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Academic Institutions and Libraries of Pakistani Administered Kashmir: A Pre and Post Earthquake Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Recent disasters like the October 8, 2005 earthquake in Pakistan reminds us that no one is secured from a catastrophe and that it can happen to any of our institutions. Furthermore, a concrete disaster plan may avoid small disasters to turn into a major devastation.

So those who are reluctant to adopt disaster prevention plan and those who do not prefer to spend time, money and staff on the disaster management planning, I would simply say that the initial expenses are nothing as compared to the cost of response and recovery after a tragedy and that protecting our heritage and the memory is the only way, and our responsibility, to graciously prepare the future of our generations.

The October 8 earthquake of 7.6-magnitude jolted the northern Pakistan especially the State of Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The death toll had risen to 86000. The government, public and private infrastructures of the State of Azad Jammu and Kashmir collapsed. The earthquake destroyed most of the State buildings and academic institutions. The capital Muzaffarabad, the valleys of Neelum and Jehlum, district Bagh and the Balkot region in the North West Frontier Province were among the most destroyed areas of the Kashmir. The earthquake impact on healthcare and education was very severe.

According to the Mid-America Earthquake Center, "the biggest earthquakes in the region are yet-to-come." Theoretical studies indicate that the energy stored along the Himalayan arc suggests a high probability of several massive earthquakes of magnitude (greater than) 8.0 in the future.[1]

With the assistance from the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan and several other organizations our team was able to gain a first-hand experience of the impact of the earthquake, and lessons to be learned pertinent to consequence-based earthquake risk

management," explained MAE director Amr Elnashai. "In addition, we were able to explore and identify avenues of collaboration for long-term earthquake preparedness encompassing research, education, and design code development for Pakistan and other regions."

PRE AND POST SCENARIO OF EDUCATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN EARTHQUAKE ZONE

Damage Assessment – Rs. 19.9 billion (US$335 million). About 7,669 schools were affected, ranging from primary schools to institutions of higher education and including both public and private schools. Approximately 5,690 of the damaged schools are primary and middle schools. About half of the damaged school structures collapsed or are beyond repair and will need to be rebuilt. In addition to damages to educational institutions and offices, the education sector has also experienced severe human losses, including students, school teachers, and staff. According to preliminary estimates, about 18,095 students and 853 teachers and educational staff died across NWFP and AJK. The deaths of teachers represent not only losses to the teaching force, but also a loss of government investment in teacher capacity development through training. A substantial number of teachers, staff, and students may also suffer from emotional trauma and injuries, which could limit their capabilities.

Total losses to education sector:[2]

Sector Direct Damage (Rs. mill.)	Indirect Losses (Rs. mill.)	Reconstruction Costs* (Rs. mill.)	Reconstruction Costs* (US$ mill.)	Share of Total Reconstruction Costs (%)
19,920	4,133	28,057	472	13

Recovery Needs – Rs. 28.1 billion (US$472 million). The most urgent requirement of the education system is to resume classes at all levels. This would entail the provision of temporary and semi-permanent alternative learning spaces, repair of partly damaged schools, provision of learning materials, training of teachers to replace those who have perished, and revival of education administrative structures. These short term measures are estimated to cost Rs. 1.2 billion. Over the medium to long term, destroyed schools will need to be rebuilt. This will involve the construction 16 new schools with seismic-resistant strengthening, classrooms, facilities, latrines and water supply, and the provision of learning materials, furniture, and equipment. Partly damaged schools will also need to be repaired, and continued teacher training will be required over the medium term. A substantial number of students in these areas may now have special learning needs that would additionally require new teaching approaches and school design modifications for improved accessibility of the disabled.

Schools:

The officials of the Education Department estimated that 6,700 schools were destroyed in Shangla, Batagram and Mansehra districts of NWFP and 1300 schools destroyed in AJK and killed, seriously injured or displaced some 2,000 teachers. The education sector was

particularly badly hit, 67 percent of schools and colleges in Pakistan's quake zone were destroyed or partially damaged, and 853 teachers and staff were killed. The quake struck at a time when classrooms were full, and some 18,000 pupils died in the catastrophe.

