

Preface

The International Research Group on Crisis Communication (IRGoCC) was founded at the Institute for Media and Communication Science, which is one of the biggest research and education facilities for communications in Germany. In the interdisciplinary academic environment of the Ilmenau University of Technology we aim at stimulating and conducting in-depth and integrative research in the field of crisis communication. Our members study a wide range of crisis types on individual, organizational, or societal levels.

In modern society crises and wars are not only covered, but also significantly influenced by the media and public opinion. Industrial crises, armed conflicts and natural disasters often become global media events, while terrorist acts strategically try to create public impact by taking advantage of the news value orientation in journalism. The IRGoCC is trying to detect common patterns in the dynamics of (public) communication processes, which can be observed in the context of crises. By integrating different disciplinary perspectives and collaborating with the international community of crisis communication scholars we intend to advance this field of study. The communication of organizational crises, violent conflicts, terrorism and security policy is in the centre of our observation.

Besides academic research the IRGoCC wants to intensify the dialogue and knowledge transfer between practitioners in politics, business, nonprofit organizations, the media, and scholars interested in crisis communication research. With this purpose we launched the IRGoCC report with its first issue on the Pakistan floods in 2010. The author is Eraj Atiq who works at the Women Media Center in Karachi, the largest city in Pakistan. From September to December 2010 she did an internship at the Department of Media Studies at the Ilmenau University of Technology, funded by the Institute for Foreign Cultural Relations (ifa). In this time she did research on the

devastating flood in summer 2010 that affected 20 million people in Pakistan. Her main interest was to look at the crisis response of the major actors and organizations involved, such as the Pakistani government, international NGOs, the media, government officials of the international community, but also victims of the flood. The report is based on journalistic interviews and gives an interesting overview on the case. It addresses readers with a general interest in the role of crisis communication in the context of natural disasters.

The IRGoCC report comprises working papers that cover topics in crisis communication from journalistic, scholarly, and applied perspectives. We invite members and associate members of the IRGoCC as well as international scholars in the field to report on their ongoing research. Moreover, the report is intended to be a platform for communication professionals and journalists to give insights into current crisis cases or developments.

Martin Löffelholz & Andreas Schwarz

Contents

Preface.....	1
Crisis Communication in the Context of the Pakistan Floods 2010.....	2
References and Links.....	8
General Information on the IRGoCC and the IRGoCC report.....	9
Bibliographic Information.....	10

Crisis Communication in the Context of the Pakistan Floods 2010

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Abstract

The report focuses on Crisis Communication during the most devastating floods of 2010 ever witnessed in the history of Pakistan in which the death toll of human beings exceeded 2,000. Millions of houses and other immovable properties were submerged, collapsed or totally destroyed. As per the estimates, about 21 million people have been rendered homeless and are constrained to take shelter in open areas under the scorching sun and bad weather. An estimate total number of people affected by the floods is around 21 million which has exceeded the combined total of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the 2005 Kashmir and the 2010 Haiti earthquakes. According to the views of various media reporters

and natural calamity analysts, unfortunately crisis communication could not play any effective role in this most crucial time of Pakistan. Interviews carried out with the victims, studies, facts and figures indicate that international response to this natural calamity has been slow and inadequate. Pakistan government's inability to sustain its grip in tackling this natural calamity is also responsible for the insufficient international reaction. The need of the time is to chalk out immediate rehabilitation programs and long-term planning in order to confront this crisis in the shortest possible time and to counter any similar calamity in future and to prevent it from turning into a long term mishap.



SINDH: A patient suffering from illness but no aid or medication is available (WMC)



SINDH: Victims rushing towards a supply truck distributing food items (WMC)

“We have received some bags of aid, we are refused bluntly if we ask for some more essential items, we are beaten if we insist and we don’t need any help if they can’t respect us. We will return all what they have given to us”. One of the victims named Hazoora while receiving aid from Navy Personals five kilometers away from Jams-horo on Indus Highway narrated to the Women Media Center Pakistan, that the dreadful flood has devastated large areas of the northwest of Pakistan. The sufferers are greatly counting on the foreign aid that yields a poor record of crisis communication.

