

The Present Situation and Improvement Countermeasures of Multi-subject Participation in Disaster Relief in Hebei Province

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Abstract

The prevention, reduction and relief of natural disasters is a worldwide problem. In recent years, with the vigorous promotion of the social governance system of "government-led, social coordination and public participation", Hebei Province has achieved phased results in the field of natural disaster relief by formulating relevant regulations and policy documents, actively guiding multiple social entities to participate in disaster relief in an all-round way, establishing disaster early warning mechanisms and giving play to the role of the market. But at the same time, there are some problems, such as unclear legal status, lack of interactive platforms and lack of professional skills of disaster relief participants. In view of the above problems, this paper puts forward some countermeasures to improve the rules and regulations for the participation of disaster relief subjects, improve the information communication mechanism among disaster relief subjects and enhance the professional level of disaster relief subjects.

Keywords

Hebei Province; Multiple Subjects; Disaster Relief.

1. Introduction

With frequent and frequent natural disasters, China is one of the countries most severely affected by natural disasters. According to the data released by the Ministry of Emergency Management, in 2022, a total of 112 million people were affected by various natural disasters in China, 554 people were killed and missing due to disasters, 2.428 million people were urgently relocated, 120,71.6 thousand hectares of crops were affected, and direct economic losses amounted to 238.65 billion yuan [1]. How to deal with the impact of natural disasters and minimize the risk and loss is still an issue that governments at all levels need to pay attention to. However, due to the uncertainty, suddenness, potential severity and other characteristics of natural disasters, as well as other objective conditions, it is far from enough to rely on the power of the government to carry out disaster relief, and it also needs the joint participation of multiple subjects such as social organizations, the public and enterprises.

Hebei Province is a province where natural disasters occur frequently. There are many kinds of natural disasters with high frequency and great harm. Flood, geological disaster, typhoon, drought, hail, low temperature freezing and snow disaster and other types of disasters have different degrees of occurrence. In the past ten years, the cumulative number of people affected by natural disasters in Hebei Province was 110 million, and the direct economic loss was nearly 162.48 billion yuan, posing a certain threat to the life and property safety of people in Hebei Province. So far, although the government of Hebei Province has made some progress in disaster relief, the disaster relief work is increasingly inseparable from the joint participation of the society. Based on this, this paper attempts to analyze the role and realization mechanism of multiple subjects in disaster relief by combining the current situation of multiple subjects participating in natural disaster relief in Hebei Province, explore the difficulties faced by

multiple subjects participating in disaster relief, and put forward relevant optimization suggestions, so as to build a more scientific and effective multiple disaster relief mechanism.

2. Literature Review

About disaster relief, domestic and foreign scholars have done a lot of research on it. In the context of frequent natural and man-made disasters, disaster relief has been paid more and more attention by the government and scholars. In China, disaster relief mainly relies on the government, and social participation is less, but in recent years, multiple subjects such as social groups, enterprises, the public and the media have actively participated in disaster relief and played an important role. In this context, scholars have discussed the multi-subject participation in disaster relief from different angles, mainly in the following aspects.

(1) Multiple subjects participate in the scientific research of disaster relief

At present, the theoretical research on multi-subject participation in disaster relief in the academic circle mainly focuses on three aspects. The first is governance theory, represented by Rosenau [2] and Gerry Stoker [3]. Stoker believes that governance is an activity in which entities with a common goal participate, either government or civil society organizations. The concept of governance proposed by the United Nations Governance Committee in Our Global Partnership is widely used in academic circles, which emphasizes the diversification of the subjects managing public affairs, including not only the government, but also non-governmental social organizations, enterprises and individuals [4]. In short, no matter which concept is adopted to explain the theory, it provides theoretical support for multi-subject participation in disaster relief.