The vast majority of schools in the affected area are estimated to be damaged beyond repair. In the two most affected areas, NWFP and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (Pakistan Administered Kashmir), there were a total of 11,534 primary and secondary schools. UNICEF and other aid workers witnessed crushed schools where hundreds of children lie dead beneath the rubble, their families unable to get them out as heavy machinery could not access remote villages.[3]

"The school buildings are the hardware and they have to have the software to go with it and that means the teachers," U.S. Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker said while announcing plans to build 50 schools and train 30,000 teachers in Frontier province and Pakistani Kashmir.[4]

There are also psychological issues to consider too. Tens of thousands of children lost one or both parents in the quake. Many more were separated from loved ones. The estimated loss in amounts to the education sector is believed to Rs. 19,920 million.

Public Library:

The Khurshid National Library in Muzaffarabad was founded in 1988 as a public library administered by the Azad Kashmir Ministry of Education. The facility housed the world's largest collection of materials on Kashmir, including more than 3,500 books and more than 40,000 documents related to the history of Jammu and Kashmir and its freedom movement. This only public library in the area of Kashmir administered by Pakistan was completely destroyed in the earthquake of October 8. The Khurshid National Library in Muzaffarabad, near the epicenter of the quake, apparently fell into one of two huge crevasses that opened up suddenly within the city.[5]

University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Library:

The University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir is the only public sector university of the State of Azad Jammu and Kashmir established in 1980, which provides opportunities to local students for higher education and research.

The earthquake of October 8 severely damaged the University of Azad Jammu & Kashmir. More than two hundred students, eleven faculty members and staff died in this disaster[2]. University Main Campus at Muzaffarabad has been destroyed completely. Buildings damaged at new campus Muzaffarabad are administration block, residential blocks, central library, auditorium (under construction), girls hostel (under construction), student teacher center, Directorate of Students Affairs, cafeteria, mosque, and boys main hostel. While old campus Muzaffarabad collapsed completely, buildings destroyed at old campus include Department of CS&IT, Botany, Geology, Economics, Art & Design, Law, two girls' hostels, auditorium and stadium. The Central Library and Kashmir Information Resource Center (KIRC) housed in a single building. The library was damaged but not destroyed. Although the rest of the campus was devastated and scores

of students and teachers were killed there, luckily the library staff survived. Most of the books and equipment are safe, as long as the damaged structure does not fall apart due to continuous aftershocks.[6]

In 2005, the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad singed MOU with the AJK University to establish an American style small library (named as Lincoln Corner) equipped with audio-visual and electronic resources. Before, the earthquake U.S. Embassy staff just had finished to set-up all the resources in the Lincoln Corner to inaugurate the facility. Unfortunately, the earthquake damaged most of electronic equipment. However, fortunately, the Information Resource Center staff of U.S. Embassy had left the earthquake region just 12 hours before the earthquake happened.

The Chief Librarian of the University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir said, "Our library is a four-story building which is about 30 miles from the epicenter. We have had no structural damage, although there were cracks in the drywall and ceiling tiles fell. The biggest problem, of course, was having books fall off shelves. Due to the continuous aftershocks, we closed the building and left everything inside. The people, who somehow escaped to save their lives, migrated to capital city Islamabad and other parts of Pakistan. Due to abandoning the library in this condition, as it happens during the disasters, the costly equipment which included computes, fax machine, photocopiers, multimedia and other resources were stolen. After the earthquake the total infrastructure of the university was damaged, the staff and their families had migrated, therefore, the University administration immediately arranged to set-up a camp office in Islamabad to save the valuable academic year of the students. In January 2007, the university officially moved all the classes from Islamabad to the old university building in Muzaffarabad and the new campus which has been built with the generous assistance from the Turkish government. So after one-and-half year, the University is still operating the classes in Islamabad and has not fully shifted the facilities from Islamabad to Muzaffarabad. Now, when we are cleaning the library building, approximately 30,000-40,000 books were on the floor."