Anomalous and deviant rains were brought by Monsoon 2010, leading to the most catastrophic and disastrous floods in Pakistan. Relentless series of rain has been the primary reason for this countrywide destruction. Initial strikes of these heavy rains began in the southern Province of Baluchistan in July 2010, then Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, followed by Punjab and Sindh. This unrestrained and headstrong flood has taken toll of over 2000 lives. Over one million homes have been eradicated and dismantled. Over 20 million people are reported to be homeless and injured. Over two million cropped areas (hectares) are documented to be adversely affected. In this moment of severe crisis for Pakistan, several communicators have played their role in order to help the victims and to provide aid to cope up from the disastrous effects of the flood. In this most trying and testing time for a nation like Pakistan, which already comes under an umbrella of under development, this natural calamity and misfortune has resulted in immense towering bereavement. Education and health sectors in the affected districts have been terribly corroded. Numerous communities have been displaced due to tremendous damage to the weak infrastructure. National Disaster Managing Authority managed to take

precautions for the continuing flood and for the effects it laid later. Different seminars and pre-monsoon conferences were held drawing in all stakeholders such as Emergency Relief Cell (ERC), Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), Inter Service Public Relations (ISPR), Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), International Organizations (IOs), Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF), International Financial Institutions (IFI), United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCF), Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations (FAO), World Food Program (WFP), Donors, Federal Ministers Provinces, armed forces and the media. The objective was to devise effective measures to avoid further consequences of the flood and the necessary precautions that are to be taken in the future to cover the fundamental needs, for instance tents, medicines, food, blankets, etc.

The promptness of the reaction has varied worldwide because it has been extremely difficult to control this level of disaster, also due to eventual nature of the flood that has spread havoc with the passage of time. Crisis communication work has not been very effective during this crucial time for the Pakistanis. The US government acted as one of the major communicators in flood relief activities. A study was published by a newspaper, The Christian Science Monitor, on 22 September 2010, by Howard LaFranchi, Washington, which showed that the attitude of Pakistanis towards the West has drawn optimistic reactions. It showed that Pakistanis gratefully acknowledged the US Disaster aid. This study drew attention among the people of Pakistan. As studies serve as a good medium of communication, the Pakistani media also highlighted this change of image in the nation’s view as news channels in Pakistan did surveys on roads and streets asking people about the role of the USA in this difficult time of Pakistan.

And the public did appreciate the US for providing immediate aid to the homeless victims.

As earlier the views of Pakistanis about the West were not that positive in particular for Americans. But in this severe time of crisis the image of Americans has improved in a healthier way. Secretary-of-State Hillary Clinton, however, has promised American aid, telling the people of Pakistan: „We will be with you as rivers rise and fall; we will be with you as you re-plant your fields and repair your roads“. Angelina Jolie, Hollywood celebrity and UNHCR goodwill ambassador, visited flood victims of Pakistan on 7 September 2010, and donated \$100,000 to this cause. She went to see Nowshera town in Khyber-Pakhtunwa province and met Afghan refugees.

Crisis communication could not work that effectively in this disastrous time. Women Media Center, a non profit organization in Pakistan that works for gender equality and women empowerment, particularly in the media, visited flooded areas and met the victims. Meena of Kacha area of Indus River narrated “water entered our houses while we were asleep at night; we ran for shelter leaving our entire world behind. My son is still there. He could not manage to join us. He is taking care of the drowned houses. We are destroyed and sleep under the open sky. We have nothing to eat and wear, we are treated like animals“. Subhai Chandio from Shahdakot district Janshoro and Bhanna Bhai from Sekhat area district of Jamshoro told “We have saved our lives only, we have lost all we had, everything has been washed away by the speedy water, and we have nothing left to feed our little children. God knows that we have nothing to eat or wear. Our agricultural land has been destroyed completely. All crops have been damaged. We left houses suddenly. Now we don't know where our relatives are. We are running

behind vehicles which are carrying relief goods. But we hardly can get anything. The relief workers are giving us food in packets“.

In Pakistan nowadays the very influential media, too played a significant role in providing the relief to the victims. Pakistani media have been active in covering this mishap in the country and have also set up strategies and plans to help relieve the victims. Media channels as Express News, KTN, Geo TV, Aaj Tv, Dawn News along with newspapers initiated campaigns to raise funds by inviting in celebrities on live shows from the country who also contributed in donating funds for the poor victims and appealed the audiences to help in raising the donations. The Express Helpline Trust has been established by the Express Media Group of Pakistan to provide aid for the millions of homeless in southern Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh and Balochistan. This helped to an extent in collecting funds for the sufferers, as media approaches the masses.

Along with the Pakistani media, the international media too played a vital role in putting efforts to help relief the victims who are in need of immense aid. According to The Dawn Media Group, Sunday 29 August 2010, Abu Dhabi, the Red Crescent Authority (RCA) launched a nationwide campaign called ‘YOUR HELP’ to raise funds for the victims of the flood in Pakistan. It raised more than 75 million dirhams (20.4 million dollars) over its first four days. Live TV fundraising campaign was telecasted on Emirati Television and radio channels such as Al-Imarat, Noor Dubai, Sharjah2, Ajman, Dunia al-Fujairah, Ras Al Khaimah and Al Waha. The donations were collected through branches of the RCS, shopping centers and also by text messages registered by the call centers. A report was published in The Nation, Islamabad, 21 September



