

ORGANIZATIONAL MEASURES TO RAISE THE CAPACITY OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS IN EMERGENCIES

Samed Karovic¹

¹ University of Educons, Faculty of security studies, Vojvode Putnika 67, Sremska Kamenica, Republic of Serbia, karovic.samed@gmail.com

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Abstract: *Emergencies cause major disruption in the functioning of the community. A significant role in solving emergencies is played by local governments, The work explains the necessary elements of raising the capacity of local self-governments to function efficiently and manage emergencies. In particular, it highlights ongoing problems in the area of functioning of local self-governments in the autonomous province of Vojvodina.*

The emphasis is placed on organizational measures and the work of authorities at the local level and concrete solutions for the successful functioning of local self-governments and effective management of emergencies. The proposals for the measures are based on the data collected in the field and cover the area of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina.

Key words: *security, local self-government, emergencies, capacities*

1. INTRODUCTION

Emergency situations, due to their characteristics and causes, cause various consequences. Usually, these consequences are losses of a material nature, the suffering of human lives and endangering the environment. The current state of the community and the environment of the Republic of Serbia makes it clear that the Republic of Serbia is exposed to the actions of various security challenges that can cause emergencies.

Successfully managing these emergency situations implies an efficient and swift response of authorities at all levels, from local self-government, to the Republic of Serbia. This means that there must be sufficient capacity to respond at all stages, from prevention to recovery and restore. It is a complex process and requires the efforts of all structures. The basics of successful action are the Protection and Rescue Plan, which is preceded by many activities and should be functional.

The paper deals with the problems of local communities and raising their capacities for successful emergency management. The data analyzed are the result of real research in local communities in the area of AP Vojvodina, covering 30% of local communities with key elements relevant for assessing the state and capacity of local self-governments.

The paper covers the units that deal with the security of local self-government and its basic elements, the current situation within local communities for successful emergency management and raising the capacity of local self-government for successful emergency management.

The analyzed data served to look at the state of local self-governments and to look at the most important activities dealt with by local governments in the previous year. The focus was on the necessary and key elements of raising the capacity to successfully manage emergencies and the needs of resolving the issue.

2. SECURITY OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT IN EMERGENCIES

The issue of security in society is a fundamental element of its successful functioning and development. There are many influential factors that put security in the sphere of interest of society as a whole. This is especially pronounced in modern conditions and will all be more pronounced in the times to come. There have never been more security challenges before the social community, and the trend is especially relevant at the level of local self-governments that represent the basic organizational whole in the social system.

In this sense, local self-governments gain importance, roles and responsibilities for working and functioning in emergency conditions. It should be noted in particular that there are many different events that can cause emergencies (Karovic, Domazet, Jesic, 2021), thereby incorporating the scope of work and capacities of local self-governments to successfully act in such a situation. Organizing local self-government, defining tasks and turning them into action is a very complex process that has direct consequences for citizens, their life and health.

If local governments prepare plans in a timely manner, define capacities and adapt organizationally to the situation they will create conditions (Karovic, 2014) for successful emergency management and prevent many negative occurrences and crises. This means accepting reality and adapting to the current development trends of modern society.

2.1. Basic elements of local government security in emergencies

Local governments within their jurisdiction to reduce disaster risk and manage emergencies, according to the Law on Disaster Risk Reduction and Emergency Management (Law), ("Official Gazette of RS", 8/2018), have many jurisdictions prescribing their competencies. If you look closely at the Art. 29 of the aforementioned Law, it is observed that local self-government, among other things, enacts an act on the organization and functioning of civil protection on the territory of a local self-government unit, drafts and enacts a risk assessment, a local disaster risk reduction plan, a protection and rescue plan, and an external plan for protection against a major accident if the SEVESO complex of higher order is on its territory, etc.

In a specific case, the competencies and activities prescribed by law include a complex of tasks imposed by an emergency and create the basis for successful emergency management. The organization of local self-government to act in emergencies depends on the elaboration of each element within the legal regulation. This conditions all bodies and holders of functions at the local self-government level to actively engage in the process of implementing legal solutions and realistically anticipating security challenges and risks, in order to make the plans in a way that is realistic in relation to the events foreseen.

Local self-governments are the foundation of the functioning of the entire emergency management system on the territory of the Republic of Serbia and their continuous and efficient upgrading and improvement increases the capacity of successful emergency management.

Observing the elements of the security of local self-governments in emergencies, it follows that in these extreme conditions there are elements of the conditions for the life and work of the population in the area of local self-government. Emergencies can be conditional on different events, but in the context of the assessment, the holders of the functions must realistically assume possible risks and in this sense orient their protection and rescue plans.

When we talk about the elements of security of local self-government in emergency situations, we primarily mean the protection of life and health of the population, protection of animals, environment, security of water and food supply, energy and functioning of traffic, communications and basic sanitary conditions. These are the elemental conditions necessary to function within the emergency-affected local self-government. Holders of government functions and management bodies at the local self-government level should always take into account the above-mentioned elements and assess whether they can ensure the implementation of the specified facilities within the framework of emergency management as part of the protection and rescue plan.

