



**NATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY  
PRIME MINISTER'S SECRETARIAT  
ISLAMABAD**



## **Pakistan 2010 Flood Relief – Learning from Experience**

### **Observations and Opportunities**

The Lessons Learned report provides a strategic level overview of lessons learned by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Government of Pakistan, and its partners from rescue and relief activities in the immediate aftermath of the catastrophic 2010 floods. The report focuses on the complexity of responding to a disaster of the magnitude that Pakistan experienced, and what NDMA has learned from the achievements and challenges from an organizational perspective, and institutional relationships. It comprises input from the experiences of some of the many government agencies, donors, military, UN, and individuals who came to the assistance of the affected communities. Most importantly, it makes key recommendations on critical areas to be addressed to improve disaster management and response. The full report will be released this week.

The generous contribution of all partners to the relief effort and to this review, epitomizes the best of humanitarian response to assist the people of Pakistan in times of great need. The combined experiences are a valuable resource to enhance preparation, response and management of future disasters. NDMA and the Government of Pakistan are deeply grateful to all.

The information has been gathered through a series of consultations with stakeholders, written contributions by various thematic clusters (supported by the UN) in consultation with their members, internal consultations within NDMA, and the desk review of available documents. The key issues that emerged from the process can be grouped around three main themes – coordination, understanding of the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders, and capacity.

The disaster management capacity of the state emerged as an element requiring immediate focus as it was found to be limited at multiple levels of government. At the federal level, NDMA suffered from a significant paucity of resources in comparison to the monumental caseload. It has no legislated authority to control the activities of any other agency such as a PDMA or a DDMA yet public perception deemed it to be responsible for everything from planning to implementation. At the provincial level, there was a distinct lack of capacity for provision of relief, with the exception of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that had recent experience with humanitarian catastrophes. In the other two badly hit provinces, Punjab and Sindh, there were few people in the government or PDMAs with enough experience in disaster operations, management or organization. Although capacity was strengthened over the course of time following the disaster, the crisis had by then largely passed.

**Capacity** was an issue not only for NDMA but also for most stakeholders including UN agencies, INGOs and national NGOs. The short-term deployment, sometimes for as little as two or three weeks, of UN and INGO personnel to Pakistan from other emergencies was identified by stakeholders as a problem area, as they had little time to understand the ground realities before leaving again. Creating sufficient surge capacity both nationally and internationally is an area to be addressed for future emergencies.

Management and capacity issues presented a serious challenge in Punjab and Sindh. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, people were trained over a period of time in best practices of camp management, food distribution and development of systems, the capacities that rarely existed in the south and this led to shortfalls and delay in response. This capacity was built up later but critical time was lost in the process. The delay had a profound impact on providing rapid assistance to the affected people and increased their suffering.

Pre-disaster organisation structures will always be lean and small but they must have a properly trained surge capacity. The NDMA team at the time of the floods consisted of only 21 officers to manage the entire disaster. The meagre organizational budget of PKR 65 million (approx. USD .74 million) per annum did not allow for any additional personnel or equipment. NDMA was very appreciative of USAID/OFDA's support in providing much needed funding to fill some critical gaps. To create a much-needed surge capacity, a number of government ministries and departments were requested that at least one person be seconded to NDMA to assist with issues particularly relevant to their home agency's role in the flood response. Regrettably, except for the Armed Forces, they were unable to assist in most cases. Although playing their own important roles in facilitating many aspects of the disaster response, an effective coordination could not be achieved. It was noted by a number of stakeholders that secondees from such ministries and departments would have been valuable to NDMA's relief operations and that people should be identified and trained in the various ministries and departments now for fixed-term secondment to NDMA in future disasters.