THATTA DISTRICT:
The railway tracks of Aamri Station is submerged and not recommended to be used. (WMC)



THATTA DISTRICT:
*Entire agricultural
 land and town
 got submerged
 after it was hit by
 the recent floods.
 (WMC)*

2010 that UK media practitioner and human rights activist Karen Brown visited flood affected areas in Pakistan from September 20 to 27 where she met the affected families and interacted with the relief workers. Telenor Pakistan, one of the most recognized and trusted telecommunication services in Pakistan has pledged Rs. 100 million in funding towards relief and rehabilitation of flood victims. These funds will be used in immediate relief efforts and in rehabilitation programs by Pakistan Red Crescent Society. All in all the response by now is not sufficient enough as donor fatigue does exist, where as compared to the Asian tsunami that has hit in 2004 the responses and aid were far greater than the ones in the case of the floods in Pakistan.

Pakistan lacks a strong economy and a stable government. Pakistan's President visit to Europe in this crucial time has sparked severe criticism by the press and the politicians followed by aggression, frustration and violence among the flood victims. A blog of Le Matinal by Rafic Soormally last updated on 9th August 2010, said that Pakistani politicians have ignored their own people themselves by deciding to leave Pakistan for a word of honor to visit Europe, when thousands of people were dying as a result of the floods. An article under "Pakistani President Zardari's Trip to Europe during Flood crisis fuels contempt" was published in The Washington Post on 7 August 2010, by Griff Witte, which very realistically covers the fact of aggression in the nation. As part of his country was dying under water after the worst flooding, Zardari visited Europe, ignoring the terrible condition of his state. He was enjoying a luxurious trip to France and a dinner on the English countryside with British Prime Minister David Cameron, while riots broke out at the interior of Pakistan.

An article was published in Al Jazeera on 7 August 2010 narrating that a shoe was reportedly thrown at Asif Ali Zardari when he was delivering his speech in Birmingham addressing supporters of Pakistan Peoples' Party, 250 people rallied outside to show their offence and protest on his visit to Europe, while the nation was suffering through catastrophe. Few protestors held placards saying „1,000s dying, president is holidaying". Perhaps The President attempted damage control after his visit to Europe during disaster by visiting the flooded areas and surveyed southern Punjab on a helicopter with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon. Lack of trust and reliability in Pakistan's civilian government along with poor handling of the crisis by Pakistani government has made the international communities refrain from extending adequate support and aid in this most crucial time. An emergency response plan appealing for 460 million dollar has been issued by the UN.

According to a document of Financial Tracking Service (FTS), last updated on 11 October 2010, of the total humanitarian funding per donor, the United States has been the major donor compared to all the other donors. The funding of USA is approx about 26.3% of the grand total followed by the private organizations and individuals who have contributed about 18.6% of the total amount. United Kingdom and European Commission has made up to 6%, but the grants were far less than the needs. Along with these contributions and commitments there is also a figure for uncommitted pledges, that the balance of these pledges is not yet committed.

One of the primary hurdles due to which reaching the victims became complicated, was that links as roads, bridge and railway tracks had been destroyed completely due to which access to the affected areas was impossible



THATTA DISTRICT:
*The railway tracks
of Aamri Station
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(WMC)

by vehicle or foot. As the disaster has hit the mountainous regions more in particular, effective telecommunication could not be carried out properly either, as their coverage was not attainable. For this very reason getting through the current situation was not possible.

Few cities have been entirely submerged under water with large populations. The power supply system collapsed. No proper medication is available for the increasing water borne diseases. Unhygienic foods are spreading germs and people are falling severely sick. This could affect a high number of victims if they are not provided with timely medical treatment.

Whereas, Gul Afridi, The Media and Advocacy Officer of the WHO Pakistan told that "When we were faced with the sudden catastrophe, the first thing WHO did before sending out any man power to the field from the Head office was to utilize already present Polio surveillance officers to report any disease outbreaks or point out areas requiring health interventions. And after a week or so the communication officers from abroad as well as locals along with disease experts, early warning systems were sent to conduct reporting from the affected districts". Human stories by the communication staff of WHO working in Pakistan can be visited on website www.whopak.org.

There were 514 damaged health facilities in the affected areas. The WHO and its health partners are operating 460 mobile health clinics in those areas. Most important for the WHO was to reach as many affected people as possible who require urgent medical treatment. So far they have provided medical supplies to more than five million people in the flooded districts of Pakistan.

Interviewing Nazir Laghari, editor of Awam and member of the editorial committee of Geo Tv, Pakistan, told that the disaster caused the greatest loss to the agriculture

belt of Pakistan as the two major cash crops, rice and cotton which contribute up to 60% of the main crunch of foreign exchange of Pakistan, have been severely damaged. The poor victims have now actually nothing to loose.

