

How Does Good Governance Contribute to Disaster Crisis Management? The Case of the 6 February 2023 Kahramanmaraş Earthquakes

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Abstract

The 2023 Kahramanmaraş earthquakes were recorded as the most destructive earthquakes in the history of the Republic of Turkey. This level 4 disaster required the cooperation of thousands of people and many different organizations. This paper discusses the contributions of good governance examples to the success of disaster crisis management in the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes in terms of the author's experiences and observations in the disaster area. Due to space limitations, one example is given in the abstract and other examples in the full text. The example will be on the good governance in the temporary shelter area created due to the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes. In the tent city, public-private-civil cooperation was carried out in different fields such as disaster shelter, health, security, education, psychosocial support. In some cases, different public institutions, the private sector and non-governmental organizations have supported the resolution of crises by working on issues that are not included in the TAMP and their own internal regulations. In these processes, the aim has been to successfully work together to contribute to disaster management, putting aside their own/institutional interests. For example, while the fire protection of tents used as temporary shelters is carried out by fire brigades, which are units of local governments, instead of fire brigades working intensively in the rubble, this task was carried out by the Turkish Armed Forces, non-governmental organizations working and trained in the field of disasters, and disaster victims in cooperation in the tent cities. As a result, a tent fire was extinguished within seconds and a second disaster was prevented through a governance approach. Therefore, as the example shows, good governance is a key approach for successful disaster management and prevention of secondary disasters.

Key words: Disaster crisis management, good governance, 6 February 2023 Kahramanmaraş earthquakes, public administration, stakeholders

1. Introduction

Disasters are not phenomena that can be dealt with by a single person, due to various reasons such as destruction and inadequate response capacity. To ensure successful disaster management, it is necessary to ensure public, private and civil participation in both disaster risk and crisis management. Successful disaster management requires a governance approach in which all stakeholders work for the common interest rather than for personal gain, and in which strong communication, effective and rapid information transfer, transparency, trust and proactive behavior are ensured. Governance is mainly based on strong communication, power sharing, working for a common purpose and doing business together [1,2]. By creating a pluralistic environment among the actors involved in disaster decision-making processes, the governance approach distributes the difficult decision-making processes in the crisis environment, which cannot be managed by a single

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person or center, among different actors. Although the governance approach is very important for disaster management, it is not sufficient on its own. Stakeholders should demonstrate good governance for fair and equitable distribution of resources in disasters, easy access to information for every citizen, ensuring participation, inclusiveness, transparency and accountability. Through good governance in disasters, problems that may arise later, obstacles that may be encountered in institutions, demands and expectations can be anticipated and resolved in advance and this approach will assume the role of facilitator in disaster management for stakeholders. In addition, by adopting good governance in disasters, there will be positive outcomes such as bringing stakeholders closer to each other and to citizens, effective disaster management, fair distribution of resources and increased trust towards stakeholders.

The 2023 Kahramanmaraş earthquakes were recorded as the most destructive earthquakes in the history of the Republic of Turkey [3–5]. These earthquakes caused many deaths, injuries and the collapse of many buildings [3,4,6]. Due to the collapsed buildings, many disaster victims had to continue their lives in temporary shelters [7]. This level 4 disaster required the cooperation of thousands of people and many different organizations. During the author's two-month experience at the earthquake site, he experienced and observed that many different disaster stakeholders contributed to the successful implementation of disaster crisis management within the framework of good governance. In this paper, the contributions of good governance examples to the success of disaster crisis management in the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes will be discussed in terms of the author's experiences and observations in the disaster area.

2. Materials and Method

This study is field research. In field research, observations are made of the development of events in the natural environment of phenomena and how people and societies react to these events. This study used direct and participant observation methods, which are commonly used in field research methods. In the direct observation method, the researcher does not intervene in the events and observations are made for the natural course of the event. In participant observation, on the other hand, the researcher not only observes but also participates in the events as a participant [8]. The aspect that distinguishes participant observation from direct observation is that the researcher is involved in the events and can determine the direction of the events. The author made observations in Kahramanmaraş, the two provinces most affected by the earthquake. He took part in humanitarian aid activities in temporary shelters and search and rescue operations in the rubble. In this process, he focused on the events related to good governance processes that he personally experienced and witnessed. The following examples of good governance will be provided based on a tent shelter (Figures 1a and 1b). This tent shelter is one of several temporary shelters established in the provincial center of Karamanmaraş.

3. Results

The first example of good governance processes will be on good governance in the temporary shelter area created due to the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes. The tent city given as an example in

the study is shown in Figure 1a and Figure 1b. It has been estimated that, on average, 5,500-6,000 disaster victims were accommodated in the tent city in the center of Kahramanmaraş each day, although there were variations to this figure.



Figure 1. (a) Temporary Shelter Area Part 1 (b) Temporary Shelter Area Part 2

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It will be about the success of the governance approach to meeting and sustaining the common needs of many citizens staying in temporary shelters, as well as their different needs arising from gender, age, disability, presence of chronic diseases, etc. During the author's experience in the Tent City, the need to work with many different disaster stakeholders, as included in the Türkiye National Disaster Response Plan (TAMP), became apparent. In the tent city, public-private-civil cooperation was carried out in different fields such as disaster shelter, health, security, education, psychosocial support. In some cases, different public institutions, the private sector and non-governmental organizations have supported the resolution of crises by working on issues that are not included in the TAMP and their own internal regulations. In these processes, the aim has been to successfully work together to contribute to disaster management, putting aside their own/institutional interests. For example, while the fire protection of tents used as temporary shelters is carried out by fire brigades, which are units of local governments, instead of fire brigades working intensively in the rubble, this task was carried out by the Turkish Armed Forces, non-governmental organizations working and trained in the field of disasters, and disaster victims in cooperation in the tent cities. As a result, a tent fire was extinguished within seconds and a second disaster was prevented through a governance approach (Figure 2a and Figure 2b).

