

KEY CONSIDERATIONS: SUPPORTING BETTER GOVERNANCE OF FLOOD RELIEF EFFORTS IN PAKISTAN

Relief, rehabilitation, and recovery from climate emergencies require getting the governance of disaster and crisis management right. In Pakistan, there are five actions where response actors can either contribute directly, or facilitate action to enable effective interventions:

- Support the collection, coordination, and dissemination of data relating to the crisis
- Help regenerate multi-sectoral cooperation and partnerships
- Assist the vertical integration of institutions at the sub-national level
- Urge coordinated resources across response actors: donors, government officials, and civil society
- Strengthen social protection systems in the longer term

Most of these are familiar to those that work on humanitarian crises in Pakistan, but they represent unresolved bottlenecks in responding effectively to a crisis. Getting these areas of action right is critical for the current crisis and to prepare for other expected and accelerating climate emergencies.

To expand on these five elements, this brief draws on the authors' experiences of national and international responses to previous disasters and their aftermaths in Pakistan. It was written by Shandana Khan Mohmand and Miguel Loureiro at the Institute of Development Studies, and was reviewed by Saba Aslam (Institute of Business Administration, Karachi), Luqman Hakeem, (UNICEF), Hayley MacGregor (IDS), Annie Wilkinson (IDS) and Olivia Tulloch (Anthrologica), and edited by Victoria Haldane (Anthrologica). This brief was commissioned by and remains the responsibility of SSHAP.

IDENTIFICATION, ACCESS, AND DATA

Who is affected and to what extent? This is a basic question during a crisis and yet one with which many countries in the global south struggle. Data collection and maintenance efforts in Pakistan have suffered from low frequency, quality, and detail. Data are also often guarded for security reasons. Regular and frequent data are essential for effective and accurate relief and recovery efforts to identify, quantify, and monitor the scale of the impact, and to mobilise, plan, and coordinate efforts.

Data collection and dissemination efforts must not only be timely and complete, but also coordinated between the state and other agencies and accessible by all response actors. In the immediate term, data collected needs to identify affected communities and displaced populations, and support coordination efforts around how and who is to get across to where help is most needed, and in which form. In a crisis, the most common data gaps are usually in terms of locally disaggregated data on the scale and magnitude of the impact, and being able to get appropriate relief to the most remote regions -- in some parts this may be shelter, while in others it may be food or cash. After the waters of the current flood have receded, databases will be needed to provide updated information on housing and livelihood needs, the spread of diseases, and emerging needs around health and nutrition.

External actors, local civil society organisations, and frontline workers (such as Lady Health workers, and school teachers) can play an important role in setting up data systems, including crowdsourcing, and making these widely available to state and non-state actors. This was evidenced in the 2005 earthquake when a group of academics set up the [RISEPAK portal](#) (which went on to win the Stockholm award in the public administration category) and in the case of the current floods with informal, citizen-led efforts such as [#floodlight](#).¹

MULTI-SECTORAL COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Response strategies in a crisis need strong coordination between actors and convergence around shared objectives. This helps to ensure better coverage and access, and to help extend the administrative reach of the state. There are good examples available in Pakistan of how donors created coordinated responses with state actors and civil society during the earthquake of 2005 and later during the floods of 2010 and 2011 (e.g. the [Pakistan Humanitarian Forum](#)). Similar approaches to coordination will be particularly important in addressing the health, undernutrition, and housing challenges that displaced populations and residents of affected areas will face in the aftermath of the current floods. The need for a concerted effort around malnutrition is not new and appeared on policy agendas in the cooperation between state and external actors in the aftermath of the 2010-11 floods. However, the momentum for coordinated health and social efforts did not last beyond the crisis period. There is a need for joint work plans across ministries and coordination of strategies and actions across multiple actors to achieve results on health and nutrition which are maintained beyond individual crises. This would also ensure better preparedness for future crises, and response mechanisms which can be rapidly deployed. At a minimum, more consistent action is required across state institutions that work on disaster management, food, agriculture, health, shelter, water and sanitation, education, irrigation, and social protection, as well as donors and civil society actors active in these areas. There is a strong effort around this already, as evidenced by the [recent launch of a joint flood response effort by the Pakistan government and the UN](#).²

The key is to maintain this cooperation in non-crisis times, but this is complicated by two governance factors. The first is the administrative structure of the state. State actors need to think and plan multi-sectorally, but policies are implemented by individual ministries and their frontline staff.³ In a devolved governance structure, such as that of Pakistan, where many of the relevant ministries are based at the provincial level, coordination can be hard to achieve. Pakistan needs multi-stakeholder coordinating bodies at the centre of government in Islamabad to identify required interventions for separate, tailored implementation by the provinces. Pakistan has the basic framework for this through the National Disaster Management Commission (NDMC) at the federal level that is connected to a network of Provincial and District Disaster Management Authorities (PDMAs and DDMA) at the sub-national level, but this has not been effectively deployed either in this crisis or in the decade since the last floods to develop sustainable coordination around disaster preparedness.

