



PIDE

COVID-19 BULLETIN

No. 5

Managing the COVID-19 Crisis An Organizational Plan

PIDE has been holding regular virtual meetings with a number of people from diverse backgrounds every day to crowd source information and analysis on the Covid-19 crisis. One important theme that has emerged during these discussions is that the public must clearly see the management of the crisis being done on a war-footing.

With that discussion in mind, I thought we should begin to conceptualize how we can be better organized to manage this crisis. While the exact configuration for management can differ, several principles are clear.

Central Strategy Making

1. This a war and the country must be mobilized to fight it.
2. Wars are planned by centrally mobilizing all the available resources, but they are fought locally. So, to begin with, a **Situation Room** (SR) with PM, CMs and Army Chief must be set up. It must be small enough for quick discussion and decisions. This will only happen if it is supported by very good information and analysis system that emanates from the localities where the virus is spreading and where help is required. The **SR** must be supported by several high-level committees at the federal and provincial levels with possible counterparts at the local level. At the minimum there should be committees for:
 - 2.1. **Health**—Must prepare a real time COVID-19 spread picture, medical supplies and logistics information, state of the health system, quality of care and the state of testing.
 - 2.2. **Social support**—Based on local and other identification, determine where help is required and how it will be disseminated. Local administrations down to the level of union councils and political representatives will help identify the community needs. Various social safety net agencies, like BISP, Bait ul Mal, NRSP and PPAF, will help in this effort.
 - 2.3. **Law and order**—Police and army will maintain law and order, and identify the needs and plans to move forward.
 - 2.4. **Economy**—Real time resource availability and utilization information, and daily required changes of expenditure based on health and social support requirements.
3. Daily and future needs plan should be maintained by each of the above committees. The **Situation Room** would prioritize and see how all the plans fit together.
4. To maintain calm, daily information must be provided to the people through the spokesman of the **Situation Room**. The principle of more public information should be followed

especially in this time of social media and fake news. Yes, some information may need to be withheld but barring that there should be disclosure.

5. Several guidelines/protocols and policies need to be developed and evolved as information from localities is received.
 - 5.1. A testing policy needs to be developed. How widespread will it be? Who gets priority in getting tested?
 - 5.2. A quarantine policy, which is cost effective (letting those who can afford, pay for it) and offers choices.
 - 5.3. Testing and tracking people.
 - 5.4. A phased lockdown policy based on testing and tracking.
 - 5.5. Communication and education
6. Logistics to be determined and carefully managed and monitored.
 - 6.1. Projecting and developing a needs plan
 - 6.2. Mobilizing our industry to start production of healthcare items needed to cope with the situation (protective gear, masks, ventilators medical supplies etc.)
 - 6.2.1. Contracting and financing this effort on a fast track
 - 6.3. Medical readiness with necessary training and incentives, and safety of the medical staff

All Wars are Fought Locally

1. Clearly the public health provision and the social support required will be local. The local authorities –political and administrative- must be galvanized and strengthened. As far as possible the effort, especially testing and delivering public health, must be decentralized. Local hospitals (including BHUs and THQs) and administrations must be mobilized. Going to district hospitals or tertiary hospitals must be discouraged.
2. The local levels must send daily reports on:
 - 1.1.1. Their implementation: testing, supplies, health care, quality,
 - 1.1.2. Needs, and identification of the vulnerable
 - 1.1.3. Law and order
 - 1.1.4. Economic activities
 - 1.1.5. Feedback on the strategy and plan, and possible ideas for tweaking the strategy and plan to make them more relevant and efficient
3. Local information will have to be collated and analyzed at various levels very quickly to keep the **SR** in real time. For this perhaps several **SRs** will have to be replicated at the district and provincial level.

Information Flows and a Portal

As argued above, information flows will create confidence as well as galvanize the nation. For this reason, the **SR** should accept that the people must be taken into confidence.

1. Let all plan policies be prepared by teams of technical experts but not necessarily in big unproductive meetings. Let policies and plans be prepared by small groups but debated widely.

2. An **Official COVID Portal** should be the trusted source of all things linked to COVID. Let all information plan and all real time data show up there.

3. Let us have live shows on this portal and in collaboration with PTV to highlight several key issues and themes to educate people and rally and lead them against the virus.

4. Real time information after clearance from the **SR** should be shown on the Portal and discussed by experts on the show. In particular, the following must be shown to all:

- 4.1. Geographic spread of virus
- 4.2. Testing and what follows after
- 4.3. Quarantine and treatment
- 4.4. Networks of people tested and how they are moving

5. Government can also think of getting public celebrities to be ambassadors for combatting COVID and help push key messages daily on the portal.

Evolving the Plan and Strategy

As this system begins to gel on a war footing, information flows will naturally evolve the strategy to emerging needs. As we learn more strategies, plans can be changed. Local implementation teams as they feel empowered can send practical ideas to make procedures better.

This is a fluid situation requiring a fluid response. The organizational plan suggested here is an evolving plan which will allow learning and evolution.

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PIDE COVID-19 Bulletin is an initiative by the Institute in response to the current pandemic, which is bound to have serious consequences for the country, specifically for its economy. The Bulletin would carry research that would aid in an informed policymaking to tackle the issue.

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