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**DEVELOPING A SYSTEMATIC MECHANISM FOR ARMY IN
DISASTER RESCUE OPERATIONS IN RATNAPURA**

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**Research for
MSc in Disaster Risk Reduction and Development**



Date of submission: of August 2024

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ABSTRACT

Ratnapura belongs to Sabaragamuwa province of Sri Lanka, an area which is highly prone for disasters and the main impact is due to floods and landslides. The vulnerability for floods and landslides is comparatively high in the areas such as Ratnapura municipal area itself and the areas around the main city, Kalawana, Nivitigala, Elapatha, Palmadulla and Eheliyagoda in the Ratnapura District and the areas beside the main road running from Ratnapura to Badulla. Further, the flood risk is mainly due to over flow of Kalu Ganga in Ratnapura especially from July to January annually. However, this study is focused in to **Ratnapura municipal** including **Elapatha Divisional Secretariat area (commonly known as Ratnapura area)** since those two areas are comparatively more vulnerable for floods and landslides when compared with the other areas of the Ratnapura District and also these areas involved with lots of SAR operations during disaster situations. Also the time duration was limited to 10 years to make the study a non-complicated one.

In this context, the involvement of Army troops in rescue operations is utmost important and critical as army is the first respondent to disasters and as the defenders of the nation in its motto in which the troops have the capability to save many of human lives and their property. Usually, the major portion of the rescue operations conducted in Ratnapura area is predominantly carried out by The Gemunu Watch Regiment (GW) of the Sri Lanka Army deployed in Kuruwita along with its attached element of Mechanized Infantry Regiment (MIR) troops and Sri Lanka Navy.

The main objective of this study is to identify the issues related to deploying of troops in rescue operations in Ratnapura by the Gemunu Watch, lapses of required equipment as per the today's requirement, communication gaps between army troops, government authorities and community, capacity building by training of army troops as per the today' requirement with a view of scrutinize those in order to achieve effective employment of army in disaster rescue or Search and Rescue (SAR) operations launched in Ratnapura area according to a systematic mechanism. The importance of the study is the analyzing of the gray areas in overall operation which were experienced during the rescue operations conducted during last decade.

This study is based on qualitative approach and the study is based on both primary data and secondary data and the data was collected from the published information sources, relevant authorities, internet, questionnaires and interviews. The primary data was collected through questionnaires, field surveys and interviews. Field surveys were conducted mainly to study about the training of troops and the equipment they have for the operations. Interviews and questionnaires are focused to the commanders of the Gemunu Watch who were reengaging in past rescue operations, staff officers who were directly engaging in planning of those rescue operations and officials of Disaster Management Center - Ratnapura, District Secretariat Office - Ratnapura and community leaders to obtain their experiences and difficulties they have come across during rescue operations.

This study will be utmost important for the relevant authorities and commanders in various levels of the army who are engaging in SAR operations to ensure the effective employment of their troops in disaster rescue operations (Search and Rescue operations) and the other stake holders to have a proper liaison with army during the same situation to achieve optimum effectiveness in disaster rescue operations.

KEYWORDS

First respondent; Rescue operations: Search and Rescue (SAR)