



DIALOGUE REPORT #3

October 2010

Institutional Arrangements for Post Disaster Recovery: Way Forward

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The Centre for Public Policy & Governance (CPPG) in collaboration with the Urban Unit, Government of the Punjab held a policy dialogue on **Post Disaster Recovery: A Brainstorming Session** on the 23rd of September 2010. The dialogue entailed a free exchange of ideas among the various stakeholders including the representatives of Punjab Government, Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA), United Nations, International NGOs, Domestic NGOs, Academics, Farmers and civil society. The dialogue consisted of three sessions including Institutional Re-arrangement, Irrigation & Food Security and Rehabilitation & Town Planning. Deliberations led to a broad consensus among the participants that Institutional Arrangement was the key to any way forward, therefore this dimension of governance in post disaster recovery be given top priority.

In Punjab, the total number of 5.33 million citizens have been affected; 2.6m have been displaced and 3.4m fall into the extremely vulnerable category with little or no access to clean drinking water, food and medicines.

Critical Issues

The dialogue and discussion that followed revolved around two critical questions; 'What is the vision of Punjab in terms of reconstruction at the provincial level? How can this vision be translated into an institutionalized mechanism?'

Cursory research of newspapers suggests that there are at least 48 advertised funds for floods relief and reconstruction while hundreds others attest to high level of involvement of citizens but a general lack of coordination. Multiple government bodies (NODMC, NDMA, and PDMA) and committees have made coordination harder as people move back to their destroyed livelihoods without a focal agency and an undefined **framework for recovery and rehabilitation**. This also demands some minimal consensus between

the federal and provincial governments on strategy, financing and institutional mechanisms—so that the response to floods is institutionalized rather than politicized.

Though National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and Punjab Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) have been thrust into the role at the federal and provincial levels respectively, the NDMA requires legal backing as the NDMA Ordinance has lapsed while PDMA (legislation in process) is not legally or organizationally mandated to conduct post disaster reconstruction coordination. PDMA is for disaster management, not for disaster reconstruction and does not have the capacity, the human resources for being a **focal agency** for reconstruction. A focal agency needs to provide clear guidelines regarding sectoral priority and source of financing to provincial line departments.

There is a general **trust deficit** among the affectees, the government and the NGOs. A major cause of this mistrust is the ineffectiveness and absence of coordination at the Local Government—for people the government does not exist at the local level. The lack of community participation can be measured from the fact that at the local level even the party workers are not mobilized. A success strategy requires a collective effort but it is still unclear whether the government or technical organizations (International & Domestic NGOs) have the capacity to involve the community.

Policy Objectives for Rehabilitation Framework

The framework for rehabilitation and recovery needs to adhere to the following objectives:

- Taking all stakeholders on board including the federal, provincial, local governments, community, donors, IGOs and NGOs.
- Centralized Coordination, Guidelines & Information Sharing, and Decentralized Implementation
- Equity & Quality across provinces
- Transparency and Accountability
- Fast track approval, procurement and implementation process
- Managing multi-source funding and supporting multi-channel implementation
- Sectoral Prioritization according to needs, Housing and Livelihoods being the most important
- Targeted programs for the poor and vulnerable
- Empowerment of communities with an eye on legal and traditional rights

Disaster response effort comprises of a three phased approach: Rescue, Relief and Rehabilitation; Early Recovery involves building temporary and transitional structures to bring normalcy to areas through livelihood cash grants and by ensuring competitive markets; Rehabilitation involves a long term effort to build the community while ensuring that the disaster will not effect them again. A long-term strategy should rely on creating local employment opportunities. It is important that in case of lack of funds, clear prioritization be based on the various needs.

Institutional Re-arrangements

The institutional framework for rehabilitation seeks to formulate the collective working of all stakeholders in the reconstruction process including the federal, provincial, local governments, community, donors, international and domestic NGOs. Its formulation is the collective responsibility of the federal, provincial and local governments.