In particular, it should be noted that the concept of security and emergency management within local governments is limited and incomplete without the introduction of information support and access to the concept of smart cities. This is why legally defined activities, as pointed out by Karovic et al. (Karovic, Rankov, Domazet, Jesic, 2021), should be aimed at strengthening human resources and information support in order to effectively manage emergencies. The same authors noted that the organization of work at the level in the context of emergency management covers various fields, including sociology, economics, physiology and psychology, etc., reflecting different aspects of emergency work. The success of working in such conditions is measured by different parameters and criteria. Therefore, in the process of work and good organization of various processes of work, it is necessary to identify these criteria and parameters, in order to achieve the necessary efficiency. This is a basic condition without which it is impossible to act effectively in modern and complex conditions.

2.2. The current state of functioning and implementation of security measures in local self-governments

As part of the research conducted in local self-governments in the area of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina and a defined project called "Strengthening the Capacity of Local Self-Governments in Emergency Prevention", basic problems and conditions in local self-governments were noted. The survey covers 30% of local self-governments in the area of AP Vojvodina. When it comes to the elements related to the capacities of local self-government in the context of the activities that were most often carried out in the previous year on the prevention of emergency situations, it was pointed out that the orientation was mainly on:

- developing disaster risk reduction assessment;
- drafting of a Protection and Rescue Plan;
- preparation of the Acoustics Study for the territory of the municipality;
- implementation of the project for replacing siren programmers and electrical installations;
- realization of the project of servicing an automatic weather station,
- drafting of proposals of documents from the competences of the Assembly and the Municipal Council (Decision on organization and functioning of civil protection, Decision on education of civil protection units; initiate the drafting of the Assessment and Plan for Protection and Rescue in the jurisdiction of public enterprises founded by municipalities;
- elaboration of the necessary number of shelters for the territory of the municipality (at the initiative of the Defense Obligations Administration), etc.

- activities carried out to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus;
- Establishment of a call center at the municipal level to receive calls from citizens who need help or delivery of life supplies, medicines, etc.;
- protection against COVID-19;
- setting up vaccination checkpoints;
- assistance to the elderly;
- engagement of call center for vaccination;
- distribution of quarantine solutions in home conditions.

If we look at the most significant activities conducted during the last year at the local self-government level, it can be noted that the orientation was directly aimed at fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and implementing recommendations by the co-ordination national body. However, there are also activities that show that the process of work and legislation has not been implemented in all local governments and that the process is ongoing.

The duration of the process of implementation of legal solutions is slow, and it is conditioned by various factors. They are also expressed in incompetent staff, partly by the inertia of office holders at the level of the Republic of Serbia and the very nature of emergency situations.

It is not ensured that systematic action and assessment of events and risks that may cause an emergency situation is enabled at the level of local self-governments. These are key elements and such a situation continues and will continue. The main sources of endangering society and the state at the moment and in the long run are various natural events and technical-technological accidents. In this segment, local governments lack resources and organized action in such situations. This is a key problem that needs to be solved and which was especially highlighted during the research.

The legitimacy of local self-governments and efficient management of emergency situations is given by the citizens and the media. These are questions that can be heard and that need to be analyzed. Of course, when it comes to the media, one should be objective and realistic, as research has shown. All this shows the level of trust in political actors and holders of public functions and authorities at the level of local self-government and beyond.

3. RAISING THE CAPACITY OF LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT SECURITY

As a key element of research and realization of the project, it is necessary to define and determine how to implement measures to increase the capacity of local self-government in emergency management. Given the current state of local self-governments in the area of AP Vojvodina, they crystallized with different problems and issues that were hidden and did not initially come to the fore.

Table 1 shows the results of certain issues that partially touch on the issue of local government capacity.

Based on the results of the survey and the issues included in the survey questionnaire, it can be noted that local governments have qualified staff for managing emergency situations in the situation, and in practice there is a situation that the system at the local self-government level does not work and has not survived in practice. Yet one local government has expressed the view that it is not a cadre that is qualified in practice and proves correct. It also raises questions about the number of personnel dealing with the problem of protection and rescue in emergencies and again the qualifications and commitment to solving and functioning this area.

Table 1: Local Government Capacities

Red. br.	Questions	Σ	
		Yes	No
1.	Does your local government have qualified emergency prevention personnel?	12	1
2.	Has the current state of emergency been analyzed at the level of your local self-government?	13	/
3.	Have you identified at the level of your local self-government that would affect the area of local self-government?	13	/
4.	At the level of your local self-government, have realistic assessments of the scale of certain emergencies been made?	13	/
5.	Is there a database of emergencies and damage sustained at the level of your local government?	6	7
6.	At the level of your local self-government, is work organized and detailed activities specified in emergencies?	12	1
7.	Is the planned use of information technology and data a preventive form of emergency?	7	6

Also, questions on the next number 2, 3 and 4 were unanimously positively evaluated. However, if you look through the analysis of other issues, it does impose the problem of full insight into certain emergency processes and drawing from such a question. The effects of certain measures are not being considered, and there are not enough indicators, ie they have not been identified. The problem is measures that are not in the sphere of measurable nature to perceive effects.

