

Linking Emergency Decisions with Long-Term Sustainable Recovery Process: the Case of Post-Earthquake Reconstruction in Marathwada, India*

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ABSTRACT

Emergency situations are special since they present a decision-maker with a context that is characterized by extraordinary constraints on resources, the need for urgent action and a critical psychosocial state that is markedly different from the norm. However, actions taken under these extraordinary circumstances can have a profound bearing on the long-term recovery of a community and its heritage. This paper discusses critical aspects of decision-making in emergency situations with reference to case studies of post-earthquake reconstruction in the Marathwada region in India, and assesses the long-term impact of rehabilitation policies formulated in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake.

Patterns of adaptation and change in these areas since the 1993 earthquake demonstrate how small decisions taken during an emergency can have wider socioeconomic and physical implications. These cases also show the importance of understanding the local context when making decisions, especially with respect to local vulnerabilities as well as capacities, skills and resources. They also emphasize the necessity of engaging various stakeholders, especially the local community, not as passive recipients but as active participants in the decision-making process. These considerations are significant for conservation professionals making decisions during emergencies, especially with regard to immediate protection, repairs, and long-term recovery of cultural heritage, even if we largely remain at the periphery of the reconstruction process.

Background

A crisis or emergency is a threatening condition that requires urgent action. Effective emergency response can avoid the escalation of an event into a conflict or disaster. However, emergency response does not exist as an exclusive phase. Rather, it is part of a continuing process that is closely linked with pre-disaster preparedness and post-disaster recovery, meaning not only restoring normality, but also reducing the vulnerabilities that led to the disaster in the first place. It is important to understand the context within which emergency decisions are taken, because it is markedly different from normal situations: it is characterized by fear and stress, urgency and unpredictability. Moreover, in such situations, limited resources are available, which calls for prioritization. Also, many new stakeholders such as international donor agencies and NGOs come into play during an emergency.

To understand the nature of decisions taken during an emergency, it is useful to consider the following questions:

- Which actors were involved in decision-making? Who had the final authority?
- What were the predominant constraints?
- What priorities were set by the decision-makers and on what basis?
- What process of implementation was decided on and how was it put into practice on the ground?

Based on the findings of a research study on the long-term impacts of post-earthquake reconstruction in the Marathwada region of the western state of Maharashtra in India, this paper will investigate how decisions taken under such extraordinary circumstances can have far reaching consequences for the cultural heritage of the area concerned. These impacts extend well beyond the emergency phase and, if

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