Institutional Structure and Functional Division

Based on the previous experience of Earthquake Rehabilitation, it was suggested that ERRA's biggest strength was its hybrid constitution including personnel from the Civil Services, Army and Technocrats which allowed for institutional linkages at all government levels as well as with NGOs and donor agencies. Administratively it was present at all levels of the State- ERRA at the federal level, PERRA at the provincial level and SERRA at the district level. While ERRA's Board at the federal level, Steering Committee at the provincial level (AJK & Khyber-Pukhtoonkha) and District Reconstruction Unit in each affected district provided the three tiered governing body.

But following the 18th amendment and because of the differences in political dispensation from the time of the 2005 earthquake and now, any replication of a highly integrated federal level institution such as ERRA appears not probable. Thus other than core coordination functions, most responsibilities should be taken up by a provincial body.

More important being that a clear division of responsibility and a harmonious relationship exists between the various levels of government. Even in the case of ERRA, while funding and coordination lay with the federal government, still the provincial government was responsible for implementation and ownership. Following describes the proposed structure in detail. The implementation responsibilities lay with the District Agency if the subject has been devolved to the local level else the Provincial Implementation Agency should be responsible.

Federal Agency

- Devise uniform/credible benchmarks and data structure for damage need assessment
- Provide one window facilitation for donor funding and coordination
- Establish standards for reconstruction and unit costs
- Monitor and audit federating units in terms of progress and quality

Provincial Agency

- Provide interface between federal, provincial and implementation levels
- Collect data according to structure and benchmarks for damage need assessment
- Spearhead provincial and sectoral reconstruction strategy formulation and work plans

- Clearance house for funding from provincial, federal and donor sources
- Ensure standards for reconstruction and unit costs
- Monitor progress reports for district & province
- Information Centre & Grievance redressal agency

Implementation Agency (provincial line department) Reconstruction Cell

- Implement approved projects/schemes
- Interface with Provincial Agency in terms of strategy, plans, funding and progress reporting
- Manage procurements, bidding, supervision and quality assurance
- Information & Grievance Redressal Centre

District Agency

- Prepare district plans and manage reconstruction funds
- Coordinate and monitor implementation of approved schemes
- Interface with Provincial coordinating unit in terms of strategy, plans, funding and progress reporting
- Manage procurements, bidding, supervision and quality assurance
- Information & Grievance Redressal Centre
- Legal Aid Centre

Review, Assessment and Recommendations for Way Forward:

Damage Determination

The non-government agencies critiqued the lack of a reliable data set to base their reconstruction design effort on. They argued that the multiple data sets collected by various departments and agencies conflict with one another making things more confusing. While local NGOs critiqued the UN's process of collecting data arguing that it was but opinions and perceptions of various NGOs at Cluster meetings rather than being evidence based.

The participants were informed that for the reconstruction effort, the PDMA is currently conducting two surveys: A Housing Survey to assess the damage to houses and a Crop Survey to assess the need for fertilizer and seed for the upcoming cropping season. While the need for these surveys is unquestionable, it is important that the survey be based on proper methodology with the involvement of independent experts to remove biases and power dynamics of the area.

According to ERRA, Damage Assessment requires a survey of each and every village/town's public infrastructure, household and crop area along with documentary proof through pictures or video. Based on such detailed survey, District Profiles and Sectoral Strategies with exact cost numbers need to be articulated. Additionally the

extremely vulnerable (elderly, widows, orphans & disabled etc.) also need to be identified for strategies concerning them.

It is important to note here that the Traditional Rights of the community may be different from Legal Rights (Eg. land title may be different from land occupation). Thus any damage assessment needs to take into account the Traditional Rights of the people in these areas. Additionally a lack of legal documents such as land registration and the National ID card (which were either never acquired or were washed away in the floods) should not be a hindrance in collecting data. This would only be possible with the involvement of local community or local Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in the process. Use of technology such as pre and post satellite imagery of the affected areas would also facilitate in damage assessment.

