



¹-Sikander HAYAT, ²-Arshad ALI, ³-Shahid IQBAL, ⁴-Maqbool Sadiq AWAN

LESSONS FOR THE DISASTER MANAGERS

¹⁻⁴-National University of Sciences and Technology, Islamabad, PAKISTAN

Abstract: Armed Forces are being employed on emergency relief operations around the world; hence they become one of the major stakeholders in disaster management. Be it Hurricane Rita or Katrina in USA, Indian Ocean earthquake cum tsunami in 2004 or Pakistan 2005 Earthquake or 2010 mega flood, forces have been employed side by side with disaster management authorities and NGOs. Depending upon their training, capacities and motivation; results of forces' employment have been quite encouraging. Major reason of the forces' success is not their experience or capacity but organizational strength. This paper is an effort to evaluate strengths and weaknesses of the armed forces in general and Pakistan Army in particular. Effort has been made to find out the constitutional place of Pakistan Army for such duties. In the end, certain suggestions have been offered for disaster manager for learning lesson from forces experiences and from their strengths. Emphasis has been to mitigate the irritants and find common ground for achievement of mutual goals of humanitarian assistance.

Keywords: Armed Forces, HFA 2005-15, Mobilization System

1. INTRODUCTION

Human race is threatened by the natural disasters with ever increasing intensity and frequency. UN and leading international agencies have realized that disaster management is a professional task requiring a deliberate planning and methodological preparation rather giving a knee jerk response. More recently, HFA 2005-15 has shifted the focus from disaster management to disaster risk reduction [1]. All stakeholders are getting educated and more aware than past and new techniques and technologies are finding way to mitigate the impact of disasters. With all these new trends and developments, governmental institutions / departments, NGOs, affected communities and armed forces remain the major stakeholders.

Forces are readily available organized manpower to any country with least financial impact on the country. Thence, their employment in emergency response is easy and advantageous. In a country like Pakistan, Army is favorite for even employment on reconstruction and rehabilitation work especially in far flung rugged areas of FATA, Baluchistan and Kashmir. Employment of Frontier Works Organization (FWO), Special Communication Organization (SCO), National Logistic Cell (NLC) and even complete Engineer Division in FATA are the apt examples. Owing to its prolonged employment, Pakistan Army has developed certain expertise and strengths. It has also some peculiar weaknesses or one may call them institutional biases that prohibit the growth of civilian institutions in disaster management [2,3]. The paper is aimed to highlight these strengths and weaknesses and suggest measures for collaborated employment of all stakeholders.

2. FUNCTIONS OF ARMED FORCES ARTICLE – 245

- "(1)The Armed Forces shall, under the directions of the Federal Government, defend Pakistan against external aggression or threat of war, and, subject to law, act in aid of civil power when called upon to do so".
- "(2) the validity of any direction issued by the Federal Government under clause (1), shall not be called in question in any Court".
- "(3) A High Court shall not exercise any jurisdiction under Article 199 in relation to any area in which the Armed Forces of Pakistan are, for the time being, acting in aid of civil power in pursuance of Article 245" [4].

3. RESPONSIBILITY OF SECURITY / DISASTER MANAGEMENT

- External Security.** Pakistan Armed Forces are Responsible to defend all territories of Pakistan including Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan from external aggression or threat of war.
- Internal Security.** Interior ministry being overall in charge of Civil Armed Forces and Police is responsible to maintain internal security of the country; however, it can call Army in aid of civil power anywhere and anytime in Pakistan. This includes Armed Forces employment on National level calamity for emergency response.

- c. **Disaster Management.** Civil Government is responsible to manage all sorts of disasters in the country through NDMA, PDMA, DDMA and other related department / agencies. However, Armed Forces can also be called to assist the civil government especially in relief operations.

