

Evidence Synthesis

Lessons on supporting disaster relief and reconstruction in fragile and conflict-affected situations

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Summary

With the recent earthquake in Turkey and Syria in mind, this rapid review synthesises evidence, guidance, and lessons on disaster relief and reconstruction in fragile and conflict-affected situations (FCAS). Precarious governance conditions in Syria – including control being split among different governing authorities, the politicisation of aid, the role of proscribed actors as governing authorities, weak state capacity, corruption, lack of resources due to protracted crisis, and the absence of a UN cluster system – will make relief and reconstruction more difficult. This review therefore includes evidence from contexts where some or all of these conditions exist.

The review focuses on:

- Timelines and priorities for earthquake and disaster response, and how they can be adapted in FCAS.
- Lessons on how disaster relief interventions in FCAS have worked, or should or might work, when collaborating with different actors.

Disaster response should be seen as part of a long-term programme of reconstruction, with immediate decisions on relief and recovery having implications

for subsequent redevelopment. It requires strong national coordination between different sectors, levels of government, international actors, and communities, and balancing of long- and short-term goals. The review finds that disaster response and reconstruction activities may need to adopt different methods in FCAS:

- The degree to which reconstruction and disaster risk reduction (DRR) can be undertaken in FCAS may be limited.
- In FCAS, it is necessary to adopt conflict-sensitive approaches that assess and adapt to risks. These approaches should be applied across programming sectors.
- Community-driven reconstruction (CDR) efforts can be used to implement projects, and factors for success vary by context. There is limited evidence on their ability to build capacity and links with local government.
- Working with different configurations of actors at subnational and international levels, including traditional authorities and civil society organisations (CSOs), may be necessary in FCAS.
- Careful diplomacy is needed when negotiating a disaster response in order to gain access to a state or work across conflict lines.

Methodology

This review responds to the following research questions:

1. Considerations on timelines and priorities for disaster response in a fragile context.
 - a. What length of post emergency phase, debris clearance, reconstruction and duration and type of involvement?
 - b. What are the key questions to consider at each stage which help to identify priorities?
 - c. What expertise is needed at different stages?
 - d. And what happens when the disaster response is slow, inadequate, poorly co-ordinated and badly managed, i.e. in cases where no DRR strategy existed, and no (high quality)

reconstruction strategy likely to be developed in the short term, what happens?

2. Evidence and lessons on working with different actors in conflict-affected contexts (including community-driven reconstruction).
 - a. Where has community-driven reconstruction been successful, and why?
 - b. How have community-driven reconstruction efforts also successfully included local authorities, i.e. which approaches have built trust as well as buildings?

There is a growing body of literature on the relationship between conflict and disaster. It pursues several lines of inquiry, only a few of which are relevant to this analysis. Issues not considered in this review include the causal links between conflict, fragility, and disasters (the impact of disasters on risk of conflict, of conflict on risk of disasters, and of conflict interventions on disaster risk), and the potential for disaster relief to contribute to peacebuilding.

Evidence for this review was gathered through a rapid (i.e. non-exhaustive) approach. Electronic search engines such as Google Scholar, as well as websites of relevant international organisations, were used. Search terms were developed based on the research questions, relevant country contexts, and issues identified in other reading. This was supplemented by literature already known to the author of this report, and references found in these publications.

The research reviewed here can be broadly categorised into two groups. First, guidance on disaster and earthquake response, in FCAS where possible, was used to inform the review of best practices, timelines for response, expertise needed, and prioritisation. Second, case studies and evaluations were used to distil lessons on working with different actors in disaster management in FCAS.

Guidance literature

The guidance literature is drawn primarily from international bodies focused on disaster response, such as the World Bank's Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), and other syntheses of best practices.

Much of the guidance on disaster response and

earthquake response emphasises that successful disaster response efforts should work through government actors and be integrated in a long-term plan for reconstruction, including ‘building back better’ and DRR.¹ It therefore has limited applicability in many FCAS, where state actors have limited capacity. Guidance on disaster response specifically in FCAS is less developed; it discusses broad principles for working in FCAS and emphasises the need for context-specific learning and adaptation.²

Because there are few examples of comprehensive disaster response and reconstruction in FCAS, guidance documents on individual aspects of disaster response in FCAS had to be included in the analysis. For example, there are several documents focusing on DRR in FCAS.

Case studies and wider literature

Case study evidence is patchy, partly because conflict situations and/or fragile states inhibit post-disaster reconstruction.³ It shows that humanitarian work is often prioritised over longer-term aid types like development work or DRR, and, in some cases, aid agencies transition from development to humanitarian work at the outbreak of conflict.⁴ Research on programs in conflict situations focuses mostly on DRR, peacebuilding, and humanitarian aid.

Discussing DRR in conflict situations, Peters, Holloway, and Peters point to several gaps in the

evidence,⁵ including knowledge of subnational and provincial levels, non-Western social contract forms such as tribal authority, and “the role of alternative governance mechanisms and parallel governance structures specifically in contexts of violence and armed conflict”.⁶

Most of the case studies do not focus on earthquakes, but are included because they highlight access and coordination problems that are common in FCAS. The literature reviewed contains information on the following topics/issues, which have a varying degree of pertinence to the relief and reconstruction in FCAS:

- Working with low-capacity and predatory state or non-state actors on disaster relief.
- Negotiating humanitarian access in FCAS.
- Undertaking DRR in FCAS.
- CDR in FCAS.

There is also literature on post-conflict reconstruction, which has some relevance to the current review, but it also includes analysis of peacebuilding outcomes and other issues that are less relevant.

The papers provide evidence of the difficulties of working in FCAS and the consequences for humanitarian aid. There are also some lessons on effective ways to undertake humanitarian work, although little applies specifically to relief and reconstruction in FCAS.

1 Tony Lloyd-Jones, *Mind the Gap! Post-Disaster Reconstruction and the Transition from Humanitarian Relief* (RICS, 2006), https://www.preventionweb.net/files/9080_MindtheGapFullreport1.pdf; GFDRR, *Earthquake Reconstruction* (World Bank, 2011), https://www.gfdrr.org/sites/default/files/publication/GFDRR_Earthquake_Reconstruction16Nov2011_0.pdf; UNISDR, *Words into Action Guidelines: Build Back Better in Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction* (UNDRR, 2017), <https://www.undrr.org/media/83543/download>.

2 GFDRR, *Disaster Recovery in Conflict Contexts: Thematic Case Study for the Disaster Recovery Framework Guide* (World Bank, 2016), <https://www.gfdrr.org/en/publication/disaster-recovery-conflict-contexts-thematic-case-study-disaster-recovery-framework>.

3 Ben Wisner, “‘Build Back Better’? The Challenge of Goma and Beyond”, *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 26 (1 December 2017): 101–05, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdr.2017.09.027>.

4 Rodrigo Mena and Dorothea Hilhorst, “The Transition from Development and Disaster Risk Reduction to Humanitarian Relief: The Case of Yemen during High Intensity Conflict”, *Disasters* 46, no. 4 (October 2022): 1049–74, <https://doi.org/10.1111/disa.12521>.

5 Katie Peters, Kerrie Holloway, and Laura Peters, *Disaster Risk Reduction in Conflict Contexts: The State of the Evidence* (Overseas Development Institute, 2019), <https://odi.org/en/publications/disaster-risk-reduction-in-conflict-contexts-the-state-of-the-evidence>.

6 Peters, Holloway, and Peters, *Disaster Risk Reduction*, 31.

Considerations on timelines and priorities for disaster response in fragile contexts

This section discusses the evidence on earthquake relief and reconstruction and disaster relief in FCAS. The first sub-section outlines the evidence on timelines and priorities for earthquake relief and reconstruction, highlighting the key questions for those managing the response and the expertise required. The second sub-section discusses the difficulties arising when undertaking disaster relief in FCAS, including low disaster management capacity and corruption problems.

