

Effectiveness of Disaster Management Policies in Rural Baltistan:

(A Case Study of Village Qumarah, District Skardu)



By

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**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
M.S./M.PHIL IN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND MANAGEMENT**

**Department of Earth & Environmental Sciences
BAHRIA UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD**

Session 2009-2011

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my loving husband, Dr. Agha Sibtain Raza, my daughter Mahnoor and my parents, for being very patient and supportive throughout the writing of this thesis. As my father, Mr. Hilal A. Raza, has always been a source of inspiration for me, I really believe that I couldn't have accomplished this research without his precious advice and continuous guidance. Thank you mom, Mrs. Sarah Raza for your love and prayers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe the deepest gratitude to my advisor, Dr. Shahina Tariq whose encouragement, guidance and valuable input, from the initial to the final stages, enabled me to make this project possible. I would also like to extend my regards to Dr. Seema Pervez (*Ex Professor & HOD National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad*), Dr. Syed Shahid Ali (*Department of Environmental Science, International Islamic University, Islamabad*), Dr. Zahiruddin Khan (*HOD Environmental Engineering Department, National University of Science and Technology, Islamabad*) & Dr. Muhammad Ikram (*Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, Bahria University, Islamabad*) who always disseminated their knowledge to me and enabled me to conduct this research in efficient and effective manner.

Here I would also like to extend my appreciation to Dr. M. Zafar (HOD) for facilitating me to complete this project. I am also grateful to Mr. Asif Javed, coordinator MS. Programme, all teachers and colleagues of Earth and Environmental Sciences Department, Bahria University, Islamabad for their full cooperation and support.

I will always cherish my time spent in Skardu where I received immense affection and support from the people of Baltistan especially the staff of AKRSP for their generous support and welcoming attitude. This research certainly could never been possible without my access to libraries and empirical data of AKRSP for which I am deeply indebted to Mr. Nazir Ahmed, Regional Programme Manager AKRSP, Skardu. I would also want to convey my gratitude to Mr. Sagheer Rizvi and Mr. Iqbal Shahzad who, after taking out their precious time, enabled me to reach the remote and difficult disaster sites of Qumarah village.

And my dear friends Sajjad, Aiman, Fatima, Nida, Laila, Yasmin and Anisa, thank you very much for cheering up and supporting me in every possible way.

May God Bless u all.....

ABSTRACT

August 2010 was a disastrous period for many areas of Pakistan that witnessed unprecedented monsoon rains and heaviest floods in the known history. Gilgit-Baltistan which is non-monsoon mountainous terrain received monsoon rains with resultant thunder, lightning, outburst of glacier, land sliding and over-flooding of streams. This caused severe damage to life and property including livestock, crops, trees and other sources of livelihoods.

This research project aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of disaster management policies and plans of the Government citing case study of Village Qumarah of Skardu District in Gilgit-Baltistan. The research also found out the gaps in government disaster management policies and its implementation status.

Methodology followed in this study was qualitative by adopting case study empirical approach based on personal observations. The Village Qumarah was selected as case study area as it suffered heavy death toll and infrastructure loss during the devastating flood in the year 2010. Three main techniques were adopted for data collection. These included (i) data and document review, (ii) semi-structured interviews with the key informants including government officials, NGO representatives, social workers and volunteers, and (iii) focus group discussions with effected community.

Findings of this research showed that Gilgit-Baltistan is a disaster prone area. Its vulnerability to natural disasters is compounded by its geography, geology, rising young mountain systems, fragile ecosystem and economic dependency. Absence of Early Warning

System, scattered population living at high altitudes with weak communication and infrastructure multiplied its problems and vulnerability. Lack of modern equipment, infrastructure inventories, emergency response centers and contingency plans, all contributed to enhancing the impact of the disaster.

Disaster management plan of district Skardu showed that village Qumarah was already defined as vulnerable in that document based on past incidents of flash floods and floods but no concrete preventive measures had been taken as advised there in. While the role and participation of local community was altogether neglected in the plan, the government was not prepared at all for such a disaster. Post-disaster, damage assessment surveys were conducted by a number of stakeholders and such repetitive work wasted time and resources. It was found that just after the first flood incident on August 7, 2010 in village Qumarah, the rescue and emergency response activities were carried out with great spirit by the district administration, Pakistan Army and civil society volunteers along with the community members. However, lack of equipment and untrained human resources were the limiting factors which did not allow the efforts to continue unabated. Relief efforts by the government also included “Watan Cards” and financial compensation for life loss and injuries. However, in rehabilitation process, the government and National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) played a limited role and failed to respond to expectations of the community. The potential and role of NGOs in disaster management activities carried out in the study area could be much more than was actually realized. NGO should be brought into a coherent loop with government through adopting innovative approaches to address the issues effectively.

In pre-flood and post-flood situations, environmental issues such as land sliding, land degradation, protection of potable water resources were not addressed and no campaign is launched to make people aware of its importance.

For effective disaster management practice, it was recommended that the role of NDMA and its subsidiaries needs to be redefined. Special emphasis should be given on conducting research and preparing database by incorporating latest as well as traditional and indigenous practices and approaches. Importance should be given on capacity building of stakeholders and launching awareness campaigns for local communities about disaster management and environmental protection. Sustainable rehabilitation programmes with the help of NGOs should be launched in which innovative approached should be adopted such as micro-financing. Stress should be given on rehabilitation of most vulnerable segments of society such as women, children and elderly people. Disaster management plan should be made a public document in a local language so that people can have access to it, respond to it and ensure safer and sustainable communities.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

AC	Assistant Commissioner
AKRSP	Aga Khan Rural Support Programme
CHIP	Civil Society Human and Institutional Development
CMH	Combined Military Hospital
DC	Deputy Commissioner
DCO	District Coordination Officer
DDMA	District Disaster Management Authorities
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRMP	Disaster Risk Management Plan
GDRC	The Global Development Research Centre
ERRA	Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority
ERC	Emergency Relief Cell
FFC	Federal Flood Commission
GB	Gilgit Baltistan
GBDMA	Gilgit Baltistan Disaster Management Authority
GLOF	Glacier Lake Outburst Floods
INGO's	International Non Governmental Organizations
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
LG & RD	Local Government and Local Development
NCMC	National Crisis Management Cell
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
NDMC	National Disaster Management Commission
NDRP	National Disaster Response Plan
NEC	National Economic Council
NEQS	National Environmental Quality Standards
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
MDGS	Millennium Development Goals
NGO's	Non Governmental Organizations

NADMA	Northern Area Disaster Management Authority
NRB	National Reconstruction Bureau
OFDA	Overseas Funding for Development Agency
PPAF	Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund
PPHI	Peoples Primary Health Initiative
PRCS	Pakistan Red Crescent Society
PDMA	Provincial Disaster Management Authorities
PWD	Public Works Department
SOPs	Standard Operational Procedures
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASEP	Water and Sanitation Extension Programme
WFP	World Food Program