Another exemplary instance of effective governance in the aftermath of the Kahramanmaraş earthquakes pertains to the provision made for disabled individuals, who constitute a particularly vulnerable demographic. Within the designated tent city, provisions have been made to accommodate individuals with orthopedic, hearing-speech, intellectual, visual, and other disabilities. Individuals with disabilities are also accommodated. This collaborative effort, initiated by academics from diverse fields, including the study's author, in conjunction with AFAD, the Ministry of Health, non-governmental organizations, volunteers, the Turkish Armed Forces, the

Beşiktaş Gymnastics Club (BJK), business leaders, and disaster victims, aimed to enhance the resilience of disabled individuals in the tent city following the disaster, addressing their specific requirements. The rationale behind this collaborative effort stems from the recognition that disabled individuals often face significant disadvantages in disaster situations and therefore require targeted support and empowerment [9–16]. This necessity is acknowledged by stakeholders involved in this field of work. The stakeholders have collaborated with these vulnerable disabled groups. Following the allocation of tasks to each stakeholder, the identification of individuals and their families was initiated. The special needs of these individuals, which included items such as wheelchairs, air mattresses, hearing aids, canned beds, and special hygiene materials, were then identified. The stakeholders then cooperated to provide these necessities (Figure 3a and Figure 3b). Support was received from various sources, including businesspeople, sports clubs (BJK), non-governmental organizations, and volunteers, for the procurement of special needs, which were subsequently provided in a timely manner. This collaborative effort has enhanced the disaster coping capacities and resilience of disabled individuals. The implementation of effective governance measures has led to a reversal of the situation for these vulnerable individuals and their families, thereby contributing to the development of a more resilient society.

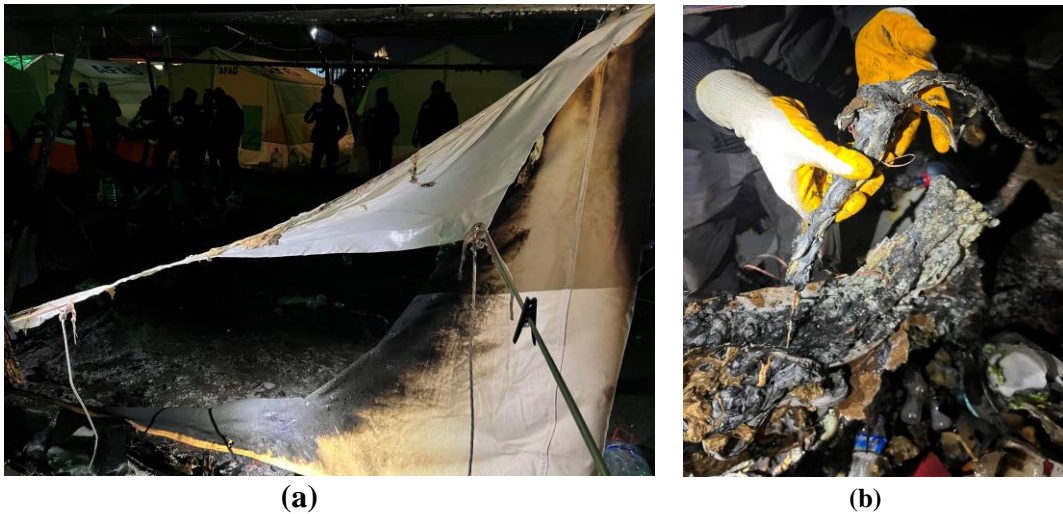


Figure 2. (a)The burning tent (b) The cause of the fire

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As the case studies show, good governance is a key approach to successful disaster management and the prevention of secondary disasters. It also contributes significantly to empowering disadvantaged groups and building a resilient society.

4. Discussion

To ensure a successful management in disasters, public, private and civil participation should be ensured. For disaster management to be successful, there is a need for a governance philosophy in



Figure 3. (a) Providing an air mattress to a disabled person (b) Providing a disabled person's special needs
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which all stakeholders work for the common interest rather than personal interest and strong communication, effective and fast information transfer, transparency and trust are ensured, and proactive behaviour is exhibited. Governance is essentially based on strong communication, power distribution, working for a common purpose and doing business together. The pluralistic environment provided among the actors in the decision-making processes in disasters shares the difficult decision-making processes in the crisis environment, which cannot be managed by a single person or centre, among various actors thanks to the governance philosophy. Although governance philosophy is very important for disaster management, it is not sufficient on its own. Stakeholders should exhibit good governance for fair and equal distribution of resources in disasters, easy access of every citizen to information, ensuring participation, inclusiveness, transparency and accountability. Through good governance in disasters, problems that may develop later, obstacles that may be encountered in institutions, demands and expectations can be foreseen and solved in advance and this philosophy will play a facilitating role in disaster management for stakeholders. Moreover, with the adoption of good governance in disasters, there will be positive outputs such as rapprochement of stakeholders with each other and citizens, effective disaster management, fair distribution of resources and increased trust towards stakeholders. In conclusion, good governance is a key approach for successful management of disasters. Countries should adopt the philosophy of good governance to become a less lost and more resilient country by using all available resources effectively in disasters that cause great destruction.

Conclusions

As the case studies show, good governance is a key approach to successful disaster management

and the prevention of secondary disasters. It also contributes significantly to empowering disadvantaged groups and building a resilient society. Turkey and other countries should adopt a good governance approach to become a country with less losses and more resilient by effectively using all available resources in the event of disasters that cause great destruction. Good governance should be included in disaster preparedness, response and recovery plans and practitioners should be encouraged to adopt this approach.

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