Key considerations for prioritisation of earthquake response

Disaster response is usually conceptualised as part of a timeline that covers all phases of a disaster, from response to relief to rehabilitation and reconstruction (or variations of these terms). UNDRR defines rehabilitation as the “restoration of basic services and facilities for the functioning of a community or a society affected by a disaster”,⁷ and reconstruction as the “medium- and long-term rebuilding and sustainable restoration of resilient critical infrastructures, services, housing, facilities and livelihoods required for the full functioning of a community or a society affected by a disaster, aligning with the principles of sustainable development and ‘build back better’, to avoid or reduce future disaster risk.”⁸

GFDRR guidance for earthquake response does not touch on the particular difficulties of fragile contexts.⁹ However, it is included in this review because it sets out broad timelines and priorities for earthquake response (see Figure 1, next page). Earthquakes can be difficult to respond to because they often destroy or block transport infrastructure, and aftershocks can further disrupt relief efforts.¹⁰

Order of interventions

The sequencing of interventions is important because of the interrelated impacts of disasters

and the path dependencies of relief. Relief and reconstruction plans need to balance speed and deliberation. In consultation with local communities, planners must balance the urgency of needs with the requirement to build back better. The ‘window of opportunity’ for post-disaster improvements varies “because it is a product of the political climate in a particular country”.¹¹ The degree of public consultation and community participation are factors shaping the timing and decisions taken on reconstruction.

It is critical to address the interdependencies of infrastructure and the risk of cascading impacts, such as fires after earthquakes, which can be more significant than the direct impacts of the disaster itself, particularly in terms of economic consequences. Efforts need to be tailored to particular hazards and to ensure that critical infrastructure, including life-saving structures, services, and resources, is strengthened pre-disaster, included in contingency planning, and prioritised in reconstruction.¹² Destruction of infrastructure such as piped drinking water systems may make populations vulnerable to disease; moreover, health needs may not be easy to predict. Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) interventions may be particularly important for health needs.¹³

It is important to plan so as to avoid a gap between relief efforts and recovery efforts. Large-scale infrastructure projects may take several months to prepare, meaning that it is necessary to prepare “smaller programs such as household repair or community-based recovery projects” to begin as soon as the emergency relief phase is over.¹⁴

The rigid imposition of timelines by aid actors can be counterproductive. GFDRR guidance states that:

The breakdown of the recovery process has been artificially created by external assisting agencies, (rarely by host governments) in order to categorise or even legitimise their support. These sequential phases imply a logical linear progression of a given community of survivors, for instance from sheltering under plastic sheeting towards permanent housing. However, the reality on the ground is that while

7 <https://www.undrr.org/terminology/rehabilitation>

8 <https://www.undrr.org/terminology/reconstruction>

9 GFDRR, *Earthquake Reconstruction*.

10 Julliard and Jourdain, *ALNAP Lessons*.

11 Stephen Platt and Emily So, “Speed or Deliberation: A Comparison of Post Disaster Recovery in Japan, Turkey, and Chile”, *Disasters* 41, no. 1 (2017): 696–727, <https://doi.org/10.1111/disa.12219>, 40.

12 Lloyd-Jones, Davis, and Steele, *Topic Guide*.

13 Julliard and Jourdain, *ALNAP Lessons*, 21.

14 GFDRR, *Earthquake Reconstruction*, 11.

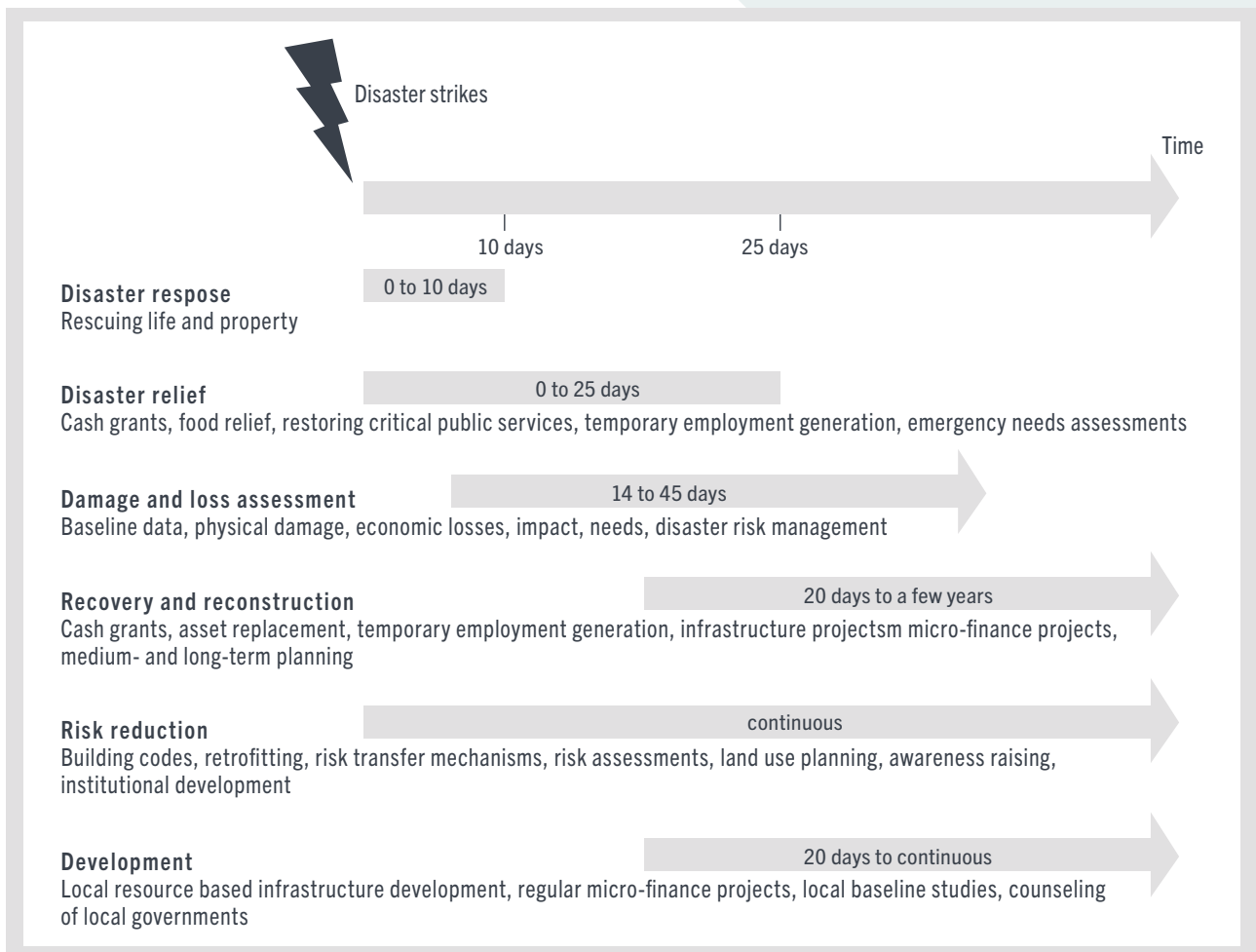


Figure 1: GFDRR earthquake response timeline (GFDRR, *Earthquake Reconstruction*)

some families are living in tents, others will be repairing their own dwellings, some may be renting undamaged buildings, with some having relocated and others are reconstructing or inhabiting permanent dwellings.¹⁵

GFDRR therefore suggests the following:

A new approach is required recognising a seamless transition from emergency sheltering to permanent reconstruction, with the removal of the artificial recovery ‘phases’ (i.e. ‘relief’, ‘rehabilitation’ and ‘recovery’). Funding should be less tied to specific immediate actions by specific agencies, but should be more flexible and aligned with longer-term development goals.¹⁶

Guidance on earthquake response emphasises the importance of considering reconstruction from the recovery stage.¹⁷ While immediate post-disaster needs may be distinct from long-term reconstruction efforts, it is recognised that decisions

about immediate responses have consequences for later reconstruction. The aim of reconstruction is to ‘build back better’, including enhanced DRR.¹⁸ Cross-cutting considerations on gender, security, and the environment should be included in the response phase.¹⁹

Following an earthquake, the initial response includes “rescue, medical aid, provision of food and emergency shelters, care for the dead, identification of dangerous structures and control of situations”.²⁰ Disaster response and recovery involves debris management; the provision of shelter, nutrition, and health and WASH services; the recovery of livelihoods and economic activity; and the re-

15 GFDRR, *Earthquake Reconstruction*, 11.

16 Lloyd-Jones, Davis, and Steele, *Topic Guide*.

17 GFDRR, *Earthquake Reconstruction*, 1.

18 Tony Lloyd-Jones, Ian Davis, and Andre Steele, *Topic Guide: Effective Post-Disaster Reconstruction Programmes (Evidence on Demand, 8 November 2016)*, https://doi.org/10.12774/eod_tg.august2016.lloyd-jonestetal; UNISDR, *Words into Action Guidelines*.