The established Lincoln Corner at the University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir is one of the vital steps for the enhancement of libraries in the post earthquake Kashmir. This Corner was inaugurated on April 26, 2007 at the Central Library of the University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir in Muzaffarabad. Hopefully, this resource center will play an important role in the promotion of libraries and information literacy for the people of Muzaffarabad who suffered a great loss of lives and institutions during the earthquake of October 2005.

Generally speaking, Lincoln Corner (elsewhere American Corner) is a state of the art resource center or a mini library that comprises of print, electronic and multimedia resources and products. The combination of latest technology, capable librarians and current trends works in a Lincoln Corner for efficient information services and effective programming in a community

School and College Libraries:
Most of the school and college libraries have been destroyed along with their respective institutions in the earthquake. Thousands of students and teachers have lost their lives. The *Independent Online* reported[3] "…the quake destroyed at least 96% of the 1500 schools and colleges in Muzaffarabad, and more than 10000 across the quake zone. Thousands of pupils were killed." According to a Pakistan's national daily[4], "…11 students had reached the Bagh Girls Degree College library on October 8 by the tragic moment of the earthquake. For the next four days they lay buried under the debris of the fallen roof, crying for help." But this isn't a story of single college and its library. Thousands of college libraries faced even more destruction.[7]

BUILDING CODES:
A large number of government buildings constructed by the contractors in AJK and Balakot area, collapsed in the first jerk of the quake. The government school in Chinari, AJK, collapsed killing 200 students, as if the building was constructed by sand.

Because of collapsed schools like these, children suffered the most from the October quake. The United Nations Children's Fund estimates that children account for about half the 80,000 killed in the quake.[8] Two years after the earthquake, neither the federal nor the state government has undertaken any investigation into the school collapses.

This is the overall impression of the people in the earthquake devastated areas that between 30 and 60 percent of funds for government buildings, including schools, are spoiled by corrupt officials. Contractors habitual of such kickbacks spend less on quality materials resulting in poorly constructed buildings. Therefore, systemic corruption in government construction projects would be directly responsible for the devastating losses among northern Pakistan's next generation.

Authorities have still to ensure hazard-resistant construction standards for all institutions of the areas that are vulnerable to earthquake and other natural hazards, especially in remaining institutions of the affected buildings to be unsound. Even if the Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority (ERRA) succeeds in devising some building codes and standards for the government and public buildings, there is no authority that will make sure the implementation of those standards.

INTERNATIONAL AID:
UNICEF has helped re-establish more than 4,000 government primary schools that were badly damaged by the Pakistan earthquake to make sure that affected children – especially girls have opportunities to continue their education and reclaim their childhood.

Earthquake-related Pledges and Commitments[9]

Pledged [Earthquake] (USD)	Committed (USD)	
	Grant	Loan
6,515,616,279	2,570,194,376	2,528,838,095

Report generated from Development Assistance Database (DAD) Pakistan (http://www.dadpak.org) on May 11 2007 12:09AM

Disbursements on Education Sector[10]

Committed (USD)			Disbursed (USD)		
Total	Grant	Loan	Total	Grant	Loan
153,595,744	133,594,675	20,001,069	71,502,719	68,295,960	3,206,759

Report generated from Development Assistance Database (DAD) (http://www.dadpak.org) Pakistan on May 11 2007 12:22AM

These grants mainly focus on the construction of schools, but, there has been given less stress on the construction of purpose built libraries and information centers.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS:

Given the potentially huge costs associated with a severe earthquake, an ongoing issue for Government of Pakistan is whether the international donations and NGO development programs aimed at reducing vulnerability to earthquakes are an appropriate response to the earthquake hazard.

Pakistan needs to establish the bodies that are responsible for the risk management, monitoring, notification and the research on the earthquake hazard. For example in the United States only, under the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP), the federal government supports efforts to assess and monitor earthquake hazards and risk in the United States. Four federal agencies, responsible for long-term earthquake risk reduction, coordinate their activities under NEHRP: the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the National Science Foundation (NSF), FEMA, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).[11]

On the same lines as in the United States, Pakistan right few months after the earthquake established ERRA (Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority) that aims to plan, coordinate, monitor and regulate reconstruction and rehabilitation activities in earthquake affected areas.