The second is the multi-subject theory. Multi-subject participation in social public affairs is a new governance mechanism and an inevitable requirement for building a harmonious society in the new era. This theory proposes that in the governance of social public affairs, in addition to the state or government organization, other social forces should also actively participate, such as market organizations, social organizations and the public. In terms of governance methods, it is not only to obey the orders of government organizations, but also to adopt consultation and other ways to break the pattern that the government is the only power center [5]. Allowing multiple subjects to participate in the framework of disaster relief is conducive to making up for the shortcomings caused by "government failure" and better safeguarding the interests of the broad masses of people.

Finally, there is the theory of emergency management, which was first used in the military and national security fields. Emergency management refers to the process in which the government, in response to emergencies, analyzes the causes, processes and impacts of emergencies in order to minimize the harm, and effectively collects information from all parties to optimize decision-making [6]. In recent years, natural emergencies have become more and more frequent, and the pressure on the government to deal with such incidents is also increasing. However, in the practice process, due to various practical conditions, emergency management has been expanding from the government to multiple subjects such as the private sector and the third sector. Therefore, through the participation of multiple subjects, it is an effective way to form an effective emergency management mechanism.

(2) Research on the necessity of multi-subject participation in disaster relief

In the field of disaster relief, social organizations are not a simple supplement to the government, but an indispensable force in the process of cooperative emergency response, which can provide important assistance to government organizations in terms of resources, technology and other aspects (Kapuca, 2011) [7], and from the perspective of medical rescue based on examples. The role and importance of ngos and the private sector in disaster relief work were analyzed (Kimiko Yamashita, 2019) [8]. At the same time, some scholars believe that

disaster relief is not only a matter for the government, but also requires the participation of ngos, enterprises and individuals as governance subjects (Nasution Bahrul Ilmi et al., 2022) [9]. It is necessary to build a cooperative model of linkage between the government and local governments. When ngos, enterprises and ordinary people are absorbed into the disaster relief system, such a whole-society coordinated disaster relief model is effective (Rosenzweig et al., 2021) [10].

In China, there is no lack of research on the necessity of multi-subject participation in disaster relief. For example, in the book *On Disaster Relief*, the author did a lot of research on the necessity of social organizations participating in disaster relief, and explained the necessity of social organizations participating in disaster relief from the two aspects of participation motivation and the relationship between social assistance and the government (Li Xiaojin, Li Qiang, 1996) [11]. Some scholars used figurative metaphors to illustrate the necessity of multi-subject participation in disaster relief, comparing disaster relief to "a wall against the wind" and ngos to "cement for the wind wall" (Jia Xijin, 2005) [12]. In addition, multi-subject participation in disaster relief also plays an important role in providing service, supervising the government, timely detecting crises and providing countermeasures and suggestions (Zheng Anyun, Dai Yaling, Miao Danmin, 2008) [13]. It can be seen that disaster relief not only needs the power of the government, but also the participation and support of social forces (Zhang Yong, 2016) [14].

(3) Research on the advantages and difficulties of multi-subject participation in disaster relief
In terms of advantages, foreign scholar Salamon (1981) believes that the advantage of social organizations is flexibility, which can provide different services according to different needs [15]. Yan Wenhui (2010), a Chinese scholar, analyzed the role of government organizations in disaster relief and believed that government organizations have advantages such as fast response speed, high rescue quality and wide social resources [16]. Zhang Yong and Liu Jun (2011) pointed out that ngos play an indispensable role in disaster relief due to their public welfare, flexibility and professionalism, and play a positive role in disaster relief combined with the overall governance of the government [14].

In terms of difficulties, foreign scholar Salamon (1981) put forward the voluntary failure theory, believing that social organizations have limitations such as insufficient charity resources and unprofessional charity work [15]. John Twigg and Diane Stenner (2011) also believe that social organizations have difficulties such as unreasonable organizational structure [17]. Chinese scholar He Xiao (2009) pointed out in his research that social organizations still have problems such as insufficient legitimacy of volunteers, poor organizational management, weak organizational influence and surplus volunteers when participating in disaster relief [18]. Based on the performance of social organizations in the Wenchuan earthquake, Meng Tian (2014) affirmed their advantages such as fast response and meticulous work in his research, and pointed out that social organizations still have problems such as legitimacy dilemma, participation dilemma, cooperation dilemma, resource dilemma and capability dilemma [19].