19 Helene Julliard and Joris Jourdain, *ALNAP Lessons Paper: Responding to Earthquakes* (ALNAP/ODI, 2019), 14, <https://www.alnap.org/help-library/alnap-lessons-paper-responding-to-earthquakes>.

20 GFDRR, *Earthquake Reconstruction*, 4.

establishment of education, food security, and civil protection.²¹

Debris clearance is a significant part of early response efforts that requires extensive time and resources.²² For example, agreement on a management plan for debris took 1–1.5 months after Hurricane Katrina in the United States, and two years after the tsunami in Aceh, Indonesia.²³

In clearing debris, the disposal of medical waste, hazardous waste, and the designation of debris collection sites should be prioritised. Debris can create significant environmental impacts that will later hamper recovery if its removal/recycling/reuse is not planned well. Those clearing debris need to decide whether to sort it where it is found or first move it to holding areas and then separate it. Sorting on-site is usually cheaper, provides livelihood opportunities, and allows for more recycling, but it can disrupt ongoing reconstruction efforts.²⁴ Cash-for-work programmes can distort the labour market and traditional self-help mechanisms if they employ a large number of people; they can also expose workers to significant safety hazards if they are not properly trained and supported with equipment.²⁵ Sorting after transportation is usually costlier and is more commonly undertaken in high-income countries.²⁶

Transitional shelters

In the response and relief stages, decisions regarding housing are crucial as they will have implications for later stages of the process. Decisions over whether to rebuild or relocate have important implications for livelihoods, social cohesion, urban planning, and other issues, and therefore require extensive consideration and a wide range of expertise. Planning should begin early, as ad hoc reconstruction may make decisions over the location and type of reconstruction harder.²⁷ Julliard and Jourdain's evidence review shows that relocation plans "are rarely successful, often due to distance from place of

origin and the lack of economic activities available to displaced people".²⁸

Transitional shelters must be provided between the disaster and the establishment of durable solutions. Key decisions regarding shelter include:²⁹

- How permanent should the shelters be? Transitional shelters take more time and resources to acquire and build than tents. Moreover, the use of transitional shelters can raise fears that they will be used for a long period and distract from efforts to reconstruct permanent shelters. In other cases, transitional shelters can be a way to avoid the creation of long-term camps for displaced persons, which can leave residents cut off from services, communities, and livelihoods.³⁰
- Where should displaced people be housed? If shelters are provided near the site of their old homes, the displaced may be able to re-establish work and community ties quickly. If shelters are set up farther away, it may be necessary to provide transportation so that the displaced can continue to access livelihood opportunities and services, and participate in community life.
- Who should be consulted when planning and building shelters? An underlying principle when building transitional shelters is to tailor them to the needs of the affected population. Aid modalities for transitional shelters can vary considerably based on the population's needs, with credit and rent assistance, building materials, and other goods all being potentially useful.³¹ Policy decisions should therefore be made in consultation with the affected population.
- How should the entire displaced population be supported, given that many may not live in transitional shelters built by disaster responders? Instead, they may build shelters themselves, live in planned camps, collective centres such as school buildings, or with host families.
- What kind of shelter structures should be built? GFDRR advises that shelters should be upgradeable, reusable, re-sellable, and recyclable, if possible.
- How should the shelters be built and procured?

21 Julliard and Jourdain, *ALNAP Lessons*.

22 GFDRR, *Earthquake Reconstruction*, 49–53; Julliard and Jourdain, *ALNAP Lessons*, 18–19.

23 GFDRR, *Earthquake Reconstruction*, 49–53.

24 GFDRR, *Earthquake Reconstruction*, 49–53.

25 Julliard and Jourdain, *ALNAP Lessons*, 18–19.

26 GFDRR, *Earthquake Reconstruction*, 49–53.

27 GFDRR, *Earthquake Reconstruction*, 49–53.

28 Julliard and Jourdain, *ALNAP Lessons*, 22.

29 GFDRR, *Earthquake Reconstruction*, 27–30.

30 Julliard and Jourdain, *ALNAP Lessons*, 23.

31 GFDRR, *Earthquake Reconstruction*, 25–26.

Ideally, this should involve local businesses and workers.

Decisions over shelter touch on many spheres of expertise, including land rights, economic development, service provision, cultural needs, and others, so decisions over housing are likely to have an effect on social cohesion and potential conflict.

Possibly contentious issues include land tenure. Land tenure claims can be difficult to resolve where personal identification and land tenure documentation is patchy or has been destroyed. Relief organisations should therefore consider ways to include people with missing identification, and work with governments to clarify land tenure claims.³²

Safety and security

Cross-cutting issues should be considered from the beginning of the response. For instance, security is an important consideration in earthquake response. In any context, an earthquake is likely to lead to security concerns as police and other security services may be disrupted and people may be without shelter. Responders may address this through assessments and specific measures, for example, building shelters with locks or liaising with security services.³³

Threats to safety as a result of a disaster may be greater for some groups than others, so demographically differentiated risks should be monitored in assessments. For instance, damage, loss, and needs assessments should disaggregate mortality and morbidity by age and gender.³⁴ Disaggregated data and assessment are required to understand needs and vulnerabilities. Women may be disadvantaged in receiving aid because of lower levels of literacy, caring responsibilities, or restrictions on their movement. They may not receive financial support if such programmes favour men as ‘heads of household’, tenants, or bank account holders. They may need more help in establishing land ownership and tenure.

Disasters are likely to worsen pre-existing vulnerabilities, which humanitarian responses should take into account. Immediate concerns are physical security and privacy. While the effect of disasters varies from context to context, the physical safety

of women and children (or others likely at risk in a post-disaster situation) should be a priority. Women may face violence and harassment, so the threats of sexual harassment and violence should be taken into consideration, and measures such as adequate lighting, reporting mechanisms, and policing, should be implemented. Separate lavatory facilities for men and women, and consultation with women on suitable locations for these facilities is therefore recommended. Pregnant women and lactating mothers should be offered appropriate facilities. Unaccompanied minors should also be afforded special protection. Orphans are also at risk of abduction and abuse, so child protection training for disaster survivors and responders should be held.

Reconstruction should take into account women’s likely increased workloads in caring and household tasks, and the disruption to informal support structures. A loss of housing may also disrupt livelihoods, such as small-scale agriculture. Measures such as making sure to “issue housing grants as well as housing and land titles in the names of both the wife and the husband, and to stipulate that widows inherit houses in their own names” may be appropriate.³⁵

Recovery and reconstruction efforts should also seek to improve gender equality. This necessitates ensuring women’s participation in decision-making and programmes, which may be hindered in conflict situations. Gender-sensitive reconstruction may involve working with existing women’s organisations.

Humanitarian response to crises can neglect to make facilities accessible to people with disabilities.³⁶ For instance, evacuation centres and other temporary services may not cater to people with disabilities.³⁷ Post-disaster needs assessments should consult stakeholders, especially vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities and other marginalised groups.³⁸ However, there is little evidence that people with disability are included in decision-making on disaster response.³⁹ Indeed, there is little

32 Julliard and Jourdain, *ALNAP Lessons*, 19.

33 Julliard and Jourdain, *ALNAP Lessons*, 14–15.

34 GFDRR, *Earthquake Reconstruction*, 59.

35 GFDRR, *Earthquake Reconstruction*, 61.

36 Becky Carter, *Impact of Social Inequalities and Discrimination on Vulnerability to Crises* (K4D Helpdesk Report, Institute of Development Studies, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.19088/K4D.2021.049>.

