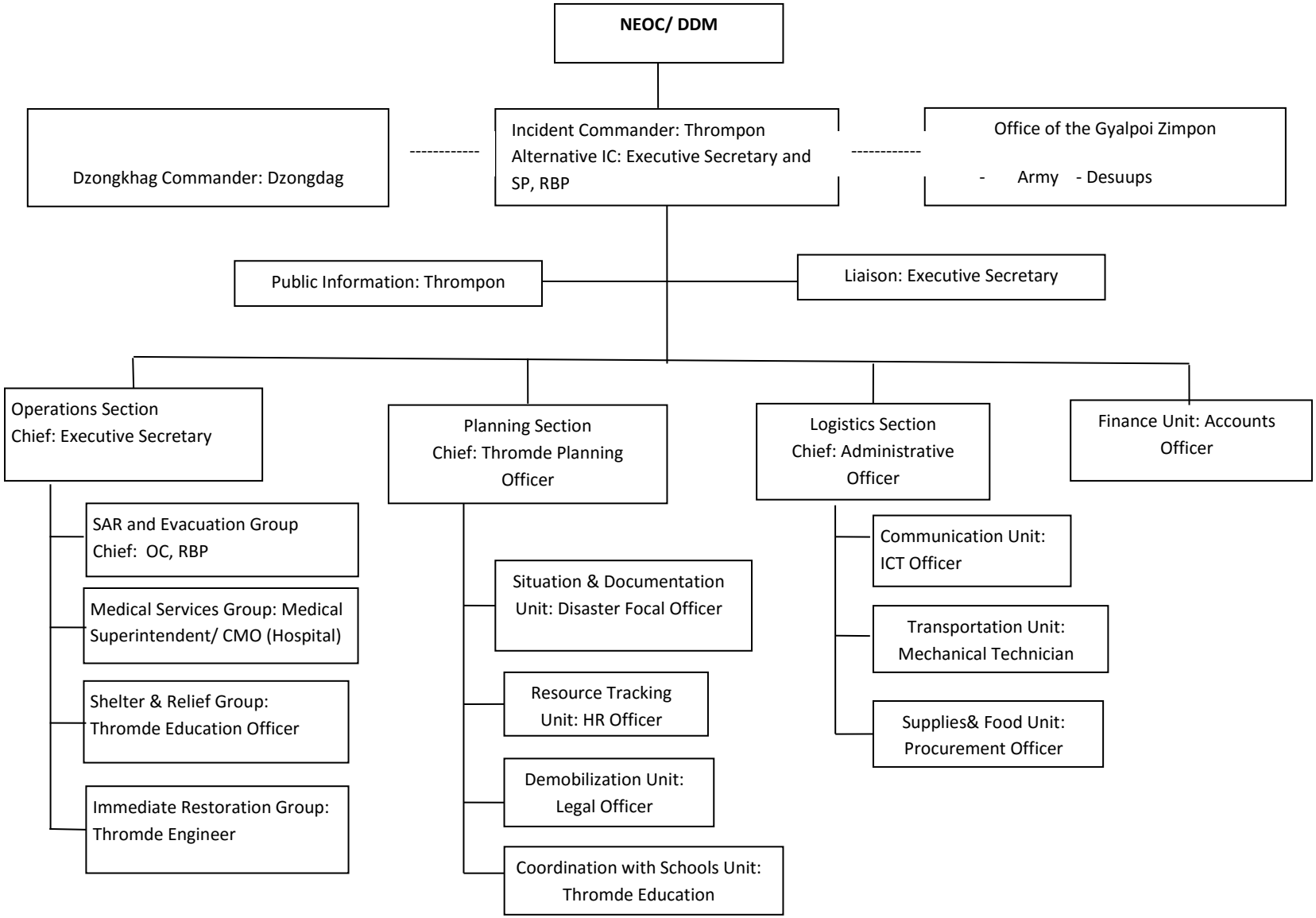
Due to the lack of sufficient officers at the Dungkhag level, the Logistics and Finance functions will be undertaken by the same officer especially in type I disasters. In case the disaster becomes type-II but still limited to geography of the affected Dungkhag then the IMT from the Dzongkhag will assume command with the support of the IMT at the Dungkhag.

