

# A reassessment and review of the Bam earthquake five years onward: what was done wrong?

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## Abstract:

An earthquake measuring 6.6 on the Richter scale on 23 December 2003 devastated the city of Bam in southeastern Iran. During the response and recovery phases, considerable shortcomings were discovered. The dire situation in the affected area, a variety of urgently required interventions, and the large number of aid organizations involved brought about difficulties in management, coordination, and communication among authorities and aid organizations. This article highlights flaws in management in the various aspects of this disaster in order to assess what was done, and what should be done to overcome these shortcomings in future disasters. A retrospective review of the various aspects of management related to the Bam disaster was done via the assessment of files, multi-center studies, governmental data, and available literature from 2003-2008. A review of the available data relevant to search and rescue operations and short-term aid provision revealed flaws in different aspects of disaster management including personnel, the transfer of the injured, availability medical supplies, treatment planning, problems concerning the composition of treatment forces dispatched to the region, distribution of tasks among treatment workers, transferring of equipment, availability of facilities, and lack of coordination among the organizations responsible for the management of the disaster. Most of the aforementioned issues have been addressed. A comprehensive disaster management plan must not be limited only to the response phase, but rather must include: preparedness, recovery with optimal legislation and budgeting, improvement of healthcare facilities, and organized communication channels between the different governmental departments. This important issue has been addressed, and a disaster management organization under the supervision of the President has been established, developing a national search and rescue strategy and protocol for unified managerial organization, an alert system, an international disaster command system (under which search and rescue and emergency medical service teams can be deployed, increasing the efficacy and coordination of the arrival of foreign teams and the construction field hospitals), and developing a flowchart to coordinate international agencies and the domestic authorities in charge. Continuous education, training of the general population, conducting periodic exercise drills, and provision for prepared task force mobilization in disaster management all are important aspects of the management of disasters due to natural hazards.

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