**Coordination** was one of the most challenging and complex aspects of the relief phase, whether between centre-province, government-UN, inter-agency or within the overall humanitarian community in general. Many stakeholders interviewed highlighted the coordination challenges between NDMA and the PDMA's. While there were significant successes in the coordination mechanisms utilized, such as the various clusters at the federal and regional hub levels, and the Strategic Leaders Forum, there were also examples of coordination shortcomings that need to be addressed. For example, a lack of effective coordination was also identified by some stakeholders in relation to the UN's internal strategic decision-making processes, because of differences amongst the top-tier UN leadership in the country and among these agencies.

On a positive note, the Strategic Leaders Forum comprising key stakeholders proved an effective coordination mechanism during the floods. Most stakeholders identified the need for this to be continued and strengthened in the form of a strategic planning network on disaster management, led by NDMA and including PDMA's, DDMA's, government agencies, UN agencies, military, humanitarian community, donors, philanthropists and media. The group should meet regularly to prepare plans for all contingencies for any disaster or complex emergency, define roles and responsibilities, and identify the gaps, for the same.

Coordination issues between the GoP and the UN were highlighted by many stakeholders. There were several key areas of contention between the GoP and the UN that led to tensions and delays that could have been avoided.

- The first was the issue of the NATO air bridge. The Government invited NATO to assist in the transport of relief goods to Pakistan but the UN intervened against the knowledge of the Government and advised NATO that they were not required. Many stakeholders identified this as an area where UN had overstepped their mandate in not respecting the wishes of the Government. The GoP ultimately accepted the NATO flights.
- The second was the launch of the Pakistan Floods Relief and Early Recovery Response Plan (PFRERRP). The appeal was initially launched in New York without the sign-off of the GoP. Further, the UN resisted the wishes of the GoP regarding the usage of terminology standard to GoP documentation and efforts by NDMA and the GoP for greater scrutiny of the projects in the appeal. These issues led to significant delays in the eventual launch of the appeal and the flow of much-needed funds.
- Thirdly, there was resistance from the UN to the GoP's direction that the relief phase should close on 31 January and move to the Early Recovery phase. This was the cause of further friction between the GoP and the UN, and created confusion at provincial and district level.

There are varying kinds of government–UN arrangements around the world. Countries such as China and India have less involvement of the UN in humanitarian response whereas in countries with an absence of proper governance structures, the UN plays a more significant role. Pakistan is a fully functional state with strong institutions but still requires support from the UN on humanitarian interventions. However, the government **must** take the lead in setting the priorities and policy guidelines. The usual argument about UN activities being governed by IASC guidelines is misplaced as the same guidelines time and again mention that these are “guidelines” and must adapt to government priorities and policies.

Affecting a **strategic shift** of relief efforts to Punjab and Sindh as the floods moved southward through the country proved a challenge. The IDP crisis in 2009 had seen a mushrooming of INGOs and national NGOs and an alignment of donor support in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Warehouses, systems and networks were well established and when the 2010 floods struck, there was a comfort level in operating there for many organizations. Conversely, Punjab and Sindh had not suffered such major emergencies in the recent past and systems were almost non-existent. Local NGOs in these two provinces had little knowledge on how to prepare documentation for donor funding, making it difficult if not impossible for them to receive support. INGOs were slow to move to the area and it was difficult for NDMA to encourage them to make the strategic shift to move or expand their operations from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa into southern parts of Punjab and Sindh.

Implications arising from the recently enacted **18th constitutional amendment** and the latest NFC Award posed significant challenges between the centre and the provinces. The former resulted in the devolution of many federal or concurrent federal and provincial legislative subjects - including disaster management - to the provinces. This posed considerable

difficulties in mounting a centrally organized and cohesive national response to the disaster and led to the exacerbation of centre-province tensions. The NFC was the primary reason because of confusion over the fiscal arrangements for inter-provincial resource distribution for relief. Donors and other stakeholders also noted that they found it confusing as to which agency, both at the federal and provincial levels, they should be dealing with. This frequently delayed decision-making on allocation of resources.

