



DISASTER MANAGEMENT BY THE LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT: A STUDY AMONG THE KERALA FLOOD 2018 AFFECTED PEOPLE

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Abstract: The local self-government has a significant role in the process of disaster management and preparedness. This paper reports selected results from a survey of Kerala Panchayat Raj institutions conducted in November 2022 that investigated their adoption of district-level disaster management policies and guidelines. An offline questionnaire was distributed to Alappuzha local self-governments, which were chosen through focus groups held in the region's inland administrative centres of Chennithala Thrippunthura Grama Panchayat. This paper attempts to identify and analyse local self-government strategies, disaster management policies and guidelines, and the affected people who respond to local self-government policies.

Keywords: Panchayat Raj institution (PRIs), Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation

Introduction

“Natural hazards continuously occur and shape the environment on which our societies depend, but there is much appropriate and scientific knowledge that public can use to prevent human disasters resulting from them.”-*International Decade for natural disaster reduction (UN, 2005)*

In Kerala state Disaster management policy point out that Kerala state is vulnerable to multitude of disasters and categorized as multi-hazard prone state. Kerala divided into the level of prone state 14.5% of the state flood prone, 14.4% is land slide, and 55.5% Coastline prone to Coastal Hazards and other is man-

made kind of disasters. The state falls in zone III in the national seismic zonation map. The constitutional amendment act of 73rd and 74th is provided to give the panchayat to plan for socio-economic development and administrative social Justice. We already discuss that Kerala is Multi-hazards state. Kerala is highly density of Population, Urban Character, long coastline, Potential impact of climate change, exotic infections disease and terrorism related hazards. With this view, the Kerala state Disaster management authority has formulated the “Kerala State Disaster Management Policy (KSDMP).” The Disaster management policy calls for mechanism for coherence and alignment policies of the Government and Future Legislation¹. The vision of KSDMP is a “State community and better quality of the in the state through holistic and comprehensive state of the art disaster management services”².

The 73rd and the 74th constitutional Amendment Acts provided opportunity for Panchayats to plan for socio economic development and administer social justice³. And, the local governments have started assuming the center stage in bringing effective, efficient, people-centric and responsive system in a decentralized mode of governance. This has been possible only with the positive attitude, active involvement and voluntary support extended by the community in the development process, and through networking of different stakeholder in the local governance⁴.

Materials and Method

Chennithala Thripperunthura Grama Panchayat is a village panchayat with an area of 22.6 square kilometres in Mavelikara taluk of Alappuzha district, Kerala. This Grama Panchayat, which came into existence in 1951, has 17 wards. This Panchayat has a total population of 27,569 people. This village panchayat was selected purposefully for the study because this panchayat was severely affected by the 2018 flood. This study was conducted on 20 ward members before and after the flood, and 60 villagers were selected randomly as respondents.

Result and Discussion

Following a disaster, relief and rescue operations include the distribution of immediate survival needs to the affected people. This is very important immediate action in the primary stage of relief and rescue. The Oxford English Dictionary defines relief (help) as "food, money, medicine, etc. that is given to help people in places where there has been a war or natural disaster." So the relief work is an immediate action

needed to get back to the social status quo. Therefore, this paper studies and analyses the relief and rescue action plan of the Chennithala grama panchayat.

Table 1 : Affected local people respond towards relief activity taken by the panchayat(n=60)

Sl.no	Measure	Opinion of the respondents				Rank Position
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
1	Arrange temporary shelter/ relief campus after initial warning/ store food & water for people live stock	14	20	13	13	VII
2	Evacuation of People & Live stock should start immediately	15	22	11	12	VI
3	Supervise rescue & relief activities with block-level officer	25	15	10	10	V
4	District/ Block medical relief team asked to take position at strategic points and coordinate with village volunteers/task force	10	13	23	14	IX
5	Providing relief materials both for people and domestic animals	30	16	8	6	II
6	Assessing loss of life, livestock & damage to Property etc.	29	17	7	7	III
7	Arrange supply of food & other items to relief camps in adequate quantities	32	18	7	3	I
8	Immediate shifting to rehabilitation place	28	12	11	9	IV
9	Proper health and sanitation care at rehabilitation	12	14	6	28	VIII