One of the most prominent communicators, The United Nation Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) suggested the entire humanitarian staff to remain alerted for security risks and aid related crimes. The revised "Pakistan Floods Emergency Response Plan," launched by the United Nations Secretary-General in New York on 17 September 2010 has carried out requests of a total of US\$ 2,006,525,183. With this exercise the response plan aims at giving ease and relaxation to the victims through 483 projects executed by 178 actors. We see that various donors world-wide have contributed to counter this misfortune. Besides, the only reason for carrying out efforts for fundraising was to encourage the international relations as global citizens to donate generously. But the response of the victims has varied.

Some believed that they have been blessed with the requirements and were quite contented for the relief efforts while others were reported to be very discouraged and disheartened for not being attended. Poor victims at some level seem to have a better image of the West though for their efforts to help them. Contrary to this they have been quite frustrated with their own government.

Several recommendations have been tossed around all over the world for coping up with this disaster. All the funding agencies and donors must now throw a light on certain key issues on how to address the ruinous effects of the flood. Measures should be taken on notes as how to treat the increasing water borne diseases, how to rebuild a strong infrastructure blessing the homeless

victims with a shelter to cover their heads. Along with the health facilities hygiene issues should also be brought under concern as they are among the most severe causes for affecting lives of the suffering people.

Pakistan suffered with cataclysm and a great misfortune of the earthquake in 2005. Unluckily by now, it could not successfully cope up completely with this loss that another immense calamity in the shape of the floods hit it suddenly. Pakistan fails to provide the adequate facility of education to the people. The majority of the youth, the most energetic and determined pillar of the country's economy, is not blessed with quality education. The earthquake had already taken its toll with loss of land, crops and valuable lives. This time the flood crisis too swept away many cities, leaving the children hopeless with a dark invisible future. One can see it in their eyes how they are longing for their lives to be revived again. Many schools have been entirely flooded away and in the remaining institutions, camps have been built by different organizations, and education has been suspended. National Disaster Managing Authority should develop methods for creating awareness as to how to control such disasters in future. Precautions and measures are needed to be planned and programs as well as trainings are to be imparted to the people to educate them about the consequences that such disasters can cause. Had USA not granted its helicopters for providing immediate aid to the affected ones, many more would have lost their lives too, as communication was not an easy task in the affected districts.

Various NGOs and human aid agencies worldwide have been trying to serve for the cause of providing aid to the homeless suffering victims. As per estimates, Pakistan's economy has suffered a massive blow due to the da-

mage to the infrastructure and the need for 43 billion U.S. dollars either in the form of aid, donations and loans and time for the rehabilitation process in order to recover completely from the effect of the devastating floods. As the death toll is expected to rise due to various reasons, for instance, inaccessibility of many remote towns and villages due to damage to infrastructure, spreading of water-borne diseases like gastroenteritis, diarrhea and cholera due to lack of clean drinking water and unhygienic sanitary conditions, the government is required to take immediate drastic measures to provide medical treatment and supply of medicines, clean drinking water, food, tents, clothes, blankets etc.

Prompt and effective response need to be shown to the flood victims on national and international levels. Growing up aggression and offence against these affectees are liable to generate severe negative impact on the country's image. This may cause the entire social and political structure of Pakistan to collapse ultimately leading to severe economic crisis in the country or may spark off rebellion against the state. Crisis communication needs to be implemented effectively in order to be up to the expectations of the affected people. International organizations, communities, government and the media on both national and international levels need to come up with more resources to identify and address the issues pertaining to this natural disaster. On 17 August, 2010, UNICEF's Regional Director for South Asia, Mr. Daniel Toole visited Pakistan's Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province to survey the destruction caused by the flood. "UNICEF needs the support of others; as per the estimates, 20 million people have been affected. That's a scale the organization has not dealt with in a very long time. We need massive resources to be able to respond, to provide



SINDH: Innocent young girls with no hopes worried about their future and education. (WMC)

health care and nutrition”, said Mr. Toole during his visit. He said „The organization has released US \$7 million from its own internal funds to provide clean water to the flood victims, but it’s not enough; more funds are urgently needed”. UNICEF has appealed for a grant of US \$47 million immediately to meet the urgent needs over

the next three months. But unfortunately, the organization has only received a fraction of this amount so far. This crisis needs to have serious attention from all over the world primarily more on an interest based on humanity instead of any agenda.

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Mr. Nazir Laghari, Editor of Daily Awam and Member of Editorial committee of Geo TV (largest evening newspaper and TV channel of Pakistan respectively)

Syed Umair Ali, Business Executive, Business Recorder, Aaj Tv, Pakistan.

Women Media Center, Pakistan

Gul Afridi, Media & Advocacy Officer WHO, Pakistan.

About the International Research Group on Crisis Communication

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About the IRGoCC Report

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