37 Louisa Yasukawa, *Disability, Disasters and Displacement* (IDMC Briefing Paper, 2021), https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/21_1003_IDMC_Disability%2CDisastersandDisplacement.pdf.

38 Iris Wielders, *Guidance for PDNA in Conflict Situations* (EU/ UN/World Bank, 2017), 11, <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/PDNA.pdf>.

39 Carter, *Impact of Social Inequalities*.

Environmental and social impact assessments, Haiti (2010)

| Assessment | Agency | Timing |
|---|--------------|---|
| Hazard identification tool | UNEP/OCHA | Day of disaster |
| Rapid environmental impact assessment | UNEP | 5 days after disaster; updated every 2 days |
| Initial social needs assessment (incorporated in United Nations Disaster Coordination and Assessment [UNDAC]) | UN/EU/WFP | 3–8 days after disaster |
| Public health risk assessment | WHO | 9 days after disaster |
| Post-disaster needs assessment | Multi-agency | 1.5 months after disaster (planned) |

Figure 2: Assessments undertaken in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake (GFDRR, *Earthquake Reconstruction*)

knowledge on what works in humanitarian response for people with disabilities. GFDRR guidance on earthquake reconstruction does not provide any recommendations on supporting people with disabilities.⁴⁰ More collection of disaggregated data, support, and participation are therefore recommended.⁴¹

It is widely agreed that schooling should resume as soon as possible because of the risks associated with children being out of school for a long time. However, as with housing, provision of education may fall awkwardly between relief and reconstruction, with the use of tents as schools continuing for many years in some cases.⁴²

Environmental impacts

In undertaking relief and reconstruction, planners need to consider environmental impacts from the early stages to make sure that construction codes and environmental and social standards are not sacrificed for the sake of speed or cost. GFDRR recommends assessing both the environmental and social impacts of disasters. As an example, it lists the following assessments undertaken in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake, their timing, and the implementing agencies (see Figure 2).⁴³

Given the range of organisations involved in these

assessments, it is important to coordinate. GFDRR recommends harmonising environmental and social guidelines, and gives examples of frameworks adopted after previous earthquakes. There may be a national framework in place. GFDRR suggests that in situations where national capacity for monitoring is limited, monitoring should be undertaken through contracting by large aid organisations with the capacity to do so, such as the World Bank, or through capacity building led by donors.⁴⁴

Environmental considerations may raise their own dilemmas. Julliard and Jourdain give the example of decisions on how to lower transportation emissions during the Haiti earthquake response – using local wood would achieve this, but it would also cause local deforestation, so the responders decided to import it.⁴⁵

Disaster relief in FCAS

Fragile contexts are more likely to experience disasters, but there is relatively little evidence or guidance on disaster response in these settings. FCAS create particular problems for humanitarian and development aid.⁴⁶ However, researchers note that “[i]nternational policy models for disaster response and risk reduction, including the Sendai Framework for Action, do not pay sufficient attention

40 GFDRR, *Earthquake Reconstruction*.

41 Yasukawa, *Disability, Disasters and Displacement*.

42 Julliard and Jourdain, *ALNAP Lessons*, 24.

43 GFDRR, *Earthquake Reconstruction*, 37.

44 GFDRR, *Earthquake Reconstruction*, 41.

45 Julliard and Jourdain, *ALNAP Lessons*, 14.

46 DFID, *Working Effectively in Conflict-Affected and Fragile Situations: Summary Note* (DFID, 2010), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67696/summary-note-briefing-papers.pdf.

to conflict-affected situations and should be more attuned to the influence of conflict, structural and cultural violence on disaster impacts and response.”⁴⁷ In policy and programmes, conflict and natural disasters are usually addressed separately.⁴⁸

Disaster relief and reconstruction plans are difficult to carry out in FCAS. Conflict reduces longer-term programming, such as development work, DRR, and reconstruction. For example, research has shown that the conflict in Yemen made humanitarian agencies wary of “investing in programmes and projects that would have to be cancelled” because of violence.⁴⁹ In situations of conflict, programming often switches from development work to humanitarian work.

Inadequate responses and poor coordination are common in FCAS. This may result from a number of factors, including low capacity, focus on other priorities (such as security), and restrictions driven by security concerns. Some contexts receive less aid than they need. Healey and Tiller focus on shortcomings in the aid sector that mean less attention is given to needs in dangerous situations.⁵⁰ This is because in emergencies, aid staff evacuate, work remotely, or focus on easy-to-reach areas and populations, while technical capacity declines in emergency settings.⁵¹ Successful interventions depend in part on the ability of aid actors to forge relationships with governing authorities, and seek to minimise compromises to principled aid.⁵²

UNDP cites Haiti as a region where security was prioritised over DRR by the national government and UN authorities. Similarly, in Aceh in Indonesia,

restrictions on movement arising from conflict limited disaster warning communications and humanitarian access. Following the 2004 tsunami, “political tensions hindered the disaster response and prevented effective capacity development of civil society participants so they could carry out disaster risk reduction and mitigation measures.”⁵³ In the disputed region of Ladakh (administered by India), militarised governance has led to a “relief-orientated disaster management approach” that does not address risk reduction.⁵⁴ Destruction of infrastructure and governing capacity, coupled with inadequate coordination among aid actors, led to poor outcomes after the Haiti earthquake.⁵⁵

Wisner questions the feasibility of ambitious ideals such as ‘build back better’ in contexts of conflict and institutional fragility. Before the 2003 volcanic eruption in Goma, the DRC’s risk governance capacity was very low as judged by the Sendai Framework, and there were, for instance, no uniform risk and vulnerability assessment procedures or contingency plans for an eruption. In cities where there is conflict, weak governance, and overlapping social and political vulnerability, building back better may require more than dealing with the specific consequences of one disaster.⁵⁶

Managing aid funds

Disasters often prompt a large inflow of aid, which can be particularly difficult to manage appropriately in FCAS. A country’s capacity to absorb funds should be taken into consideration. Immediately after a high-profile conflict (or a disaster), aid flows are likely to be high, but capacity to absorb them limited. While capacity to utilise aid money grows over time, aid funding is likely to decline.⁵⁷

Corruption, in the form of misappropriation of funds or the relaxation of standards, is a significant problem

47 Rodrigo Mena, *When Disaster Meets Conflict* (International Institute of Social Studies, 2020), 1; Sonny Patel et al., “Delivering the Promise of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction in Fragile and Conflict-Affected Contexts (FCAC): A Case Study of the NGO GOAL’s Response to the Syria Conflict”, *Progress in Disaster Science* 10 (April 2021): 100172, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pdisas.2021.100172>; Peters, Holloway, and Peters, *Disaster Risk Reduction*.

48 Wielders, *Guidance for PDNA*, 7; UNDP, *Disaster-Conflict Interface: Comparative Experiences* (UNDP, 2011), <https://www.preventionweb.net/publication/disaster-conflict-interface-comparative-experiences>.

49 Mena and Hilhorst, “The Transition from Development”.

50 Sean Healy and Sandrine Tiller, *Where Is Everyone? Responding to Emergencies in the Most Difficult Places* (MSF, 2014), https://www.msf.org/sites/default/files/msf-whereiseveryone_-def-lr_-_july.pdf.

51 Healy and Tiller, *Where Is Everyone?*; Rodrigo Mena and Dorothea Hilhorst, “Path Dependency When Prioritising Disaster and Humanitarian Response under High Levels of Conflict: A Qualitative Case Study in South Sudan”, *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* 7, no. 1 (13 January 2022): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-021-00111-w>.

52 Healy and Tiller, *Where Is Everyone?*

53 UNDP, *Disaster-Conflict Interface*, 16

54 Jessica Field and Ilan Kelman, “The Impact on Disaster Governance of the Intersection of Environmental Hazards, Border Conflict and Disaster Responses in Ladakh, India”, *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 31 (1 October 2018): 650–58, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdr.2018.07.001>.

