

Disaster Management in Pakistan: Challenges and way forward

Outline

(1) Introduction :

Thesis Statement:

"Pakistan's disaster Management mechanism faces great challenges that hampered its performance and resulted in failure during many disasters; however, it can still be brought on track through serious reformative measures"

(2) Challenges

(a) Disaster Management departments lack needed tools and resources. Case in point: Auditor General of Pakistan confirmed that PDMA locked funds.

(b) Corruption and embezzlement of funds is prevalent in disaster management departments. Case in Point: NAB in Balochistan placed PDMA among other departments for investigation into illegal purchasing of tents and other embezzlement.

(c) PDMA Lack prior planning for management of a disaster. Case in Point: The final Report of 2022 floods confirmed that PDMA was not ready and it had no plan for management of the disaster.

(d) Functional ambiguity is a major challenge in disaster management. Case in Point: 18th Amendment gave the subject of disaster management to provinces, yet there is National Disaster Management Authority, a federal department, which does the work of disaster management.

(e) Politicizing natural disasters and its management is another great challenge to disaster management in Pakistan.

Case in point: Recent rhetorical confrontation between ruling party of Punjab and Sindh on mechanism of funds distribution on flood victims.

(3) way forward

(a) Government should allocate a fixed

and adequate budget for crisis management

(b) Members of disaster management departments should be trained well from international crisis management organization

(c) A Comprehensive audit of the disaster management budget should be done to minimize the chances of corruption and funds embezzlement

(d) To remove the functional ambiguity, all the functions of disaster management should be given to one government, so that they can promptly respond to any critical situation

(e) Political parties and leaders should refrain from politicizing natural disasters and their management as it can worsen the situation for victims causing delay in response and relief.

(4) Conclusion.

Pakistan is facing a number of issues one of which is bad governance and management. The Country witnessed a number of disasters in recent years, like 2022 floods, 2025 floods but in every case the disaster management mechanism was inadequate. There are a number of challenges that Pakistan faces in terms of disaster management among which following are the key challenges. For instance as Pakistan struggles economically, it lacks required tools and kits that are essential for effective disaster management. Similarly, embargement of funds has also hampered the functioning of the mentioned department. In most of the recent cases it has been noticed that the disaster management departments had no prior planning for rescue and relief which again impact its management along disaster. Moreover, since the passing of 18th Constitutional Amendment, disaster management subject has been given to provinces but it is still managed by Center; therefore overlapping functions result in delay in the response and relief operations.

Furthermore, like other issues in Pakistan, disaster and issues of their management are also often used for political point scoring, for instance, recently, PPP and PML (N) were on odds over ~~mechanism~~ mechanism of delivering funds to flood victims in Punjab where ruling party favored alternative to PTSP. Thus, Pakistan's disaster management faces grave challenges that had greatly hampered its performance, but there is always hope at the end of the tunnel, Pakistan can still make things better and improve its disaster management mechanism through following measures. Such as allocation of a sound budget, training of the professionals and regulator and thorough audit of the budget of crisis or disaster management. In the same way, to remove functional ambiguity, all the functions of disaster management should be given to ~~people~~ government. Lastly, political parties should show readiness at times of crisis and avoid doing politicizing the natural disasters as it adds to the sufferings of the victims. If taken these measures, Pakistan's disaster management mechanism can perform well at times of disasters.

One of the major problems that Pakistan's disaster management faces is the unavailability of required tools, kits and funds as the Auditor General of Pakistan stated after the 2022 floods that Pakistan's disaster management mechanism performed poorly during the crisis because it lacked the required amount of funds and other resources. Therefore lack of resource can be a great hindrance in the performance of Pakistan's disaster management mechanism.

Like any other department, Corruption is also quite prevalent in the disaster management departments. In Balochistan, National Accountability Bureau listed PDMA PDMA Balochistan in watch list for Corruption as before some months now was circulation circulating on social media that PDMA officials have illegally purchased tents and embezzled a great amount of fund fund among the funds given for flood victims by National Disaster Management Authority to PDMA.

Similar to that, another major issue is with the internal functioning and lack of planning and Strategy by the department and its officials. According to the final report of 2022 floods, PDMA did not have any planning and Strategy for managing the disaster and performing the relief and Resettlement activities. That's why, the internal flaws are also a great obstacle in the performance of the disaster management departments.

Apart from above mentioned challenges, another challenge is functional ambiguity specially after 18th Amendment. For instance, Since under 18th Amendment, the function of Crisis management went to Provincial domain, but to some extent center government also has an overlapping function through National Disaster Management Authority which often results in ambiguity and leads to late and un timely response during crisis times as it has been witnessed many times during 2022 and 2023 floods.

In addition to that, as there is a prevalent culture in Pakistan that national issues were used as political tools of point scoring, similarly disaster management issues are often politicized by politicians making disaster management much more harder. For example, following the 2005 floods which wreaked havoc to Punjab and Sindh, Punjab government and Sindh government stuck in a rhetorical confrontation on the mechanism for providing funds to the victims. Punjab government favored an alternative mechanism to BTSP while Sindh government favored BTSP which furthered the sufferings of victims. Thus, politicizing of disasters and disaster management is another grave challenge to disaster management in Pakistan.

There are certain measures that can be taken to improve the performance of the disaster management mechanism in Pakistan.

For improving the disaster management system mechanism, the government should

allote allote an adequate budget to the crisis management department. This can make sure the availability of required tool kits and the funding for any unfavorable situation where emergency relief funding is required. With these funding, the Department can conduct public awareness campaigns and programs to train citizens for disaster situations.

In addition to that, the disaster management Department officials should be trained well. Therefore, if government provides a fixed and adequate budget, then this can enable the hiring of professional trainers and crisis management experts and groups for training the officials of disaster management professionals of Pakistan. Thus, the well trained employee professionals can greatly improve the poor performance of disaster management department.

Only funding may not work without proper auditing, so it is necessary that thorough and comprehensive auditing

of the funds of disaster management should be done regularly. This will ensure the correct usage of funds and make the officials accountable for every rupee. Auditing and accountability is doubly needed as corruption and embezzlement of funds is greatly hampering the performance of the disaster management department.

In the similar way, removal of the functional ambiguity is also necessary at times of disaster such functional confusions can cause delays to response and relief. That's way the govt function of disaster management should be given to one government so that it can promptly respond to any kind of disaster or serious situation. Thus removing the functional ambiguity to crisis management response.

As discussed above issues of national security and survival are often politicized. Likewise, crisis and disaster management are also used as tools for political points.

Scoring. For example recent ~~the~~ worldly war
of ruling ~~parties~~ politics of Punjab and Sindh
where they were ~~each~~ debating on the issue
of total of delivering funds to flood victims
PML(N) favored an alternative to BTSP while
PPP favored BTSP. This crisis took many
days to settle and yet delayed relief for
some days, therefore the political leaders
should avoid politicizing the issues of
Disasters and their management.

In conclusion, Pakistan's disaster manage-
ment mechanism performed very poorly and
failed in many places to rescue and provide
relief to victims. However, it can still
be up to the mark if it is funded well,
its officials are trained well and accountabil-
ity and auditing is done comprehensively
to discourage corruption. Similarly, constitutional
and legal constraints should also be removed
for its smooth functioning and, lastly, the
politicizing of disasters and their manage-
ment should be avoided for a collective good.