According to the data in the table above, respondents had mixed feelings about the Panchayat's relief and rescue services. The rank position reveals that the affected people received assistance from the panchayat, particularly in arranging adequate supplies of food and other items to relief camps, followed by providing relief materials both for people and domestic animals and assessing loss of life, livestock damage, and damage to farming, property, and so on. Supervise rescue and relief activities with a block-level officer, Evacuation of people and livestock should start immediately. After an initial warning, arrange for temporary shelter or relief on campus; stock up on food and water for people. The district/block medical relief team was asked to

take position at strategic points and coordinate with village volunteers/task forces. They received IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, and IX ranks, respectively.

Table 2: The Panchayat officials opinion towards relief activities (n=20)

Sl.no	Measure	Opinion of the panchayat officials				Rank position
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
1	Establish temporary shelter/ relief campus after Tsunami/ store food & water for people live stock	10	6	2	2	VII
2	Evacuation of People & Live stock should start immediately	14	5	1	0	III
3	Supervise resue & relief activities with block-level officer	13	5	0	0	IV
4	District/ Block medical relief team asked to take position at strategic points and coordinate with village volunteers/task	9	5	3	3	VIII
5	Providing relief materials both for people and domestic animals	16	4	00	00	I
6	Assessing loss of life, livestock & damage to Property etc.	15	5	00	00	II
7	Arrange supply of food & other items to relief camps in adequate quantities	11	6	2	1	VI
8	Immediate shifting to rehabilitation place	12	4	2	2	V
9	Proper health and sanitation care at rehabilitation	8	4	4	4	IX

The panchayat officials' opinions on relief and rescue activity are measured in Table 2. They strongly agreed that providing relief materials for both people and domestic animals should be followed by assessing loss of life, livestock, and property damage, and that evacuation of people and livestock should begin immediately. The rank position showed that panchayat officials were supporting and supervising the distribution of relief materials and the shifting of cattle and important documents to a safer place.

Table 3: Comparative Analysis of Opinion on relief activities

Sl.no	Item	Differ rank position	
		Affected people	Panchayat official
1	Establish temporary shelter/ relief campus after initial warning/ store & water for people live stock.	VII	VII
2	Evacuation of People & Live stock should start immediately.	VI	III
3	Supervise rescue & relief activities with block-level officer	V	IV
4	District/ Block medical relief team asked to take position at strategic points and coordinate with village volunteers/task	IX	VIII
5	Providing relief materials both for people and domestic animals	II	I
6	Assessing loss of life, livestock & damage to Property etc.	III	II
7	Arrange supply of food & other items to relief camps in adequate quantities	I	VI
8	Immediate shifting to rehabilitation place	IV	V
9	Proper health and sanitation care at rehabilitation center	VIII	IX

As shown in Table 3, the main point of disagreement between affected people and panchayat officials is that they both agree to establish a temporary shelter or relief campus following an initial warning and to store and provide water for the people. The district/block medical relief team was asked to take strategic positions and coordinate with village volunteers/tasks, but they only received rank VIII from Panchayat officials. Other major differences are proper health and sanitation care at the rehabilitation centre, supervision of rescue and relief activities with a block-level officer, and immediate shifting to the rehabilitation centre. This finding therefore suggests that the panchayat officials have to develop the best disaster plan to fulfil the suggested facilities and organise the disaster-affected communities accordingly to overcome the ill effects of disaster.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as "the action of restoring someone to health or a normal life through training and therapy." The World Health Organization also defined "a set of interventions designed to optimise functioning and reduce disability in individuals with health conditions in their interaction with their environment." In a disaster management situation, rehabilitation means the restoration of public health services, education, drinking water, environmental management, and law and order problems. Because houses are often built to meet individual needs, an immediate survey is required to assess loss and identify victims for compensation. So the panchayat raj institution has the programme and the house is being rebuilt.