55 Julliard and Jourdain, *ALNAP Lessons*, 27–28.

56 Wisner, “Build Back Better”.

57 John Bray, *International Companies and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Cross-Sectoral Comparisons* (Social Development Paper 22, World Bank, 2005), <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/fr/994031468752728929/pdf/31819.pdf>.

in disaster relief and reconstruction and in FCAS.⁵⁸ Factors such as weak institutions, organised crime, or norms of patronage and nepotism, encourage corruption in situations where there is an influx of aid resources. It is important to note that corruption is hard to define, and some attributions of corruption may be culturally specific, meaning it is important to systematically assess fiduciary risks. Alexander notes that after the earthquake in Haiti, state corruption was much less significant than inefficient distribution of aid and lack of funding to local NGOs.⁵⁹

In the phase of immediate disaster response, corruption may lead to the diversion of aid from those in need. In the rush to provide adequate relief, aid may be poorly targeted and correct processes ignored. In the reconstruction phase, appropriate standards, such as building regulations, may be bypassed, leaving the built environment vulnerable to future disasters.⁶⁰

Recommendations to reduce the risk of corruption in disaster relief and reconstruction include: “[enhancing] the transparency of ... assistance by adopting consistent policies and procedures in aid design, implementation and evaluation”; using the expertise of local actors with better local knowledge; capacity building in aid oversight for local institutions; ensuring broad participation in aid, as well as transparency and accountability in aid and procurement, to encourage mutual supervision; the agreement of uniform procurement procedures by governments and aid providers. It is helpful for governments and aid providers to agree on uniform procurement procedures and independent monitoring by civil society actors.⁶¹ Aid agencies should increase their own capacity to detect corruption. Inter-agency mechanisms, such as risk management units, may be useful in sharing

information on corruption risks and mitigation measures.⁶²

In areas of contested control, reconstruction can be highly politicised. For example, an edited volume on post-conflict reconstruction highlights that reconstruction is a ‘loaded term’ that may imply either a return to the status quo or a vision of a new social, economic, and political order to different observers.⁶³ With regard to Syria, it has been argued that the Assad government, which is seeking to control the country in the face of domestic and international opposition, is using post-war reconstruction to reassert authority over Syrian society.⁶⁴ Sanctions by foreign governments can also make reconstruction difficult.⁶⁵

Assessment models

Different assessments can be undertaken in conflict and disaster settings. Assessments of conflict, fragility, and peacebuilding, such as the Risk and Resilience Assessment or the Recovery and Peacebuilding Assessment (RPBA), include conflict risks.⁶⁶ However, the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) evaluates a disaster’s impact and recovery needs. While a PDNA takes a whole-of-society approach and involves relevant stakeholders and affected communities, it does not pay attention to conflict dynamics (like an RPBA). A PDNA should take 6–12 weeks and needs to be elaborated into a disaster recovery framework. A Disaster/Dynamic Needs Assessment (DNA) or Rapid Disaster Needs Assessment is a shorter version of a PDNA, and is led by government. Where these assessments do not

58 Adele Harmer and Francois Grünewald, *Collective Resolution to Enhance Accountability and Transparency in Emergencies: Synthesis Report* (Transparency International, 2017), https://www.humanitarianoutcomes.org/sites/default/files/publications/2017_create_synthesis_en.pdf; Gretta Fenner and Mirella Mahlstein, “Curbing the Risks of and Opportunities for Corruption in Natural Disaster Situations”, in *International Law and Standards Applicable in Natural Disaster Situations*, ed. Erica Harper (International Development Law Organization, 2009), <https://baselgovernance.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/Corruption%20in%20natural%20disaster%20situations.pdf>.

59 David Alexander, “Corruption and the Governance of Disaster Risk”, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Natural Hazard Science* (Oxford University Press, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199389407.013.253>.

60 Fenner and Mahlstein, “Curbing the Risks”.

61 Fenner and Mahlstein, “Curbing the Risks”, 248–50.

62 Harmer and Grünewald, *Collective Resolution*.

63 Marc Lynch and Maha Yahya, “Introduction”, in *The Politics of Post-Conflict Reconstruction*, ed. Marc Lynch and Maha Yahya (POMEPS Studies no. 30, 2018), 4, https://pomeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/POMEPS_Studies_30.pdf.

64 Steven Heydemann, “Reconstructing Authoritarianism: The Politics and Political Economy of Postconflict Reconstruction in Syria”, in *The Politics of Post-Conflict Reconstruction* (POMEPS Studies no. 30, 2018), 14–21, https://pomeps.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/POMEPS_Studies_30.pdf.

65 Jon Unruh, “The Priority Dilemma of Western Sanctions on Syria’s Agricultural Reconstruction”, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 16, no. 2 (15 March 2022): 202–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2020.1868751>.

66 World Bank, *Building for Peace: Reconstruction for Security, Equity, and Sustainable Peace in MENA* (World Bank, 2020), 101, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/747201593601797730/pdf/Building-for-Peace-Reconstruction-for-Security-Equity-and-Sustainable-Peace-in-MENA.pdf>.

include conflict factors, they should be supplemented with awareness of the conflict-disaster interface.⁶⁷

The impartiality of a needs assessment may be more difficult to achieve in FCAS. Authorities may seek to politicise needs assessments in order to focus aid on areas from which they derive political support.⁶⁸ Therefore, when working in unstable political environments, a risk analysis should be undertaken to identify factors that may distort or politicise needs assessments.⁶⁹ Strategies taken by humanitarian actors to ensure the impartiality of needs assessments include ‘substantial presence on the ground’ and ‘trust-building’ to allow them to undertake direct assessments in communities. However, this may only be possible if funding has been earmarked for the purpose.⁷⁰

Conflict sensitivity is cited as a necessary approach when undertaking relief or reconstruction in conflict areas. It helps aid actors ‘do no harm’ by identifying areas where their work may inflame tensions and risks of conflict. Programming that is conflict-blind risks inflaming tensions. UNDP gives the example of money given to tsunami survivors and those recovering from conflict in Aceh, Indonesia. Those rebuilding housing following the tsunami were given more money, which increased tensions.⁷¹ Conversely, there is some evidence that conflicts can be opportunities for peacebuilding and disaster diplomacy, although most scholars emphasise that such outcomes are rare.⁷²

UNDP has begun to assess the links between conflict and disasters, and their implications for programming.

It identifies several causal relationships relevant to programming, including the following:

- The impact of conflict can exacerbate disaster risk and recovery. It can weaken the coping capacity of individuals and communities, reduce the ability of authorities to provide basic services, reduce access to particular populations, create war economies and criminalities, and lead to security risks.
- Disaster interventions can intensify conflict risk. This can happen as a result of resettlement schemes that create tensions between hosts and displaced populations, aid responses that fail to include certain groups or are perceived to be unfair, aid that strengthens conflict parties, and violence resulting from ‘reconstruction markets’.⁷³

UNDP therefore calls for conflict sensitivity in disaster programming in areas with conflicts and disasters. While each context is unique, the programming approach must abide by the principles of conflict sensitivity and building back better.

It is agreed that conflict sensitivity requires aid actors to strengthen their analytical and advocacy capacities so as to “enable a more strategic and contextual navigation of politics – adjusting their work to politics when they must, and advocating for marginalised communities and local actors when they can.”⁷⁴ UNDP recommends multidisciplinary in programming and the sharing of expertise.⁷⁵ Conflict sensitivity should be applied consistently and linked to the programme cycle and monitoring of activities.⁷⁶ It is rooted in careful analysis of conflict risks and opportunities; the use of transparent programming criteria is also important in fostering trust and cooperation between different actors.⁷⁷

The *Disaster Recovery in Conflict Guidance* from GFDRR focuses on the importance of conflict sensitivity. It outlines “how recovery frameworks must be informed within a disaster–conflict nexus”. This requires a “nuanced consideration of the local political context, the two-way relationship between intervention/action and conflict, and how both will inform the recovery effort.” Rather than suggesting a new framework, it emphasises the distinctiveness

67 UNDP, *Disaster-Conflict Interface*, 27.

68 Ajay Madiwale and Kudrat Virk, “Civil–Military Relations in Natural Disasters: A Case Study of the 2010 Pakistan Floods”, *International Review of the Red Cross* 93, no. 884 (December 2011): 1085–1105, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S181638311200032X>.