3. The Effectiveness of Multi-subject Participation in Disaster Relief

(1) Government level

Regarding disaster prevention and relief, the Hebei Provincial government has always put the interests of the broad masses of the people first. In recent years, in combination with the specific deployment and relevant requirements of the CPC Central Committee and The State Council on the reform of the disaster prevention, reduction and relief system under the new situation, Hebei Provincial Government has achieved certain results in disaster prevention and relief.

In terms of policies and regulations, the Hebei Provincial government follows The State Council's "National General Emergency Plan for Public Emergencies".

The Regulations on Natural Disaster Relief, the National Comprehensive Disaster Prevention and Mitigation Plan and other policies and regulations, It has successively promulgated the "Hebei Provincial People's Government General Emergency Plan for Public Emergencies", "Hebei Provincial Natural Disaster Relief Emergency Plan", "Hebei Provincial Comprehensive Disaster Prevention and Reduction Plan", "Hebei Provincial Natural Disaster Relief Measures", "Hebei Provincial Major Meteorological Disaster Emergency Plan", "Hebei Provincial Flood Control and Drought Relief Emergency Plan", "Hebei Provincial Flood Control and drought Prevention and Typhoon Emergency plan", and "Hebei Provincial geological emergencies Policies and normative documents such as the Disaster Emergency Plan not only clarify the responsibilities and division of labor of local governments at all levels in disaster relief and prevention, but also provide policy and regulatory guarantees for multi-subject participation in disaster relief, and promote the specific implementation of disaster prevention and reduction and relief work. It can be seen that the disaster relief of Hebei Provincial government has achieved certain results in the construction of policies and regulations.

In terms of disaster relief expenditure, Hebei Province is one of the provinces with the most serious natural disasters due to its complex geological structure and frequent natural disasters such as flooding, drought, hail and cryogenic freezing. Therefore, the Hebei Provincial government has always attached importance to the investment in disaster relief. According to the existing data of the National Bureau of Statistics, the disaster relief expenditure of the Hebei provincial government in 2019 was 4.689 billion yuan, 5.293 billion yuan in 2020 and 5.892 billion yuan in 2021, which was generally higher than that of other provinces in the country, which undoubtedly provided a solid material guarantee for disaster relief work and ensured the effective and smooth progress of disaster relief work. In addition, the Hebei provincial government has also implemented agricultural insurance against natural disasters in some cities, and established a unified rural housing insurance system to further reduce the losses of vulnerable groups in natural disasters. In short, for disaster relief, the Hebei provincial government has achieved certain results in both superstructure and material basis.

(2) The social dimension

As mentioned above, due to the characteristics of public welfare, flexibility and professionalism, social organizations play an indispensable role in disaster relief, which can be combined with the coordination and integrity of the government to play a positive role in disaster relief. Of course, the participation of social organizations in disaster relief is also based on relevant laws and regulations. For example, Article 3 of the Charity Law stipulates that non-governmental organizations may voluntarily carry out disaster relief work by donating and providing services, and Article 8 of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Earthquake Prevention and Mitigation stipulates that the government should actively encourage and guide non-governmental organizations and individual citizens to carry out earthquake mass detection and mass prevention activities. It is necessary to rely on the strength of multiple subjects such as social groups, volunteers, communities and enterprises to form an emergency management mechanism with overall command, quick response, complete functions, orderly coordination and efficient operation.