**Parallel decision-making bodies** created confusion about mandates. This area warrants immediate attention. According to the National Disaster Management Act, the 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. The shifting of responsibility from NDMC to the Council of Common Interests (CCI) and the formation of the National Oversight Disaster Management Council (NODMC), added a further layer of confusion for stakeholders as to which was the key oversight body for relief efforts. While robust Government oversight of relief, recovery and reconstruction activities is of utmost importance, this created a perceived duplication of authority and one that on occasions may have slowed the decision-making process for stakeholders. It may be timely for the Government of Pakistan to review the role for parallel committees and, at the same time, review the National Disaster Management Act, and if necessary, to strengthen it to ensure a clear definition of mandates, roles and responsibilities. Genuine and sustained efforts by both the Federal and Provincial Governments in consultation with key parties, to find consensus to resolve the structural issues that impede effective coordination and national response should be encouraged. Consensus will lead to a more comprehensive disaster response at both the federal and provincial levels and encourage more confidence in resource mobilization by donors and other stakeholders.

The **Cluster approach** was applied to coordinate and organize the humanitarian community, with this disaster marking the first time 12 clusters were rolled out in an emergency in Pakistan. The number of clusters to be deployed was a point of contention between the GoP and the UN leadership. This is an issue for which consensus is required between these two stakeholders in advance of any future disaster. The clusters achieved varying degrees of success in the coordination of the humanitarian community and setting the strategic direction of their respective sectorial response. Information management, as well as monitoring and reporting of planned activities, were some of the areas of concern for all clusters. For instance, different UN agencies came up with caseload numbers that not only contradicted the multi-cluster engagement approach, but also the official caseload numbers. Agreement on baseline data is imperative to avoid confusion for all stakeholders. The UN and the cluster system must also ensure compliance with the agenda of aid effectiveness by proper prioritization of needs and resources, establishing transparent procedures and accountability mechanisms.

Despite best efforts, receiving the right kind of information for timely decision-making remained a problem for the planners at NDMA. While much of this was a responsibility of UN agencies, they were constrained by internal procedures that frequently delayed release of available information. Conflicting numbers and small sampling made needs analysis difficult. Encouraging UN leadership in New York to allow greater flexibility for the in-country teams to release information, make on-the-ground decisions in a timely manner, and better engage with NDMA to align with the requirements of the Government, will enhance their capacity to respond more effectively in future.

The cooperation, collaboration or complementarities of **civil and military** stakeholders in an emergency is integral to a successful response. In the Pakistan floods, the relationship between the civil and military sectors was mostly effective and harmonious. 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 INGOs.

Among the prominent features of the response, the **cash transfer mechanism** for compensation through the Watan card, was one of the significant components of revitalizing communities. Though it was difficult to monitor the actual usage of the funds by the affected populations, the Watan card was instrumental in providing short-term financial support at a crucial time. Challenges in the implementation of the Watan card initiative included a lengthy grievance system, difficulties in targeting vulnerable communities and insufficient ATMs in more remote areas.

In the early days of the emergency, the **media** was focused on criticizing the government and raising allegations of corruption. 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 situation improved with more efforts to sensitize the media on the needs of the people, and significant efforts by media groups to launch their own appeals to support relief efforts.

Despite many challenges and limited resources, NDMA was able to deliver effectively in many ways. There was no epidemic, agriculture started to recover well, the return of the displaced was facilitated, and WATAN cards were launched successfully. The policies and strategies NDMA implemented made a huge contribution to this response.

The scale and complexity of this disaster would have challenged any country but, along with the many partner organizations that worked tirelessly throughout the emergency, the situation was stabilized and has moved into the Early Recovery phase. NDMA has learned much from the experiences of the 2010 floods to enhance future response to disasters. When the Dalbandin earthquake struck in January 2011, the response was immediate, coordination procedures had been strengthened, roles were clear, and stakeholders acted accordingly. This quickly brought the situation under control.