69 Terry Jeggles and Marco Boggero, *Post-Disaster Needs Assessment PDNA: Lessons from a Decade of Experience* (World Bank/EU/UNDP, 2018), <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/30945>.

70 Isabelle Desportes and Dorothea Hilhorst, “Disaster Governance in Conflict-Affected Authoritarian Contexts: The Cases of Ethiopia, Myanmar, and Zimbabwe”, *Politics and Governance* 8, no. 4 (10 December 2020): 343–54, 348, <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v8i4.3127>.

71 UNDP, *Disaster-Conflict Interface*, 16.

72 UNDP, *Disaster-Conflict Interface*; Ilan Kelman, Jessica Field, Kavita Suri, and Ghulam Bhat, “Disaster Diplomacy in Jammu and Kashmir”, *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 31 (1 October 2018): 1132–40, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2018.02.007>; Arno Waizenegger and Jennifer Hyndman, “Two Solitudes: Post-Tsunami and Post-Conflict Aceh”, *Disasters* 34, no. 3 (2010): 787–808, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7717.2010.01169.x>.

73 UNDP, *Disaster-Conflict Interface*, 18–19.

74 Mena, *When Disaster Meets Conflict*, 1.

75 UNDP, *Disaster-Conflict Interface*, 27.

76 Peters, Holloway, and Peters, *Disaster Risk Reduction*.

77 UNDP, *Disaster-Conflict Interface*, 27.

of each context, and that programmers should apply conflict sensitivity principles to existing frameworks.⁷⁸

Guidance for PDNA in Conflict Situations, prepared by the EU, the UN, and the World Bank, seeks to provide guidance on integrating conflict and disaster needs and responses. Allowing that each context is distinct, it sets out broad conflict sensitivity questions that should guide assessments in each context. It advises the use of a conflict-sensitive lens to develop an awareness of risks, as well as opportunities for cohesion.

The PDNA process should be inclusive and involve multiple stakeholders. It should also be aware of conflict risks arising from programmes that target infrastructure, food, or governance, in their baseline and impact assessments. The PDNA should “consider whether there are any concurrent events while the PDNA is being developed that could heighten tensions. The electoral cycle, harvest timeframes and religious festivities are some examples of time-bound events that may have an impact on tensions and social cohesion.”⁷⁹

Conflict sensitivity

Conflict risks should be considered when prioritising recovery needs. While the “most critical recovery needs are accorded priority ... as prioritization is also a political process, various factors influence sequencing decisions, including: national and local government priorities, technical feasibility (including accessibility), and the availability of resources.”⁸⁰

The prioritisation and sequencing of recovery interventions is an area where the conflict sensitivity lens should be applied to minimise the risk of reinforcing tensions and maximise opportunities to strengthen resilience. Perception is especially important, and with it the need to ensure transparency and clear communication to both beneficiary and non-beneficiary communities regarding how prioritisation and sequencing decisions are made, and by whom.

The guidance states that as part of a conflict-sensitive approach, “a needs-based approach can overlap with the prioritisation of one particular population group”.⁸¹ This should be applied in each

sector. Research on post-conflict reconstruction in Nineveh, Iraq, reports widespread perceptions that aid was disproportionately targeted at particular social groups, giving rise to tensions.⁸²

On governance issues, the guidance states that “it is important to investigate the legitimacy of the government authorities in place, in particular where problems have been identified that weaken the social contract”.⁸³ Questions to consider include the following:

- Are particular groups more affected than others by gaps in basic service provision following a disaster?
- What are the views on the legitimacy of government authority?
- Does this differ between different levels of government?
- Are there differences in perception between different groups?
- Are there corruption risks related to recovery assistance?
- Are these linked to (perceptions of) inequality between different groups?
- Are there tensions between different levels of government that should be considered?
- Are decentralisation processes underway?
- In conflict-affected situations, is the legitimacy of government contested?
- Are there peace processes underway that include discussions on governance arrangements?

Evidence and lessons on working with different actors in conflict-affected situations

Disaster response and reconstruction is a complex process that involves many stakeholders. In the

78 GFDRR, *Disaster Recovery*, 25–27.

79 Wielders, *Guidance for PDNA*, 21.

80 Wielders, *Guidance for PDNA*, 21.

81 Wielders, *Guidance for PDNA*, 21.

82 Amal Bourhrou, Shivan Fazil and Dylan O’Driscoll, *Post-Conflict Reconstruction in the Nineveh Plains of Iraq: Agriculture, Cultural Practices and Social Cohesion* (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, November 2022), <https://doi.org/10.55163/RAEP9560>.

83 Wielders, *Guidance for PDNA*, 23.

response stage, local communities and civil society organisations have important roles in immediate relief efforts.⁸⁴ National and local governments, sometimes alongside international organisations, should lead and coordinate relief responses. In FCAS, conflict parties, whether state or informal, as well as communities, may take on more prominence in disaster relief and reconstruction.

This section discusses evidence on working with different state and non-state actors in FCAS. It first sets out a broad categorisation of different conflict contexts and their possible effects on disaster relief. It then discusses evidence on working with different actors in such contexts, before addressing the difficulties of disaster relief in areas of split control or low-level conflict, and finally looks at the potential of CDR in FCAS.

Effect of conflict contexts on disaster relief

The conditions in which a disaster occurs shape how relief can be undertaken. The *When Disaster Meets Conflict* programme has categorised conflict contexts into high-intensity conflicts, low-intensity conflicts, and post-conflict settings.⁸⁵ It identifies a number of features that shape disasters in each setting.

Challenges raised by high-intensity conflicts (HICs) include lack of infrastructure, logistics and access; absence of aid organisations; and population movements.⁸⁶ Potential solutions to these challenges include adaptive management, the use of cash, and careful communication with authorities and donors. In particular, it is important to define and communicate project aims and outputs clearly.⁸⁷

In HIC situations, aid may be “locked into path-dependent programming. Agencies tend to stay and work in the same areas and sectors over time, rather than moving to locations where aid is needed most.”⁸⁸ Disaster response is often subsumed under conflict response, and in cases where conflict

breaks out, aid may shift from development to humanitarian.⁸⁹

Challenges raised by low-intensity conflicts (LICs) include lack of funding, funding priorities, unsustainable programmes, and low-capacity local actors. In such contexts, long-term and integrated programmes have been found to be most successful. They make it possible for aid workers to “work around the central government, if necessary through personal channels and networks. At the same time, trustful relations with the government were also deemed a prerequisite to be allowed to work long-term in these countries.”⁹⁰ Related strategies include cultural sensitivity; aid actors ‘keeping their heads down’, that is, undertaking politically controversial work but seeking to not draw attention to it; and subcontracting. Long subcontracting chains can decrease transparency and accountability and increase corruption risks.⁹¹

Authoritarian states with LICs create difficulties for international disaster responders. Case studies on Ethiopia, Myanmar, and Zimbabwe highlight the role of disaster response in actors’ legitimacy, and therefore the importance of framing disaster response as part of a ‘governance of perceptions’. The scenario may require aid actors to balance the expectations of various groups involved in, and receiving, disaster aid. In several authoritarian states with LICs, states are perceived as having political goals, while aid agencies are framed as ‘Western agents’ or ‘terrorist supporters’.⁹²

Authorities in authoritarian states featuring LICs “mainly influenced the disaster response through everyday politics, including via (i) bureaucracy and (ii) information management, and by instilling a culture of (iii) uncertainty and (iv) fear.”⁹³ International responders use strategies of compliance, social navigation, and resistance:⁹⁴

- Compliance (e.g. self-censorship or reinterpreting their mandate).
- Social navigation (e.g. working according to local bureaucratic rules, being tactful in emphasising or downplaying certain issues, and carefully

84 Julliard and Jourdain, *ALNAP Lessons*.

85 Mena, *When Disaster Meets Conflict*, 4.

86 Roanne van Voorst and Dorothea Hilhorst, *Humanitarian Action in Disaster and Conflict Settings: Insights of an Expert Panel* (International Institute of Social Studies, 2017), 12–13, <https://www.iss.nl/media/2018-05-humanitarian-action-disaster-and-conflict-settings-lr-2>.

