

FLOOD MANAGEMENT SYSTEM IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Pakistan is prone to disasters and these disasters altogether cannot be stopped; however, their ill effects can be minimized through a pragmatic (Flood Management System). Year 2010 witnessed the unprecedented floods in Pakistan, which rose to the highest levels in the recorded history. Thereby, preparation in Disaster Management is a compulsion rather than a choice. The paper mainly focus on contours/underpinnings of flood 2010, however, cardinal aspects of role of various stake holders have been incorporated in the working paper. The data has been acquired through various sources to include reports, online databases, and policy document as result to analyze the overall scenario of the country and the provinces as well. Both the secondary/primary data and information has been used to understand existing flood management system of Pakistan in purview of Floods-2010, with a view to recommend suitable measures

The analysis revealed that flood management requires deliberation both at national and local level. The decentralized mode of operation should be adapted from national to regional level in order to follow an integrated framework for bringing all stakeholders and victims together for developing an organized management system. The aim is to carry out analysis of existing flood management system of Pakistan in purview of Floods 2010, with a view to recommend suitable measures to enhance flood management capacity in Pakistan.

Keywords: Disaster, PDMA, DDMA, Stakeholders, Contingency planning

Introduction

Year 2010 witnessed the unprecedented floods in Pakistan, which rose to the highest levels in the recorded history. Eastern and Western weather system supplemented each other in a manner which caused unprecedented precipitation in North-Western parts of country. The disaster management authorities at national and provincial levels were neither configured nor capable to match such a mega disaster. Particularly, Sindh underwent greatest devastation of communication infrastructure, loss of life and private damages. Civil governments too being unaccustomed to such disasters could not initiate timely response. Though the procedure for disaster management functioning exists but still it could not generate coordinated efforts to manage these properly.

Barriers of the Existing Disaster Management Functions

The causes which hindered the existing disaster management functioning specially between NDMA and PDMA are highlighted as under:

Disaster Management Capacity.

At multiple levels of government the disaster management capacity has been found limited. However, an extreme lack of resources did not allow NDMA at federal level to deal well with flood disaster. In addition to that the non-availability of the legislated authority was

observed to perform the activities of Disaster management authority such as PDMA or DDMA.

PDMA.

A noticeable deficiency of competence/capacity for flood relief resources at the provincial level was detected. There were only few trainees from the government or disaster management authorities for operations and organization; the province Sindh was of great concern.

Surge Capacity due to Lack of Resources

For the attainment of properly trained surge capacity organizations like Pre-disaster structures will always be lean and small on their part. The floods 2010-2011 were managed by a team of about 21 officers only deployed by NDMA for the entire disaster. Any additional personnel or equipment was not supported because of the meager budget of Rs 65 million (approx. \$ US 0.74 million) per annum as per the records of NDMA. However, NDMA continued positive of USAID/OFDA's support in making available needed funding to cover some critical gaps at least. Purposely to develop a much-needed surge capacity, government ministries were requested for services of experienced manpower, but in vain. Regrettably, except for the Armed Forces, no other government ministry and department provided worthwhile assistance.

Lack of Coordination

Establishing a link with respect to coordination is the core aspect of all the phases of management at all levels and tiers; may it be inter departmental or intra departmental; organizational, provincial or government level; community in general as well. A highlight of the issues was marked by the stakeholders between NDMA and the PDMA.

Implications of 18th Constitutional Amendment

Significant challenges have been posed between the centre and the provinces as a result of the Implications arising from the recently enacted '18th constitutional amendment' and the latest NFC Award. As a result the former decentralized many federal or concurrent federal and provincial legislative subjects, including disaster management, to the provinces also. This entire scenario has aroused substantial obstacles in building a centrally organization and cohesive national response to the disaster and led to the exacerbation of centre-province stresses.

Parallel Decision Making

Confusions about the mandates were generated by Parallel decision making body, which demands immediate attention as a remedial measure. NDMC is the apex body for disaster related policy formulation in Pakistan with representation from centre, all federating units and areas of the country, military and civil society as per the National Disaster Management Act. In addition, the stakeholders were confused about the consideration of the key body for relief efforts by shifting the of responsibility from NDMC to the Council of Common Interests (CCI) and the formation of the National Oversight Disaster Management Council (NODMC). The decision making process for stakeholders was decelerated and perceived duplication of authority was created as a result of robust government oversight of relief, recovery and reconstruction activities which is of utmost importance.

Inadequate Planning

Disaster management mechanism of governments still lacks institutional maturity and required potency of prior planning and coordination. Aspect of forehand planning at

provincial / district level is found missing, due to which disjointed response from government machinery and public was observed.

Availability of Correct Information for Consumption of UN and NGOs

NDMA lacked timely dissemination of getting the appropriate and relevant information despite of all the efforts. As an outcome decision making remained a problem for the planners at National level. UN agencies had a vital role to play in this regard but they were also constrained by internal procedures that frequently delayed relief of available information. Conflicting number and less sampling methodology made analysis and resource required calculation difficult. There was required to display more flexibility in decision making at UN HQ level conforming to urgencies of ground realities.

