

Policy Brief: Government Learnings from Ad Hoc Groups During Crises

Highlights

- Ad hoc groups, such as task forces and committees, play a pivotal role in governmental crisis management.
- These groups facilitate rapid decision-making, policy learning, and innovative responses during emergencies.
- Insights are drawn from experiences with the SARS outbreak and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Summary

Ad hoc groups offer governments a flexible and dynamic mechanism for addressing crises. By integrating expert knowledge and fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders, these groups enhance crisis management strategies. This policy paper examines their institutional roles and contributions to policy learning in emergencies, highlighting the lessons learned from SARS and COVID-19.

What's the Issue?

During crises, governments must make swift decisions and adapt to rapidly changing circumstances. Ad hoc groups—temporary and flexible in nature—help mobilise expertise and resources efficiently. However, questions remain regarding their optimal structure and effectiveness in fostering learning and innovation under unprecedented conditions.

Why Is This Important?

Crisis situations, such as pandemics, demand innovative and adaptable policy responses. Ad hoc groups, by integrating expert-driven and reflexive learning, enable governments to:

- Address emergent challenges swiftly.
- Leverage diverse expertise.
- Develop innovative and context-specific solutions.

These capabilities are crucial for effective crisis management and building resilient governance systems.

What Should Policymakers Do?

Policymakers should adopt the following strategies to enhance the effectiveness of ad hoc groups:

1. **Establish Clear Mandates and Objectives:** Define the scope and goals of ad hoc groups to focus efforts and ensure coherence.
2. **Foster Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Include experts from diverse fields to provide a holistic understanding of crises.

3. **Implement Robust Communication Strategies:** Ensure effective communication within groups and with the public to maintain transparency and trust.
4. **Invest in Capacity Building:** Provide training and resources to enhance the capabilities of ad hoc groups.
5. **Encourage Flexibility and Innovation:** Allow groups to experiment and innovate in their approaches to crisis management.
6. **Emphasise Transparency and Accountability:** Ensure processes are open and decisions are justifiable to maintain public trust.
7. **Promote Continuous Evaluation:** Regularly assess group effectiveness and adapt approaches based on feedback.

Citation

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