The second governance factor undermining sustainable cooperation is that a deep distrust exists between state agencies, donors, and civil society actors in Pakistan. Interventions and regulations against both international and local NGOs in particular have limited the capacity of these actors and has reduced cooperation. Despite this, building links with state bodies is essential for multiple reasons including– to ensure coordination; for better access to and coverage of all affected communities; to help multiply the impact of limited resources; to rebuild working relationships; and also to help strengthen state-citizen relationships rather than create parallel structures. Because of difficult relationships with the state, donors and civil society actors will often work with informal authority structures in rural areas. These, however, introduce other power dynamics and structures of exclusion that can leave out the most deserving and marginalised populations.⁴

INTEGRATION OF SUB-NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Greater coordination at the federal and provincial levels will have little effect in the absence of effective delivery systems at the district level and below. This is a fundamental issue of vertical integration, which refers to the extent to which capacity exists within the state to implement policy across all tiers of government, and the extent to which the tiers remain accountable to one another. There are two main areas of concern. First, the extent to which any horizontal coordination achieved at the national level can carry down the vertical chain to ensure horizontal coordination across frontline departments. Second, the lack of institutionalisation of decentralised local governments in Pakistan.

Pakistan has a devolved federal system that places decision-making authority with the provinces. It is overlaid by the fact that provinces are led by different political parties in a deeply polarised political system. This makes coordination between the centre in Islamabad and the provinces very difficult. Within the provinces, capacity at the frontline is limited by a lack of capacity for planning, data collection, monitoring of impact, and coordination of interventions across departments. The provinces are also limited by the hierarchical structure of the bureaucracy, which often means that frontline staff will wait for directives from the top rather than act quickly in the field. Innovations are motivated by a few individual champions,⁵ and while it works in the short term for emergency response actors to identify these, it does not help build a system in the longer term that encourages local solutions and action. Polarisation and political persecution over the last decade have further created a culture of inaction within the bureaucracy to avoid retribution. This means that even when resources are available, they may not be spent effectively or in a timely manner.

Complicating the matter further is the lack of an institutionalised system of local government that could be used for local information, access, disbursements, and monitoring of relief and rehabilitation. Such a local system could also be used for more decentralised decision-making and responsiveness through locally elected bodies within village communities. This is the missing link behind much of the lack of access, information, and coordination that Pakistan has witnessed in each crisis.

In the absence of effective local governments, provincial planning and development departments (P&Ds) can take on coordinated planning and distribution of funds to more local levels. They can connect vertically to the centre in Islamabad, as well as to districts, and horizontally across provinces. The link between provinces and districts is particularly weak -- provinces need to strengthen districts' capacity to deliver services more effectively at the village level, for example in the areas of basic and preventive health care, water supply and sanitation, irrigation, and primary and secondary education. Over time, greater responsibility should be passed down to the district in all of these areas. External agencies can help create capacity within districts through long-term programming, by building and monitoring databases, offering joint funding lines, planning and facilitating joint sectoral initiatives, and providing technical capacity, especially at the front lines. In particular, they can assist districts with disaster risk reduction and preparedness, such as the more effective use of early warning systems to evacuate people and livestock.

COORDINATED RESOURCES

As resources to respond to the floods flow into Pakistan, it is important to consider pooled funding modalities. This is currently being done through UN-OCHA but generally, donor funds in Pakistan are allocated separately and through different modalities. A risk is that high levels of donor funding can reduce state ownership of interventions. This is especially so in the aftermath of emergency response efforts, where the end of donor funding can affect the continuity of health and nutrition initiatives, and weaken state-citizen relationships, particularly in low-trust settings such as Pakistan. Indeed, Pakistan has previously experienced this cycle where the lack of state ownership motivates donors to establish separate initiatives. These separate initiatives in turn further reduce state ownership and involvement. Without efforts to work more collaboratively, distrust continues to grow on both sides and amongst citizens.

The state in Pakistan attempts to over-regulate external funding in the name of security and national sovereignty, which can reduce the effectiveness of programmes. Leaving the state out of interventions, however, means that no state capacity is built over the longer term. This lack of state capacity has implications on preparedness for the next crisis. Indeed, there are OECD targets on the provision of funds through state cooperation and partner country mechanisms, but these targets have not been met in Pakistan. Our previous work on malnutrition after the 2010-11 floods showed that only 17 percent of missions were jointly conducted with the state (against a target of 40 percent). It was found that “the UN, World Bank, and DFID [were] leading the way on coordinated work, but even there ‘none of them managed to co-ordinate more than half of their missions.’”⁶ Donor should ensure that recent efforts to coordinate must extend beyond the current crisis and be connected to strategic planning by the centre in Islamabad and provinces, while also ensuring transparency of allocations to

help rebuild trust. Creating a joint tracking and monitoring mechanisms across donors, government officials, and civil society watchdogs is one way to strengthen coordination efforts and build trust.

STRENGTHEN PROTECTION SYSTEMS

Key to longer term efforts is the need for effective and extensive social protection systems, as highlighted by Yashodhan Ghorpade's recent policy note.⁷ This was evident during the recent pandemic when the state's existing system struggled to meet the economic needs of a population affected by job losses and an economic downturn. It is evident again in the delays in distributing essential aid to the poorest population groups, and in registering and rehabilitating displaced populations. Pakistan has one of the most impressive social protection programmes in the world – BISP, recently renamed and extended as Ehsaas. The programme provides an excellent basis for allocating further funds to meet livelihoods, health, and nutrition needs, get millions of children back into schools, collect data on needs and impact, and monitor results. It could also provide an excellent vehicle for pooled funding during the rehabilitation phase and in the longer term to support population groups that have lost their livelihoods.

In moving forward, donor agencies that remain active in Pakistan will need to work on strengthening relationships with the state to facilitate the building of formal institutions that are effective, inclusive, and sustainable. With ongoing and expected crises, coordination, cooperation, and integration are key. Crises require these as foundational elements towards better governance in Pakistan and there are few alternatives to getting this right, but these remain elusive in Pakistan's governance system.

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