It should be noted, as pointed out by Karovic and Domazet [4], emergency management, at It should be noted, as pointed out by Karovic and Domazet (Karovic, Domazet, 2021), emergency management, at any level, is an inherent aspect of risk management and poses a significant challenge. It continually questions the effectiveness of the measures taken to minimize the risks. There is no single and effective governance mechanism that "drives" activities in depth, which effectively prevents an integral approach to controlling a particular situation or pandemic, and therefore crises as a whole.

When asked directly about the existence of a database of data within local self-government about the damage caused by the emergency, the condition is of such a nature that more than half have declared that the base does not exist. This is very concerning and demonstrates the need for information support at the local government level to manage databases of such a condition. This includes equipping local governments with information technologies and the need to enable staff to use these tools. The problem is complex and requires deeper analysis and solution proposals in a more complex project that will specifically cover this dimension.

The question on number six indicates that attitudes are not unanimous that there are problems within the process of organizing work and is partly about drafting a Protection and Rescue Plan. Such plans that are not concreted and in which not every activity and carrier is defined, with elements of network planning, do not ensure its effectiveness.

Finally, in the question of plans to use information technology and data as a preventive form of emergencies, there is a problem at all that this is planned to be introduced. Research has shown that nearly 50% are not in the projection of the introduction of such technologies. Due to the scope of emergency jobs, monitoring of the condition and processes, it is inconceivable that in the information era this is not on the agenda. Such an approach must be eliminated,

information support well and realistically and rationally designed and placed in the function of managing emergencies at the level of local self-governments..

A key problem for raising the capacity of security in local self-governments is the people and the inability of the persons in charge of emergencies. This leads to the initiative, positive solutions and improvement of the system only coming down to the survival of some archaic solutions in the previous period. There is simply no development or improvement of the system at the level of local self-governments.

Therefore, emergency tasks and managed security in emergencies in certain local self-governments in the area of AP Vojvodina are performed by persons who do not have adequate education to do the job. It is also present that in addition to the work for which they were educated, they perform a whole range of other jobs, thus preventing their absence for professional training.

Ultimately, overcoming this problem is a key element in ensuring effective management of security in emergencies. This means that emergency personnel must have a clear projection of the development of emergency protection and rescue systems. They should have a clear vision of equipping it with information support in managing emergencies. It is a process that needs to be directed by the holders of power at every level. Of course it's not a simple question and it should be dealt with phased with a clear goal.

4. CONCLUSION

Taking organizational measures to increase the security capacity of local governments in emergency situations is an important process and element of successful emergency management. In order to be able to propose key organizational measures for raising the security capacity of local self-governments, it was necessary to record the current situation in local self-governments and identify the basic problems. Accordingly, based on the collected and processed data, it was concluded that at the level of local self-governments, activities aimed at resolving the COVID-19 pandemic were mainly carried out.

It was also determined that, in most local self-governments, the process of implementing the legal solution for drafting the Protection and Rescue Plan in emergency situations is slow. A comprehensive and systematic approach in defining the competencies and implementation of the Protection and Rescue Plan is particularly characteristic in the field of risk assessment of local self-government.

In the sphere of activities and work at the level of local self-government, only current issues are the current response to the state of the pandemic and the measures determined by the coordinating body at the level of the Republic of Serbia. There were no more concrete examples of work at the local self-government level that could improve the quality and capacity of the functioning of security and emergency management. A climate of passivity has been created and only instructions and concrete solutions of higher instances are expected. This is a problem that puts local government in a position of waiting and passivity in concrete conditions.

The poor equipment and the lack of a projection of equipping local self-governments with informational support for acting in emergency situations were especially pointed out. And informational support should have clear elements of work. This also requires changes in the structure of human resources in emergency affairs at the local self-government level. The issue of human resources is always ongoing and that's what Karovic and Domazet talked about (Karovic, Domazet, 2019). They emphasized that it is necessary to adapt and train people with modern requirements and organization of work in the jobs of protection and rescue and

emergency management. All elements of work and functioning within the management of emergencies must be implemented in the Protection and Rescue Plan in the form that ensures the involvement of the management staff and other holders of protection and rescue in mitigating the consequences of the emergency situation.

It is important to note that the issue of local self-governments, putting them at the center of emergencies, in future research should be looked at through measurable values and clearly determine the local self-government safety index and the value of local self-government's ability to act in emergencies. To especially update the issue of emergency situations, primarily with an adequate assessment of the overall security of the Republic of Serbia and those elements that bring climate change. These are the basic questions that society will also face in the future and seek concrete answers to the security challenges of all levels.

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