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**Exploring the role of the mosque in dealing with disasters:
A case study of the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan**

A dissertation presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

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New Zealand

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Dedication

To the loving memory of my father, may Allah shower countless blessings on his soul. Amin

Abstract

This dissertation explored the role of the mosque, a community-based religious institution, in disaster management by documenting and analysing its role in rural settings in the aftermath of the 2005 earthquake in Pakistan. The role of community-based religious institutions has been largely undocumented, underestimated and overshadowed in the development and disaster studies literature. This research was informed by post-development theory. The study addressed two research questions. The first examined the role of the mosque in relation to key actors from the state, civil society and private sector during response, relief, recovery, reconstruction and rehabilitation in the aftermath of the 2005 earthquake. The second explored the potential roles of the mosque in similar situations in the future. Using qualitative research methods and a case study design (in three villages of Mansehra district, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province), this dissertation analyses primary data collected throughout five months of fieldwork (in 2009 and 2010).

Socially and culturally, the mosque served as an entry door, facilitating access to communities for private, government, local, national and international organisations during the earthquake response, relief, recovery, reconstruction and rehabilitation phases. The mosque building was destroyed but the institution of the mosque remained intact. It continued to function, as men in the surviving community gathered to pray on the rubble or in the open, and served as the collection point of the community. Women did not benefit from the mosque, as a physical place, because of the social, cultural and religious limitations in communities. However, the mosque's institutional support was critical for the engagement of women in other culturally and socially appropriate development and disaster risk reduction activities.

Religious interpretations of the earthquake lead communities to turn to God, increasing meditation and prayer, fostering psychosocial and spiritual healing and creating resilience. Conversely, however, religious interpretations of the earthquake also promoted fatalistic tendencies, which negatively affected communities' attentiveness to some of the disaster risk reduction measures advised by the government. Economically, the affected communities exchanged livelihood-related information and coordinated their income generating activities using the institution of the mosque. In the political context, the study questions simplistic pejorative labels attached to the mosque such as it being a centre for preaching radical views in society and argues that such labels belittle and fail to recognise the distinct position of the mosque as a central community institution.

This research suggests that state, civil society and private sector actors and organisations involved in disaster management need to understand the complex relationships involving people and their religious institutions, and their impact on the social environment. This study calls for engagement: acknowledging and valuing the role of community-based religious institutions including churches, mosques, synagogues and temples in building a synergy between secular and religious efforts for disaster risk reduction. This dissertation contributes to

the scarce body of knowledge about the multi-faceted and potential role of a community-based religious institution, the mosque, which could be used to strengthen disaster management to save human lives and reduce the extent of losses from natural hazards in the future.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AJK	Azad Jammu and Kashmir
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CBDRM	Community Based Disaster Risk Management
DCO	District Coordination Officer
DDMA	District Disaster Management Authority
DFID	Department for International Development
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ERC	Emergency Relief Cell
ERRA	Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FRC	Federal Relief Commissioner
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross
ISDR	International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
km	Kilometre
NCMC	National Crisis Management Cell
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
NDMF	National Disaster Management Fund
NDRMF	National Disaster Risk Management Framework
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PBUH	Peace be upon him
PDMA	Provincial Disaster Management Authority
PERRA	Provincial Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority
SERRA	State Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Authority
UK	United Kingdom
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNISDR	United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Aid