Civil / Military / NGOs Coordination

The civil and military stakeholders intervention in an emergency is mandatory for a successful response. In Flood-2010, the relationship between the civil and military seconds was positive and cooperative inbetween. However, there was a lack of clarity on some issues with regard to sharing of information between the military and humanitarian community that needs to be resolved in future disasters to avoid overlapping and duplication in distribution of relief goods. Other issues that arose related to the 'last resort' guideline for use of military assets, and the use of armed escorts for NGOs.

Media Management

The 'media' was focused on criticizing the government and highlight poor management in the early period of emergency. This detracted from the impetus to contribute to the relief efforts by the public and donors. While such undue politicization of the relief efforts was considerably damaging in the short run, the sit improved with passage to time and media sensitized gen public for volunteer contributions and launched their own relief efforts in various forms and different areas. Media has immense potentials which can be exploited for overall better flood management.

Miscellaneous Aspects

Integration between Government, NGOs and Volunteer Groups. Framing up of the Procedures and organizations of the systems is at the top most priority to prevent confusion and ensure best utilization of the assistance being offered. In this regard, close cooperation between the Government, NGOs and volunteer groups for relief and rescue efforts is a necessity.

Rejuvenation of Civil Defence Organization

Civil Defence, being a redundant organisation at present, needs to be injected with appropriate resources. This should be developed on the lines of UK model of Emergency Management Agency (EMA) at each district.

Role of Media.

Media needs to play a proactive role to effectively portray the disaster to the masses and international community thereby generating a positive and forthcoming response both at home and at international front. At the same time, the media must counter the subversive propaganda intended at maligning the Government for gaining of political mileage by few.

Database

NCCM and PCMCs must maintain database in the shape of Global Information System (GIS) for all existing resources in the province down to district level. This step will present a fair picture in terms of likely requirement vis-à-vis available assets.

Information and Communication

The important aspect is that there should be communication between civil agencies and the military through line, wireless and data link. Provincial data through NADRA and other departments must be available to all for dissemination through military channels if needed to concerned areas. Up dated data needs to be available at the site of any disaster and this must include all relevant data such as civilian debris removal capacities and local medical facilities available and so on. For this purpose a nationwide internet based resource should be available for access through military channels.

Contingency Planning

Planning must include response as part of the national effort in three segments of the disaster cycle that is 'warning', 'event' and 'response'. This would be stage wise:-

Warning and initial response – lead agency

Event including initial assessment– lead agency

Response including rescue, evacuation and initial relief – lead agency transiting to supportive role.

Damage Assessment

There are two aspects to damage assessment. Initial assessment is for rescue and evacuation and subsequent is for a viable sec ph response involving longer term measure mostly in the domain of national response. For initial assessment there is a need to have trained individuals who are part of the Corps Rescue Teams assisted by aviation, Corps UAV resources and through data link with satellite resources as well.

Aviation Assets

One of the major shortcoming that has come to light has been the shortage of aviation assets especially helicopters for transportation of personnel and logistics to far flung areas. This needs to be addressed as dependence on helicopter transport is high in any disaster related scenario where damage to infrastructure is more than likely.

Conclusion

The response and performance of the nation in disaster relief operations can improve manifolds if we can capitalize on our experience of past disasters that we have been through. Though a new Natural Disaster Management sys is in place in Pakistan that is intricate, detailed and will prove to be responsive. At the same time the role of the military will in any future disaster be high profile and very vital to the lives and safety of our citizens. This is in keeping with global trends towards OOTW (operations other than war) and a major shift in the role of militaries that has taken place, Worldwide.

Recommendations

In order to enhance flood management capacity of Pakistan, following is recommended:-

In the light of 18th amendment of Constitution of Pakistan, consensus must be built among federal and provincial governments as regards to lead coordination role of NDMA in disaster management.

To further strenghten the National Disaster Management Act a; comprehensive review of it is essential. Also the provision of mandates with complete clarity, roles and responsibilities of NDMA, PDMAs and DDMA's and all relevant state actors is the need of the hour.

Proper resourcing of NDMA and PDMAs should be done through sufficient staff, funding and allocation of equipment. In this regard, government ministries and agencies

should be asked to spare officers and staff for secondment to NDMA, till the time it does not dev its own manpower pool.

DDMAs need to allocate dedicated personnel and equipment for the strengthening at district level as well as aligning them with the ‘Revenue Department’ that has visibility down to the village level to ensure organizational and managerial measures to the grass root level.

DDMA / District administrators may devise category plans for disasters like floods and earthquakes, which should be shared with Army units earmarked for disaster management. / flood relief in the area. The plans may include:-

Schools / colleges may be earmarked in peace time for established of ‘Relief Camps’ immediately after disaster / flood.

Rat items and other relief goods for at least 3 x days for planned capacity must be staked for any category.

Evacuation drills on area basis may be devised and including in public awareness programs.

Vast potentials of media with regard to instant mob of public sentiment and opinion must be harnessed and used in disasters like floods. In this regard, a dynamic and working relationship may be established with print and electronic media, which may play positive role in times of emergency.

Category plans must be formulated at Engineer Directorate level, whereby Flood Rescue / Relief resources can be immediate shifted from one province to another at the time of emergency. Such resources must be earmarked in peace time Flood Relief Schemes of respective formations.

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