At present, Hebei Province has a considerable number of professional organizations that can carry out disaster relief tasks. For example, the Hebei Red Cross Society, the Hebei Charity Federation, the Hebei Charity Fund Joint Foundation, the Hebei Love Rescue Team and the volunteer service federation of various cities. Among them, the most representative is the Hebei Red Cross Society, which has so far established 57 rescue teams in different categories such as medical, search and rescue, and public health, ranking third in the country. In addition, in recent years, some enterprises and volunteers in Hebei Province have also actively participated in

disaster relief work, and achieved good results. Taking the Zhuozhou flood relief situation in Baoding as an example, various social groups, enterprises and individual citizens uphold the spirit of "one party in trouble, eight parties support" and actively respond to the government's call to participate in flood relief. Among them, many social organizations such as Hebei Photovoltaic New Energy Chamber of Commerce, Baoding Female Photographers Association, Baoding Electric Power Equipment Industry Association, Langfang Wenzhou Chamber of Commerce and Cangzhou Boai Life Volunteer Service Association actively carried out donation activities to timely transport necessary living and medical supplies for the disaster area. In addition, a total of 120 volunteer service teams and 18,000 volunteers from Handan, Zhangjiakou, Langfang, Cangzhou, Shijiazhuang, Xingtai and other places participated in Zhuozhou flood relief work.

According to preliminary statistics, the Zhuozhou flood relief work, a total of 800 social organizations participated in the province, all units and individuals donated a total of about 105 million yuan, carried out more than 760 rescue tasks, rescued more than 20,000 trapped people. It can be seen that the participation of various social groups, enterprises and individuals not only reduces the pressure of the government in disaster relief, but also improves the efficiency of disaster relief work, which is exactly the effect of multi-subject participation.

4. The Problems of Multi-subject Participation in Disaster Relief

From the practice of multi-subject participation in natural disaster relief work in Hebei Province, although each subject has made great efforts in disaster relief, and the multi-participation has also played an advantage in disaster relief, there are still some problems in practice.

(1) The legal status of multiple participants is unclear

Although the rules and regulations of the Hebei Provincial government on disaster relief are relatively perfect, mainly including Hebei Provincial Natural Disaster Relief Emergency Plan, Hebei Provincial Natural Disaster Relief Measures, Hebei Provincial People's Government General Emergency Plan for Public Emergencies, etc., there are few detailed regulations on multiple participants in disaster relief. In particular, there is a lack of institutionalized provisions on the coordination mechanism among the participants and the division of powers and responsibilities.

The government is in the leading position in disaster relief, but the legal status of other participants is vague, which will discourage its enthusiasm in disaster relief. On the other hand, with the continuous expansion of the volunteer service team, some rescue teams organized by enterprises, individuals or social groups to rescue in the disaster area, due to the absence of relevant volunteer laws, there will be chaos in the disaster relief process, greatly reducing their rescue capabilities and collective centripetal force.

(2) The information communication mechanism of multiple participants is not perfect

Due to the high frequency of natural disasters in Hebei Province, which have brought different degrees of harm to society and citizens, it is necessary for multiple parties to participate in coping with the impact of natural disasters. However, since the division of labor and responsibility of multiple entities in disaster relief is not clear, it is difficult to achieve the effect of coordination and cooperation in disaster relief.

Although there are many channels for the release of disaster warning information in Hebei Province, it is mainly released to the public through TV, Internet, mobile phone SMS, electronic display and other channels, which can enable social citizens and rescue organizations to prepare for disaster prevention and relief in advance. However, after the disaster occurred, there was a lack of information exchange and feedback platform, insufficient disclosure of disaster information, and information communication and sharing between multiple

participants and between the government and multiple participants could not be realized, resulting in unclear task distribution among various participants, ineffective coordination of rescue forces, and inaccurate implementation of the "last mile" rescue.