Being at the hotbed to earthquakes, ERRA taken the following steps towards the risk management, monitoring, notification and the research on the earthquake hazard.[12]

1. Convene regular meetings of an organization-wide emergency management team which has the authority to make necessary decisions pertaining both to emergency preparedness and emergency response.

2. Develop a communications network through the police alarm center that provides efficient and timely communication of emergency occurrences to necessary personnel.

3. Establish a 24-hours “on call” duty officer system for staff in the preservation program.

4. Orient all staff of the educational institutions and the libraries to emergency procedures. Collect such procedures in a booklet and distribute to all staff.

5. Procure and store in all facilities the supplies needed for immediate response to emergencies.

6. Conduct emergency risk assessments and prepare emergency preparedness floor plans for all collections areas.

7. Train and drill Preservation, curatorial and collections management staff in procedures for the safe handling of damaged collections materials.

8. Prepare a comprehensive emergency/disaster preparedness, response and recovery plan for the library that defines all policies, regulations, and procedures to be followed in the vent of an emergency of disaster.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Building codes and disaster management systems should be reviewed, to prepare for any future disasters. Based on observations, recommend better construction practices and develop and implement building codes (environment-friendly, energy and timber saving). Basic training of contractors and builders on safety measures for construction should also be considered as part of the reconstruction process.

2. In addition to updating building codes to mitigate the effects of future earthquakes, the Government of Pakistan should incorporate sensors and earthquake recording instrumentation into large building projects especially the educational institutions.

3. Restoration of cultural heritage sites: These cultural heritage sites which have been destroyed are national assets and should be restored. Similarly some historical religious sites, such as tombs and mosques, have suffered damage and need to be restored.

4. The government authorities in the earthquake devastated region should consider having an insurance plan for the buildings of libraries and educational institutions.

The donors should also make sure that specific amount of funds is allocated towards the building of libraries and information centers.

5. Systematic training for disaster management should be improved in Pakistan. Professional education and civil servant training could greatly improve risk management in the country. Primary and secondary school textbooks should also raise awareness of risks as part of the education curriculum.

6. A major public awareness campaign on risks, preparedness, and vulnerability reduction should be implemented as soon as possible. Information dissemination programs would greatly improve people's understanding of existing natural risks and how to mitigate their impacts. The libraries can play a vital role to create awareness about the disaster management in case of earthquake.

7. Emergency/disaster preparedness: Emergency preparedness is a very important part of preservation program management. No institution is immune from disaster. To be successful, it must be given the highest priority and it must have unwavering support and commitment at all levels of library management.

8. The new libraries should be built on modern and international standards. My opinion is that it would be better to establish several small and medium libraries rather a few large libraries in Kashmir. As the population in Kashmir is scattered at mountains and valleys, therefore, a large number of small libraries and resource centers, with minimum investment and staff at each resource center, are more feasible to serve public all across Kashmir.

9. The focus now should be to enhance electronic resources and collection in libraries rather the print sources. The cost of damage of print collection is much higher than the electronic resources. Secondly, the materials in digital form are more secure and have the durable life. The resources that are resided at remote server or website are more accessible and secure.

10. The training for the librarians and teachers in Kashmir is vital for the exposure to modern trends and technologies. A comprehensive program for their capacity building should be chalked out at national level.

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Author's short biography:

Mqsood Shaheen has ten years of experience conducting reference and research on variety of topics for government officials, Academia, journalists, researchers and non-governmental organizations. Presently, he is working as "Reference and Research Specialist" in the Information Resource Centre of the U.S. Embassy, Islamabad. He is a Salzburg Seminar fellow and has professional memberships of Pakistan Library Association and Special Library Association (SLA). He is also the "newsletter editor" for of Asian Chapter of Special Libraries Association. He is also volunteer editor from Pakistan for the E-LIS online repository and coordinates locally to submit Pakistani LIS literature to the website.