Many stakeholders are also conducting reviews and Lessons Learned exercises from their own perspective. These too will be a valuable contribution to the future of disaster response in Pakistan. Constructive dialogue is critical to build resilient working relationships. NDMA will continue to encourage stakeholders to contribute to the process through future planning sessions, information sharing and other relevant activities.

Effective Disaster Management and preparedness is critical to the safety and wellbeing of the people of Pakistan. This requires the support of Federal and Provincial Governments and all stakeholders. Disaster response itself must be a 'one-window' operation. To achieve this, it is imperative that roles and responsibilities are clearly mandated and the designated key agency is empowered to lead the process of ensuring more cohesive coordination. In addition, the capacity of key organizations needs to be strengthened urgently.

The Lessons Learned report contains many recommendations for specific areas. However, there are a series of key recommendations that require the most critical attention from NDMA the Government of Pakistan, and stakeholders.

1. A comprehensive review of the National Disaster Management Act is needed to further strengthen it and provide complete clarity on mandates, and roles and responsibilities of NDMA, PDMAs and DDMA's and all relevant State actors. In addition, accordant Rules of Business must be developed.
2. Efforts should be made to achieve consensus between the Federal and Provincial Governments on the NDMA's lead coordination role in major disasters to avoid incoherence in disaster response.
3. A set of guidelines must be developed providing clear definition of roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders including Government Ministries/Departments, military, donors, UN agencies, humanitarian organizations, philanthropists and civil defence, in disaster response.
4. Proper resourcing of NDMA is required through sufficient funding and staffing.
5. Government Ministries and agencies should identify officers for training for future secondment to NDMA during disasters.
6. A strategic planning network on disaster management comprising all key stakeholders including Government Ministries/Departments/agencies, PDMAs, DDMA's, military, civil response agencies (such as 1122), donors, UN, humanitarian communities (PHF, NHN, PRCS and others), and the media, should be established immediately to meet periodically (preferably quarterly in 'peace' time) to prepare for a cohesive response for all disasters. This will also help address shortfalls and also create a sense of 'ownership' among stakeholders.
7. At the provincial level a shift in focus is required towards the capacity development of the PDMA's of Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan in terms of increased resource allocation, personnel training, warehousing and focal-point functionality.
8. The reporting line of PDMAs should be uniform and clearly defined in order to avoid divergent practices in different provinces. Ideally, the PDMA should report to either the Chief Minister or the Chief Secretary of the province, to better facilitate their engagement with multiple departments and authorities.
9. At the district level, DDMA's require strengthening through the allocation of dedicated personnel and equipment as well as aligning them with the Revenue Department that has visibility down to the village level.
10. In all future major disasters, a Joint Aviation Coordination Cell must be established immediately. The importance and effectiveness of the JACC was a lesson learned from both the 2005 earthquake and the 2010 floods.

11. An incident command system, as envisaged in the NDM Act 2010, needs to be operationalized for future disasters, comprising the national emergency operation center (NEOC), provincial emergency operation centres (PEOC), district emergency operation centres (DEOC), as well as representation from all key departments of government at federal, provincial and district level, armed forces, and the humanitarian community.
12. NDMA should ultimately have a dedicated air rescue team at its disposal to facilitate immediate response and rescue in the event of any disaster, but until then the military may earmark resources to be deployed at short notice when needed.
13. Standard Operating Procedures must be developed by NDMA in relation to the acceptance of unsolicited relief goods shipped by air or sea from abroad to ensure that:
  - only goods that are considered as priority and not available in Pakistan are sent,
  - that the receiving organisation is credible and able to immediately arrange distribution; and
  - that the cost of shipment to Pakistan does not outweigh the value of the shipment.

These SOPs should be available on the NDMA website and circulated to all relevant agencies including overseas Pakistan Diplomatic Missions to be immediately implemented in the onset of a disaster.