87 van Voorst and Hilhorst, *Humanitarian Action*, 12–13.

88 Mena, *When Disaster Meets Conflict*.

89 Mena and Hilhorst, “The Transition from Development”.

90 van Voorst and Hilhorst, *Humanitarian Action*, 12–13.

91 Harmer and Grünwald, *Collective Resolution*, 21.

92 Desportes and Hilhorst, “Disaster Governance”, 345.

93 Desportes and Hilhorst, “Disaster Governance”, 348.

94 Desportes and Hilhorst, “Disaster Governance”, 350.

positioning themselves in relation to powerful interests).

- Resistance (working via parallel local networks such as CSOs, raising issues in international forums or with officials, working without authorisation, boycotting particular programmes, exiting the country, or denouncing the government).

Partnerships with local NGOs and others are potential strategies to enable “aid actors to get access to a politically disenfranchised group of people (such as IDPs in Ethiopia)”.⁹⁵

Challenges in post-conflict situations (PCSs) include lack of infrastructure, political sensitivities, overwhelmed humanitarian workers, and the risk that culturally inappropriate programmes may be implemented. In post-conflict or low-intensity conflict situations, aid actors may be encouraged to favour particular constituencies.⁹⁶ For instance, Wielders recounts tensions arising over the perceived lack of transparency and unfairness in the aid response in post-conflict Sri Lanka, with aid efforts in both government- and Tamil-held areas being accused of favouring supporters of those groups.⁹⁷ Following the Nepalese earthquake in 2015, unresolved outcomes from Nepal’s civil war (1996–2006) affected the reconstruction. Conflict tensions shaped perceptions of the relief effort, such as the belief by some that the state was deliberately slow in carrying out reconstruction work to distract from political problems. Political appointees to the reconstruction committees were also common.⁹⁸

Working with different actors

National governments are often the most important actors in terms of planning and coordinating responses, and ensuring the sustainability and legitimacy of those responses.⁹⁹ GFDRR guidance states that “[g]overnment leadership is the key factor in determining a successful recovery of any affected area. International partners should make every effort

to strengthen the government’s role to lead recovery – no matter how fragile the government’s capacity is.”¹⁰⁰ In FCAS, leadership by national governments may be unlikely due to lack of capacity, lack of control over some areas, lack of will to deliver aid impartially, and political tensions with foreign donors and rebel groups, among other factors.

International aid is needed in many disasters, but states may refuse it for a number of reasons.¹⁰¹ Several strategies may help:

- Outside actors can make long-term reconstruction aid conditional on being given access to the region struck by disaster.¹⁰²
- Diplomacy led by regional organisations. ASEAN was effective in negotiating access to Myanmar following cyclone Nargis in 2008.¹⁰³ Myanmar delayed access for foreign aid staff, principally by being slow to issue visas. International diplomacy, including threats of responsibility to protect (R2P) intervention by Western states, was unsuccessfully deployed before “international assistance with a regional character” involving Myanmar, ASEAN, and the UN was agreed.¹⁰⁴
- Framing responses in particular ways may help navigate the sensitivities of government authorities. In all disasters, decisions over where, when, and how to respond are negotiated between multiple aid, social, and political actors.¹⁰⁵ One aspect of this negotiation is ‘framing’ of the different ways international responders interact with state and other authorities. The framing of a disaster and its response is central to disaster governance.¹⁰⁶ One aspect of framing

95 van Voorst and Hilhorst, *Humanitarian Action*, 12–13.

96 Samantha Melis, “Post conflict Disaster Governance in Nepal: One door Policy, Multiple Window Practice”, *Disasters* 46, no. 1 (January 2022): 226–45, <https://doi.org/10.1111/disa.12455>.

97 Wielders, *Guidance for PDNA*, 11.

98 Elly Harrowell and Alpaslan Özerdem, “The Politics of the Post-Conflict and Post-Disaster Nexus in Nepal”, *Conflict, Security & Development* 18, no. 3 (4 May 2018): 181–205, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2018.1468531>.

99 Julliard and Jourdain, *ALNAP Lessons*, 11.

100 GFDRR, *Earthquake Reconstruction*, 11–12.

101 Travis Nelson, “Rejecting the Gift Horse: International Politics of Disaster Aid Refusal”, *Conflict, Security & Development* 10, no. 3 (1 July 2010): 379–402, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2010.484202>.

102 Claudia Meier, *Humanitarians, Play Your Cards Right: How to Save Lives and Impartiality in Syria’s Earthquake-Affected North* (GPPI, 2023), <https://gppl.net/2023/02/10/how-to-save-lives-and-impartiality-in-syrias-earthquake-affected-north>.

103 Yves-Kim Creac’h and Lilianne Fan, “ASEAN’s Role in the Cyclone Nargis Response: Implications, Lessons and Opportunities”, *Humanitarian Exchange* 41 (December 2008): 5–7, <https://odihpn.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/12/humanitarianexchange041.pdf>.

104 Julie Belanger and Richard Horsey, “Negotiating Humanitarian Access to Cyclone-Affected Areas of Myanmar: A Review”, *Humanitarian Exchange* 41 (December 2008): 2–5, <https://odihpn.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/12/humanitarianexchange041.pdf>.

105 Mena, *When Disaster Meets Conflict*.

106 Desportes and Hilhorst, “Disaster Governance”.

is expressed through terminological choices. For instance, the term ‘post-crisis’ rather than ‘post-conflict’ or ‘disaster’ was used in Pakistan.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, following the 2004 tsunami, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) adjusted its terminology from ‘conflict-affected’ to ‘emergent’ when referring to certain regions as a tactic to maintain programming in the face of government sensitivities around the ongoing civil war in Sri Lanka.¹⁰⁸ However, humanitarian actors should be careful that framing their work as apolitical does not lead them to ignore important conflict sensitivities and differential needs.¹⁰⁹

- Aid from foreign donors can be coordinated through mechanisms such as multi-donor trust funds, cluster approaches, and effective needs assessments and planning, to ensure coordination and good communication with national authorities.¹¹⁰
- Summarising evidence on previous earthquake responses, Julliard and Jourdain encourage “creative ways to work with local and national actors and include them throughout the various phases of the project cycle.” They give the example of an NGO working with both local and national government departments.¹¹¹

Armed actors, including national militaries and police, as well as non-state armed actors and other informal groups, may present particular challenges for humanitarian operations.¹¹² Academic work suggests that “little is known about the impact of conflict actors on natural disaster relief efforts.”¹¹³ Moreover, guidelines on military–humanitarian cooperation in disaster relief, such as the 1994 *Oslo Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief* and the 2003 *Guidelines on the Use of Military and Civil Defence Assets to*

Support United Nations Humanitarian Activities in Complex Emergencies, do not provide meaningful guidance on many issues. These guidelines focus on state militaries and do not mention “negotiating humanitarian access, promoting civilian protection, and other issues of security.”¹¹⁴

Grace et al. have developed a typology for humanitarian-military relations based on two factors: the degree of convergence between an “armed actor’s organisational interests and the civilian responders’ view of needs”, and “the extent to which the crisis-affected population views the armed actor as a credible agent of security”. They show that in several instances humanitarian actors faced dilemmas over whether to compromise principled aid in situations where they worked with military actors, and sought to advocate for more principled aid (in the Philippines), or used military actors for logistical activities (in the DRC).¹¹⁵

Case studies also elucidate particular issues faced when working with armed groups. During the typhoon in the Philippines in 2012, two armed groups offered contrasting levels of support to the humanitarian relief effort. While the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) collaborated with the relief effort, the New People’s Army (NPA) did not. These differences in behaviour are attributed to the “level of hostility between the rebel group and the state in the pre-disaster period.”¹¹⁶

International relief teams may have to decide whether to work with listed terrorist organisations in certain areas, with mutual suspicion and anti-terror laws leading to weakened coordination.¹¹⁷ While the US government and aid actors were willing to work with proscribed Islamist groups in Kashmir after the 2005 earthquake, particularly in the relief stage, the relationship was controversial, and the listed organisations were not involved in coordination meetings, despite their important role in the relief effort.¹¹⁸ While working with such groups can bring benefits in terms of delivery of relief, it may compromise ideals of impartial and inclusive recovery. An International Crisis Group report raised concerns that Islamist groups in Kashmir were seeking to reconstruct the region’s schools based

107 GFDRR, *Disaster Recovery*, 23.

108 Elly Harrowell and Alpaslan Özerdem, “Understanding the Dilemmas of Integrating Post-Disaster and Post-Conflict Reconstruction Initiatives: Evidence from Nepal, Sri Lanka and Indonesia”, *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction* 36 (1 May 2019): 101092, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2019.101092>.