Table: 4 Affected people respond towards Rehabilitation Support Provided by the Panchayat Raj Institution (n=60)

Sl.no	Measure	Affected People Respond				Rank position
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
1.	Prompt survey to assess loss	33	12	8	7	II
2.	Identifying victims for compensation	35	10	6	9	I
3.	Formulate reconstruction Plan for Houses, community buildings, roads, etc.	25	19	10	6	VI
4.	Conduct Grama Panchayat level task force/volunteers	22	13	15	11	VIII
5.	Prompt repairing of village roads and village institution	24	11	10	15	VII
6.	Immediate reconstruction of water supply and Electricity	20	15	15	10	IX
7.	BPL card persons special assistance	10	12	16	24	X
8.	Arrangement for emergency communication	32	15	5	8	III
9.	Encourage local people to insure assets/livestock	28	12	10	10	IV
10.	Assist in Supervising and monitoring reconstruction and development projects.	27	10	10	13	V

According to Table 4, the majority of respondents strongly agreed that panchayat officials' identification of victims for compensation ranked first, followed by a prompt survey to assess loss and emergency communication arrangements, both of which received a II and III rank position.

Table-5: The Panchayat officials opinion towards Rehabilitation support (n=20)

Sl. no	Measures	Panchayat official respond				Rank position
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	
1	Prompt survey to assess loss	17	3	00	00	I
2	Identifying victims for compensation	16	4	00	00	II
3	Formulate reconstruction Plan for Houses, community buildings, roads, etc.	14	4	2	2	III
4	Conduct Grama Panchayat level task force/volunteers	8	3	5	4	VIII
5	Prompt repairing of village roads and village institution	10	5	5	00	VII
6	Immediate reconstruction of water supply and Electricity	5	3	3	9	IX
7	BPL card persons special assistance	4	2	4	10	X
8	Arrangement for emergency communication	13	7	00	00	V
9	Encourage local people to insure assets/livestock	12	5	3	1	IV
10	Assist in Supervising and monitoring reconstruction and development projects.	11	6	00	3	VI

The panchayat official majority agreed to conduct a quick survey to assess loss and identify victims for community and individual compensation. And they also agreed on the reconstruction plan for houses, community buildings, roads, etc.

Table 6: Comparative analysis of the opinion on rehabilitation support

Sl.no	Measure	Differ rank position	
		Affected people	Panchayat officials
1	Prompt survey to assess loss	II	I
2	Identifying victims for compensation	I	II
3	Formulate reconstruction Plan for Houses, community buildings, roads, etc.	VI	III
4	Conduct Grama Panchayat level task force/volunteers	VIII	VIII
5	Prompt repairing of village roads and village institution	VII	VII
6	Immediate reconstruction of water supply and Electricity	IX	IX
7	BPL card persons special assistance	X	X
8	Arrangement for emergency communication.	III	V
9	Encourage local people to insure assets/livestock.	IV	IV
10	Assist in Supervising and monitoring reconstruction and development projects.	V	VI

According to table 6, the following opinions were shared by affected people and officials: conduct grama panchayat level task forces or volunteers to prompt the repair of village roads and village institutions; immediate reconstruction of water supply and electricity; special assistance for BPL card holders; and encourage local people to insure assets or livestock. Other respondents had minor differences of opinion. According to these studies, the basic needs of a community or individual are not being met adequately.

CONCLUSION

Disaster management plans and policies are critical components of the country's policy framework because natural disasters disproportionately affect the poor and underprivileged. The relief and rehabilitation efforts in Kerala following the 2018 floods were not the result of much active participation by the local government. The local self-government has no authority over the disaster management plan; it is controlled by the district collector. The panchayat raj institution has a very important place in the social community policy framework because natural disasters disproportionately affect the poor and underprivileged. The relief and rehabilitation efforts in Kerala following the 2018 floods were not the result of much active participation by the local government. The local self-government has no authority over the disaster management plan; it is controlled by the district collector. When it comes to pre-and post-disaster initiatives, Local self-government institution

play a pivotal role as a driving force behind providing the best possible outcomes for the community. But the local self-government was failed to satisfy affected local people.

¹ *Disaster management policy*, 2010, Department of Revenue & Disaster management, Thiruvananthapuram.

² *ibid.*

³ Kumar k, *Disaster Management through Panchayati raj*, 2010, Mohit publication, New Delhi.

⁴ Gireesan K, *Role of local Government in disaster management*, 2011, Research gate.