C. Onsite Incident Response Management Team Structure at Gewog level

The Gewog Incident Response Management Team will be led by Gup and monitored by Dzongdag / Dungpa. Due to the lack of sufficient officers at the Gewog level, the Logistics and Finance functions will be undertaken by the same officer especially in Type I disasters. In case the disaster becomes Type II but still limited to geography of the affected Gewog then the IMT from the Dungkhag / Dzongkhag will assume command with the support of the IMT at the Gewog.



Onsite Incident Response Management Team Structure at Thromde level (Thimphu, Phuentsholing, Gelephu and Samdrupjongkhar)



In case of disasters within the Thromde jurisdiction of the 4 major Throms (Thimphu, Phuentsholing, Gelephu and Samdrupjongkhar), the Thromde Administration will take the lead in providing relief and response to the affected areas and the Dzongdags should not be held accountable. However, there should be information sharing and close coordination between the Dzongkhag and the Thromde.

V: Details of IMT positions and Functions

INCIDENT COMMANDER

The individual responsible for all incident activities, including the development of strategies and tactics and the ordering and the release of resources. The IC has overall authority and responsibility for conducting incident/disaster operations and is responsible for the management of all incident/disaster operations at the incident site.

Public Information Officer: responsible for interfacing with the public and media or with other agencies with incident-related information requirements.

Liaison Officer: responsible for coordinating with representatives from cooperating and assisting agencies.

Operations Section: responsible for all tactical operations at the incident such as search and rescue, medical, infrastructure, and shelter/relief.

Groups under the Operations Desk

- **SAR and Evacuation Group**: will be responsible for conducting the SAR and providing evacuation at the site of the incident. Also responsible for monitoring and assessing safety hazards or unsafe situations, and for developing measures for ensuring personnel safety.
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- **Medical Services Group**: will provide medical assistance to the victims.

- **Shelter & Relief Group**: responsible for providing shelter and relief to the affected families

- **Immediate Restoration of Essential Public Services Group**: responsible for immediate restoration of essential public services

Planning Section: responsible for the collection, evaluation, and dissemination of information related to the incident, and for the preparation and documentation of Incident Action Plans. The Section also maintains information on the current and forecasted situation, and on the status of resources assigned to the incident.

Units within Planning Section

- **Situation and Documentation Unit:** Responsible for the collection, organization, and analysis of incident status information, and for analysis of the situation as it progresses. Responsible for collecting, recording, and safeguarding all documents relevant to the incident.

- **Resources Unit:** Responsible for maintaining the status of all assigned resources (primary and support) at an incident.

- **Demobilization Unit:** responsible for assuring orderly, safe, and efficient demobilization of incident resources.

- **Coordination with Schools Unit:** responsible for coordination with schools.

Logistics Section: Responsible for providing facilities, services, and materials for the incident.