Information and Communication Strategy

One reason for the lack of coordination in relief work was the absence of Information Centres across the province, thus requiring citizen donors, volunteers, NGOs to conduct their own need assessment. Community involvement requires that Information Centres are setup at the district level. Additionally, a clear Communication Strategy is needed to set the right expectations for donors, beneficiaries and media, as any premature promises of model villages traversing the Punjab landscape will later lead to mismanaged perceptions.

A web based information portal indicating a list of projects, their status and implementing agency, which can be sorted according to sector, location (district-tehsil-union council-village) and size would both provide transparent funding opportunities to donors, implementation opportunities to NGOs and volunteer opportunities to citizens.

Financial Management and Implementation Mechanisms

ERRA had a one line item budget and thus did not have to go back to the Ministry of Finance (MoF) to get funds released for each initiated project, while a check was maintained with both a representative of MoF and the Planning Commission on ERRA's Board. Internal financial checks were in place with the Board able to approve projects of upto Rs. 500million, the Provincial Steering Committee to approve projects of up to Rs. 250 million and the District Reconstruction Advisory Committee (DRAC) to approve projects up to Rs. 100 million. Additionally the PC1 IRR and ERR calculation requirements were bypassed to shorten the approval cycle with the assumption that only destroyed elements were being reconstructed.

Similarly Procurement rules were relaxed to shorten the tendering cycle (average 12-14 weeks) by increasing the procurement limit from Rs. 0.2million to Rs. 4million.

To instill donor confidence, a transparent Financial Management System for transparent and traceable flow of funds is necessary, while the second option is to allow donor to independently implement the project based on the standards and guidelines provided by implementation agency. Thus clear definitions and product standards for tendering is

needed for universal application. To facilitate donors, multiple implementation mechanisms were developed by ERRA. For small donors, a web based selection of projects along with provision of minimum requirements and construction standards were provided. For large donors (ADB/IDB), separate Project Management Units (PMU) were setup to process all related work. Additionally ERRA did not handle cash forcing all beneficiaries to use Bank Accounts.

Similarly, the beneficiary receipts also need to be recorded. The PDMA is currently developing software with UN Habitat, which would provide benefits information for a household based on the National ID Card (NIC). Sharing of this information with various agencies in addition to its linkage with the Financial Management System would greatly enhance the auditing capacity of the Flood Reconstruction process.

Community Empowerment and Involvement in Implementation

While Punjab has not completely done away with the Local Government System (LGS), effectively there is no local government awaiting a new legislation. There was a general disagreement between serving Government Officers and every one else regarding the usefulness and need for representative Local Government. Serving Government Officers felt that the abolishment of the old Deputy Commissioner (DC) system had led to anarchy and a loss in the writ of government especially during the floods, while others felt that had there been Local Governments they would have acted as the first response to floods. Some even argued for reinstatement of previous Nazims & councilors till the next LGS elections, seeing it as critical for a successful rehabilitation process.

But there was a general agreement in the house that the community needed to be involved and invested in. It was argued that there was a need for an organization (preferably local who know the ground realities and have relationships with local people), which could build the communities social capital as well as provide an interface between the people and the government. PDMA was thinking along the lines of a Modern Village Project with the support of Punjab Rural Support Program (PRSP) rather than a Government Contractor Model, allowing donors to pick their own NGOs to do the work. It had already initiated work on four villages of 100 houses each and is ready to start work on 204 more villages awaiting donor commitment.

Civil society representatives argued for involving Citizen Committees. Rather than making separate health, farmer and other organizations, it argued that a Village Council should instead be linked up with the Local Government to rehabilitate their own school, dispensary and agriculture extension. Local Council is already a part of the LGS and needs to be reactivated. ERRA attested to this suggestion arguing that 4322 Water Management projects had been completed by the community since the earthquake. Additionally School Reconstruction projects done by the community on the basis of technical drawings provided by ERRA were completed in a much shorter time as compared to contractors while quality and accountability was ensured, as the School Committee was answerable to the community.

Empowerment of the community also involves the resolution of differences between their Traditional and Legal Rights. It was thus important that Legal Aid Centres be established in all affected districts to support the affectees who may not have legal documents to their land or have lost their NID.

Appendix: List of Participants

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