14. There are significant infrastructure issues that must be immediately addressed by the relevant government departments. Those that should be given top priority included the immediate redesign and reconstruction of bridges in KPK, and maintenance and improvement of flood protection structures. For infrastructure restoration and reconstruction the 2010 floods must be used as the benchmark.
15. There should be permanent threat specific warehousing of likely required relief stores established in different regions.
16. Donors and major humanitarian actors need to assist the development of the capacity of local organizations for effective resource management, compliance with humanitarian standards, and result-oriented reporting to improve their eligibility for direct funding from donors.
17. The Cluster System coordinated by UN must be reviewed for cost-effectiveness, efficiency of effort and aid effectiveness. This review should include:
  - reorganization in order to achieve greater congruity with relevant tiers of government as well as local organizations with greater knowledge of national context;

- consultation with NDMA to decide the scale of deployment of clusters in order to ensure the flow of resources to priority sectors;
  - the application of a standard system of monitoring and reporting across clusters with a process of ensuring compliance and requisite training of personnel.
18. A single reporting system is critical to properly monitor aid effectiveness and assist planning. The Single Reporting Format, now being implemented by NDMA for Early Recovery must become a feature of all future disaster response. It must be supported by all stakeholders, and the compliance be made compulsory.
  19. The UN system in Pakistan should follow the strategic guidelines and policies set down by the GoP at all levels of UN operations in the country.
  20. There should be unity of command between the UN's humanitarian and development arms to achieve coherence in disaster response.
  21. There should be sufficient autonomy of decision-making capacity at the UN country level rather than decisions taking place at UN Headquarters in New York.
  22. Contingency plans for all disasters – flood, earthquake, cyclones, landslides, industrial and nuclear – must be prepared by NDMA in consultation with key stakeholders, and regularly reviewed and updated. Contingency plans must include an inbuilt provision for surge capacity at federal, provincial and district levels.
  23. Mock exercises on a regular basis for all types of disasters must be conducted by NDMA with the participation of stakeholders.
  24. Watan Cards is a successful model and should be replicated in future emergencies ensuring the inclusion of vulnerable groups, proper resourcing of the registration authority like NADRA, speedy grievance redressal system and accessible ATM machines.
  25. GoP through NDMA, and provincial governments through their respective PDMA, should create a permanent liaison with media, and institute training on disaster reporting for media.
  26. Disaster risk reduction is an investment in a safer future. Donors must be encouraged to fund programmes that focus on reducing the risk to communities as identified in the Medium Term Plan developed and launched by NDMA. These programmes include:
    - District Capacity Enhancement
    - Multi-Hazard Risk Assessment of major human settlements and economic centres
    - Technical studies on climate change associated hazards
    - A more robust NIDM to continue DRM capacity building activities
    - Preparation/updating of district and provincial disaster management plans
    - Training resilient communities through and extensive CBDRM activities



- Assisting technical agencies in developing comprehensive multi-hazard early warning systems
- Mainstreaming DRR efforts in provincial P&D departments and line departments
- GAP analysis and revamping local response capacities
- Safer school and hospital initiatives as part of the Safer Cities Project

NDMA has matured and has built enduring relationships to work together for preparedness and response in future disasters. The organisation has established its place as the key agency for disaster management in Pakistan. It must now be fully empowered and resourced to properly carry out its designated lead role and responsibility to prepare for and manage all disasters in Pakistan, working in harmony with all stakeholders. The implementation of the recommendations in the report will be a significant step forward for disaster management in Pakistan.



Lieutenant General (retired) Nadeem Ahmed  
Chairman, NDMA  
12 April 2011

*The Report was prepared by the Lessons Learned Team led by Jennifer McKay, and co-authored by Ammar Rashid and Zeeshan Noel. Major Kashif Naeem Khan assisted with research, stakeholder consultations and development of the report. Shahida Arif also assisted with coordination.*