(3) The lack of professional knowledge and skills of multiple participants in disaster relief

At present, the people's Liberation Army and the armed police forces under the leadership of governments at all levels are mainly responsible for natural disaster relief tasks. In recent years, non-governmental rescue teams have gradually joined the disaster relief team. However, due to the lack of special disaster relief training and professional knowledge learning, some rescue teams blindly carry out disaster relief tasks without understanding the situation of the disaster area, which not only fails to cooperate with the government's disaster relief operations, but also causes chaos at the disaster relief site.

In addition, the public's own professional knowledge and skills of disaster relief are insufficient, and they are often in a passive state when facing natural disasters, resulting in poor self-rescue and mutual rescue ability of the public. At the same time, since citizens learn about the disaster information of natural disasters mainly through the early warning issued by the government before the disaster, they fail to pay timely attention to the spread of the disaster or the external relief situation, which will greatly affect the rationalization of the victims and hinder the orderly development of disaster relief work [20].

5. Strengthen the Multi-subject Participation in Disaster Relief Countermeasures

(1) Improve the rules and regulations for multiple entities to participate in disaster relief

On the one hand, it is necessary to constantly improve and improve the rules and regulations for multi-subject participation in disaster relief. Hebei Province can fully learn from the rules and regulations for multi-subject participation in social relief in other provinces and combine the relevant practical experience of the province, so as to clarify and strengthen the scope of power of social organizations, enterprises, volunteers and the public under the legal framework. Further clarify the scope of responsibilities of multiple entities. According to the characteristics of different participants, the rules and regulations with high feasibility and strong operability are formulated to provide a good institutional environment for multiple participants to participate in disaster relief and ensure the legitimacy and enthusiasm of multiple participants. On the other hand, the government should pay full attention to the legal status of social organizations, enterprises, volunteers and the public to participate in disaster relief, give sufficient financial support, and further improve the corresponding reward and incentive policies. At the same time, we should improve the two-way supervision mechanism, not only introspection but also mutual supervision. The government should accept the supervision of itself and multiple subjects, and multiple subjects should also accept the supervision of the government and themselves. Maximize the integration of human, material and financial resources of the whole society, achieve efficient cooperation of multiple subjects, and carry out rescue work in an orderly manner.

(2) Improve the information coordination mechanism for multi-subject participation in disaster relief

First of all, we need to smooth the channels of information communication. As the leading force of disaster relief, when natural disasters occur, the government will announce the early warning information of natural disasters to the society through official channels, so that other participants can timely understand the disaster level and the situation of the disaster area and formulate disaster relief plans. After the occurrence of natural disasters, the government can announce the disaster relief process, rescue and relief consultation, and material needs of

victims to the public through the official website, broadcast, social platforms (Tiktok, wechat public account, Weibo) and other channels, so as to increase the participation of the public and multiple subjects.

Secondly, build a multi-subject information sharing platform based on digital technology. Information sharing platform is a bridge connecting the government and multiple subjects, and it is particularly important to build an information sharing platform led by the government and participated by multiple subjects. At present, the Hebei Provincial government has its own e-government platform, which can realize the exchange and cooperation between various government departments. On this basis, it can be combined with blockchain, big data, Internet of Things, artificial intelligence and other technologies [21] to build a multi-subject information sharing platform to realize the two-way flow of information and data interoperability in disaster relief, and ensure the timeliness, accuracy and authenticity of disaster information.

(3) Improving the professional level of multi-subject participation in disaster relief

Considering the characteristics of current disaster relief and the existing problems of multi-subject participation, first, the government should fully encourage multi-subject participation in disaster relief, provide appropriate financial or expert support, regularly conduct disaster relief lectures, encourage the establishment of professional disaster relief teams, and encourage them to carry out timely and appropriate simulation exercises in peacetime. Strengthen the capacity building of relevant rescue workers, and improve the response ability and professionalism of disaster relief teams. Second, regular disaster relief exercises and training are organized for the people in cities and counties prone to natural disasters in Hebei Province, so as to improve their mutual and self-rescue ability and psychological quality in natural disasters, so that the people can truly apply what they have learned and cope with natural disasters calmly [22].

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