4. ARMED FORCES IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

a. Strengths

- (1) **Organizational Structural.** Armed Forces are structured into functional organization vertically and horizontally as per their combat requirement. However, the organization is flexible to absorb attachments and detachments. The hall mark of the organization is the unity of command. Armed Forces do encourage the deliberate discussion on operational plans but once the decision is taken, all subordinate commanders have to implement it in letter and spirit [5]. This institutional flexibility coupled with unity of command help the forces to undertake relief operations during emergency with precision and speed.
 - (2) **Mobilization System.** Mobilization system of the forces signifies the preparation, training including rising of reserves. It is regularly updated as per changing operational requirements. All drills and procedures are pre-planned and well-rehearsed. Such a comprehensive mobilization facilitates quick assembly of forces and movement for operation.
 - (3) **Mobility.** Operational mobility is another capability of the forces which afford them quick movement from bases to operational areas. This mobility is all weather and for all type of terrain. Moreover, forces are well conversant with the areas of responsibility and local traditions [6]. Similarly, air mobility including air transportation further enhances the forces capacity.
 - (4) **Communication.** Variety of communication system available with the forces, provides them a communication reach to all areas hence enables provision of latest situation about the disaster and ongoing operations.
 - (5) **Availability of Technical Expertise/ Equipment.** Availability of technical equipment like dozer, cranes, excavator, earth auger, generators, ambulances and fire tenders etc. gives forces readymade capacity to undertake search and rescue operations with speed and marginal successes. For additional requirement of such equipment they have to move it from neighboring sectors.
 - (6) **Stocking of Emergency Response Items.** Emergency response items like food, water, shelter, bedding and medicine are all part of forces kit. These items are always sufficient in stock for emergency operations. Availability of mobile field hospitals along with sufficient doctors, paramedics, ambulances and medicines take care of emergency medication till buildup of civil resources.
 - (7) **Deployment across the Country.** Armed Forces are adequately dispersed along frontiers and provinces. In case of Pakistan, entire country is divided into area of responsibility for internal security duties. Field formations of the army are dedicated for these duties all over the provinces. Forces have prepared emergency plans for different type of contingencies and they regularly carryout liaison visits and reconnaissance. These activities afford them an opportunity to move and deploy in quick time.
 - (8) **Enjoy Masses Confidence.** Armed Forces all over the world have special respect and confidence of the masses. Owing to their loyalty to nation, commitment to duty, masses trust them and listen to them. It becomes easy for forces to maintain discipline, undertake operation and find willing cooperation.
 - (9) **Standard Staff Functioning.** Armed Forces have special staff function and staff duties. Different headquarters have standards staff branches known to everybody that who has to undertake which type of job. General staff planning, operations, logistics, communications, procurement, administration, finance and media management; all have dedicated part of the duties. Such division of duties enables them to function under minimum direction or even isolated. It also helps the NGOs to quickly understand the system and collaborates with the forces in emergency response operations.
 - (10) **Motivation.** Defense of motherland and safety of its people is the main cause of superior motivation of the armed forces. This motivation coupled with humanitarian assistance is instituted on socio-religious and cultural moorings and act as force multiplier.
- b. **Peculiarities.** Armed Forces despite of many advantages over civilian in disaster management have few peculiar disadvantages as well which must be understood by all concerned working together with forces in relief operations [7]. Some of them are as under:
- (1) **Limited Experience for Actual Disaster.** Relief operations are not the primary tasks of the armed forces. No matter how dedicated, how well organized and how well equip these forces might be, they would not be trained precisely for disaster management operations. A US Air Forces officer Michael R. Weeks describe his experiences during his employment in 2005 Earth Quake in Pakistan, "While the probability of a military response is high, the personnel assigned to these operations often have limited experience in actual disaster environment. He further writes that military units must be resilient and robust to deal with the uncertainty of combat, often referred to as the 'fog of war,'" [8].