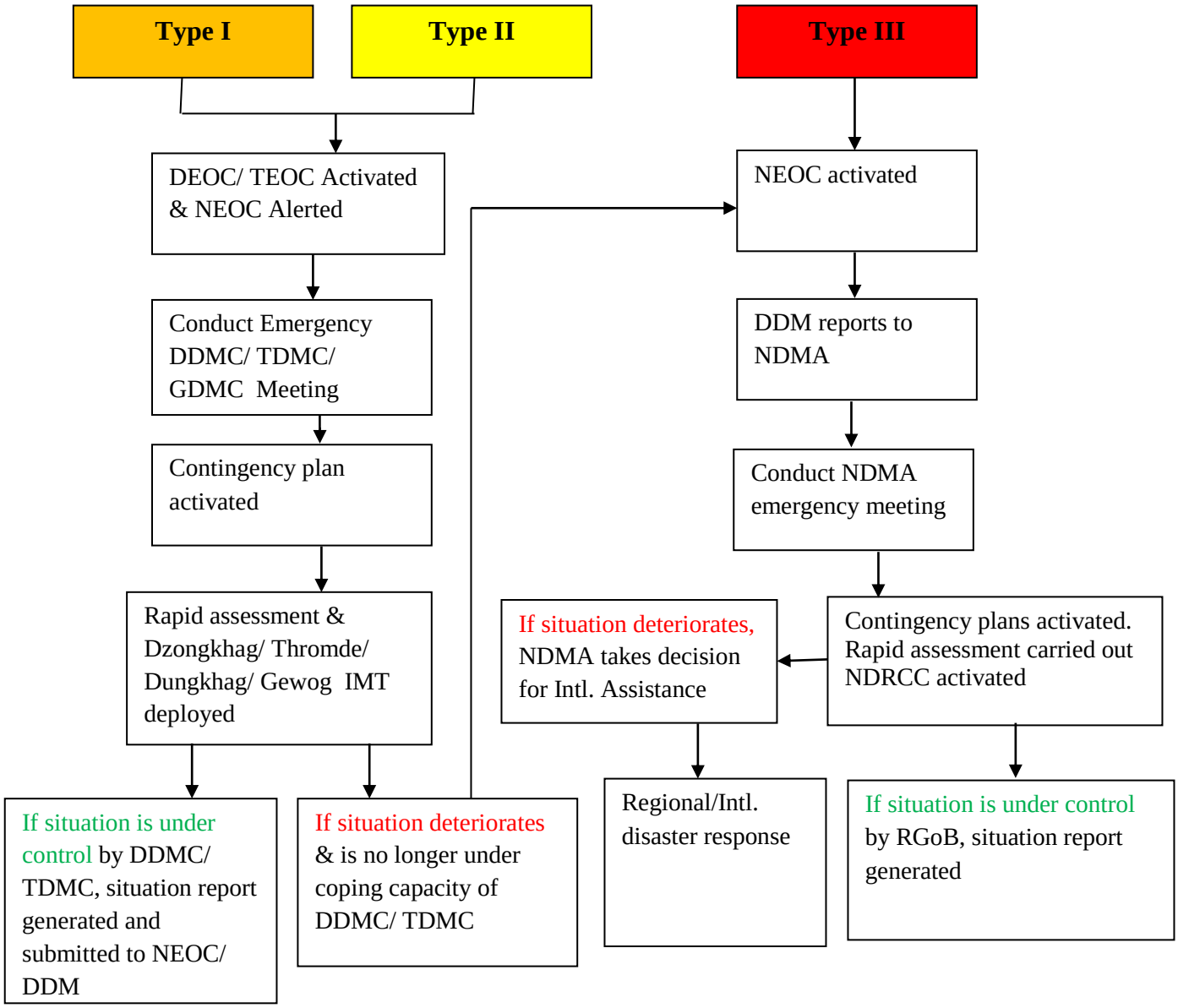
Units within Logistics Section

- **Communications Unit:** responsible for providing communication services at an incident.

- **Transportation Unit:** responsible for the fuelling, maintaining, and repairing of vehicles, and the transportation of personnel and supplies.

- **Supplies and Food Unit:**
    - Responsible for ordering equipment and supplies required for incident operations.
    - Responsible for providing meals for incident personnel and for providing food/ supplies for the Relief and Shelter Unit (for victims).

Finance Section

- **Finance Officer**
    - Responsible for all incident costs and financial considerations.
    - Responsible for tracking costs, analyzing cost data, making cost estimates, and recommending cost-saving measures.
    - Responsible for financial concerns resulting from property damage, injuries, or fatalities at the incident.
    - Responsible for fiscal matters involving hiring, purchasing goods and services, and establishing local sources for obtaining equipment and supplies.

VI: Disaster Types and Decision Making/ Reporting Chart