- (2) **Aggressive Attitude Prohibit Multinational Collaboration.** Armed Forces by nature are supposed to be aggressive in operations. Wrestling initiative from the enemy is part of their training. Owing to the repeated employment in martial laws, this may be true in case of Pakistan Army. McGrik write in his experience during 2005 Earthquake “not even a single leaf on a tree shake in Pakistan without the army and its dreaded intelligence service”. This observation may not be 100% true but one of the Western personal involved in the earthquake made it blatantly. Civilian working with the army also have similar feeling in mild tune.
- (3) **Over Security Consciousness Hamper NGOs Functioning.** Most of the international NGOs feel that they have very limited liberty of action in Pakistan. Over security consciousness hampered their free movement and execution of their relief works in Pakistan during 2005 earthquake as well during 2010 mega flood. This may be true up to some extent as Pakistan is facing multifarious geo-strategic challenges and these NGOs have interest based specific funding [9,10]. As a matter of principle, both the host Government and international agencies must understand each other compulsion and try to find common ground for collaboration.
- (4) **Bilateral Security Irritants Impedes Regional Cooperation.** Foreign journalists have observed that 2005 was a good opportunity to enhance regional cooperation especially for disaster management. Keridis 2006 argues that “due to military regime, Pakistan missed the opportunity provided by the natural disaster in 2005 for humanitarian assistance and new thinking in foreign policy for regional cooperation”.
- (5) **Army Overshadow Civil Departments/ Institutions.** It is general feeling of the civilian staff working with Army across the world that forces tend to overtake and overshadow their work. During emergency response to disaster it was felt even more. Prof Michel Chossudovsky writes about US Military assistance to Haiti, “The military component of the US mission, however, tends to overshadow the civilian functions of rescuing a desperate and impoverished population. The overall humanitarian operation is not being led by civilian governmental agencies such as FEMA or USAID, but by the Pentagon”[11].
- (6) **Armed Forces have Experience of Relief Operation only.** World focus has shifted from disaster management to disaster risk reduction (DRR). In this regard, lot has to be done before the actual occurrence of disaster. This whole cycle is a specialist job and includes variety of structural and non-structural measures [12]. On the other hand the armed forces experience is related to emergency relief operations only. Disaster risk reduction cycle need to be understood holistically by the forces and agencies/ NGOs for optimum utilization of each agency to achieve common objectives.



Figure 1. Armed forces in disaster management

5. SUGGESTED MEASURES FOR JOINT EMPLOYMENT

Civil institutions, international agencies and NGOs have great experience, experts and valuable volunteers working for disaster management since decades. Similarly, Armed Forces of many countries have been repeatedly employed on emergency relief operation. Therefore there is a need to integrate both organs into a happy collaborated team. Some of suggestion in this regards are as under:

- a. **Governance and Leadership.** In a multinational and multi-sector environment: strong, competent and influencing leadership would be required to provide timely decision making. Use of modern techniques of governance and cutting edge technologies will further enhance the governance and collaborations. Institutional building and development of standing operating procedures will also facilitate the governance.
- b. **NDMA in a Lead Role.** NDMA being the central constitutional body should take the lead role. It should provide the strategic direction and division of roles and responsibility amongst various organizations. Department and agencies should be tasked keeping in view capability. For instance, forces should best be employed during emergency response and recovery stage. Establishment of Emergency Operation Centre, distribution of resources, media and information management all should be done by the professionals centrally.

- c. **Development of Civil Institutions.** Functioning system of the civil departments, international agencies and armed forces have different methodologies and procedures. Problem occurs when different organizations cannot keep pace with each others and the whole machinery gets affected. At this point in time, forces get frustrated and think that sluggish and stubborn procedures of the department / agencies are counterproductive. They tend to either takeover or start bypassing the joint functioning environment. Equal development of different institutions, joint working procedures and standard drills are considered vital for joint operations.
- d. **Identification of Regional Cooperation.** Regional cooperation can thrive where environment of confidence, trust and mutual understanding exists. In case of Indo-Pak Sub-Continent, it is other way round. That's why very limited avenues of cooperation exist. However, best education and training practices, research, studies and information on disaster threat profile of the region can easily be shared [13]. Provision of relief goods and shelters etc. can also be exchanged. Deployment of forces and agencies in each other's country may not be possible till bilateral disputes are resolved.
- e. **Joint Briefings and Training.** Small sessions of joint briefing and training on cutting edge technologies and latest methodologies used by experts on disaster management should be undertaken during preparatory stage. It will help in understanding each other and harmonizing various groups.
- f. **Media Management.** Media management is a specialist job. Forces have dedicated department to manage and handle the media. Similarly, NDMA should have dedicated media management team which should plan, prepare and execute regular media briefings. All other agencies / department should be prohibited to interact with media directly.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Disaster management is a complete cycle of activities namely mitigation, prevention, preparation, emergency response, recovery and rehabilitation/reconstruction. Large numbers of sub-activities are carried out under each phase. While the disaster manager is part of all stages, the department/ agencies may be specialist in particular aspects. Disaster manager, as leader of the team needs to identify the strengths and weaknesses of all stake holders and utilize them as per their capabilities. He should divide the responsibilities and create cohesive environment for all concerned to work under international umbrella. He should provide strategic direction, establish systems to function semi-independently and be readily available for decision making at critical time and locations. The department / agencies should mutually benefit from each other's experience for achievement of common objective of humanitarian assistance.

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