109 Harrowell and Özerdem, “The Politics of the Post-Conflict”.

110 GFDRR, *Earthquake Reconstruction*, 11.

111 Julliard and Jourdain, *ALNAP Lessons*, 7.

112 Rob Grace et al., “Moving Humanitarian-Military Relations Forward: A New Typology”, *Journal of International Humanitarian Action* 8, no. 2 (December 2023), <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-023-00134-5>.

113 Colin Walch, “Collaboration or Obstruction? Rebel Group Behavior during Natural Disaster Relief in the Philippines”, *Political Geography* 43 (November 2014): 40, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2014.09.007>.

114 Grace et al., “Moving Humanitarian-Military Relations Forward”, 5.

115 Grace et al., “Moving Humanitarian-Military Relations Forward”.

116 Walch, “Collaboration or Obstruction?”, 40.

117 Andrew Wilder, “Aid and Stability in Pakistan: Lessons from the 2005 Earthquake Response”, *Disasters* 34, no. s3 (2010): 406–26, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7717.2010.01209.x>.

118 Wilder, “Aid and Stability in Pakistan”, 414–15, 416–19.

on Islamist precepts, and ‘trafficking’ orphans.¹¹⁹ In Lebanon, following the 2006 conflict, donor reconstruction funds from different states were often disbursed along sectarian lines, entrenching local patronage networks and the distribution of power.¹²⁰

Working in areas of split control and conflict

The de facto control of territory by opposing conflict parties can raise difficulties for disaster relief and reconstruction efforts. In LIC and PCS contexts, authorities may seek to channel relief to particular constituencies.

Case studies demonstrate the difficulties of working across areas of split control. Mena and Hilhorst show that in Yemen, where territory is split between a recognised government and the Houthi movement, humanitarian actors found it hard to navigate working with the two authorities. According to interviews, “the two entities had limited governance capacity and differing (and sometimes unknown) agendas and procedures. This added a north–south geographical divide and a coordination challenge to the problematic division between development and humanitarian aid.”¹²¹

UNDP offers several examples of split control or low-level conflict hindering humanitarian response during disasters. In Bolivia, following floods in 2007, the government centralised decision-making through a ‘transitory command unit’ and did not distribute aid to marginalised communities, while international donors sent money through local governments, which polarised relief.¹²²

The response to the tsunami in Aceh, Indonesia, is cited as an example of a disaster response that helped improve conflict dynamics. For instance, IOM sought to engage members of both sides of the conflict in its flood relief work. The disaster allowed peace negotiations to take place.¹²³ Not all disaster relief work was sensitive to conflict dynamics, however, with much more aid given to disaster

victims than conflict victims because of donor earmarking and restrictions on the ground.¹²⁴

In Sri Lanka, following the 2004 tsunami, conflict dynamics affected the disaster response. A ceasefire had been reached but a peace agreement had not yet been signed. In the northeast, many remained in camps. The PDNA aimed to work in both government and Tamil Tiger-controlled areas. The PDNA took five steps to address conflict sensitivity: public consultation, communication consultation, arbitration and mediation, district-based reconstruction plans, and appropriate funding mechanisms. It focused on involving all stakeholders, including different conflict parties.¹²⁵

The conditions for disaster and conflict recovery were initially good: “conflict parties in Sri Lanka sought to create a joint mechanism – the Post-Tsunami Operational Management Structures (P-TOMS) – to facilitate cooperation and coordination in the recovery process ... [This] was widely seen as an ideal scenario for the conflicting parties to use the disaster and recovery as a window of opportunity to revive the peace process.”¹²⁶ However, the body was suspended by the Supreme Court shortly thereafter. Relief remained centralised under the state, and some areas, such as those in the northeast, received less aid than the south.¹²⁷ The designation of funds as conflict recovery or disaster recovery also affected distribution, with some funding only available to tsunami survivors.

Several lessons and potential strategies can be derived from these case studies. The GFDRR guide recommends effective and independent monitoring, including highly local assessments, to ensure a fair distribution of aid.¹²⁸

With regard to conflict contexts, GFDRR guidance states that:

It is desirable to establish a mutually agreed upon process between conflicting parties and potential external cooperation organizations and donors that is respectful of human rights, minority and diversity, and humanitarian principles. There may also be a need to foster civil-military relations. Recovery efforts are likely to involve military and civilian authorities. Thus,

119 Cited in Wilder, “Aid and Stability in Pakistan”, 419–20.

120 Christine Sylva Hamieh and Roger Mac Ginty, “A Very Political Reconstruction: Governance and Reconstruction in Lebanon after the 2006 War”, *Disasters* 34, no. 1 (2010): 103–23, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7717.2009.01101.x>.

121 Mena and Hilhorst, “The Transition from Development”, 1063.

122 UNDP, *Disaster-Conflict Interface*, 32.

123 UNDP, *Disaster-Conflict Interface*, 32.

124 Waizenegger and Hyndman, “Two Solitudes”.

125 GFDRR, *Disaster Recovery*, 11.

126 GFDRR, *Disaster Recovery*, 19.

127 GFDRR, *Disaster Recovery*, 21.

128 GFDRR, *Disaster Recovery*, 21.

*it may be necessary to develop principles of engagement for the military and principles of effective collaboration among military, civilian, and international actors.*¹²⁹

More generally, in conflict contexts, the use of humanitarian forums or technical committees involving the conflict parties may be an effective tool to gain cooperation.¹³⁰ Although not specifically developed for disaster relief and reconstruction, such forums may allow humanitarian actors and conflict parties to agree access arrangements and the principled distribution of aid. Their success is highly context-specific and may work better when linked to, or separate from, political processes, depending on the context.¹³¹

Working across conflict lines may call for a different set of relationships than what is recommended in disaster recovery guidance. A report sets out the strategies taken by GOAL, an international humanitarian response agency, when undertaking DRR in northwest Syria, as part of a broader effort to reconceptualise DRR in FCAS. It recommends a systems thinking approach, contextual understanding, and flexibility in programming. GOAL used the following strategies when working with the limited and competing governance structures in the area:

- Strengthening coordination, partnership, and advocacy through the Syria NGO Forum to engage with Turkish authorities.
- Using an ‘assurance framework’ to build trust with stakeholders. The framework “consists of minimum standards for employed teams and an independent quality-control levels [sic] of conflict sensitivity, audit, compliance, accountability, safeguarding, investigations, communication and visibility, monitoring and evaluation, learning, and technical quality assurance, which are separate to the evaluation of operations and program implementation.”
- Implementing risk reduction solutions in a way that was “both localized and internationalized, but

crucially not nationalized within the confines of Syria”. It also used area-based programming.

- Emphasis on the need to adapt to challenges such as sanctioned actors or conflict events.¹³²

Using community-driven reconstruction in FCAS

While guidance on disaster relief, reconstruction, and prevention foregrounds the role of the state in order to foster sustainability, CDR may be appropriate in FCAS, where national or local state governance institutions may be weak or absent.¹³³ CDR is advocated for several reasons: the accountability and efficiency of service delivery led by local actors, and the need to “rehabilitate or even invent institutions for reconstruction and service delivery, given that state institutions have been weakened by civil war”.¹³⁴ Similarly, collaborative aid networks (CANs) may be able to provide support to communities ignored by authorities. They can also address needs more holistically and in a longer-term manner than sector-focused humanitarian responses.¹³⁵

CDR may be also used in post-conflict reconstruction because it has several potential advantages, including low unit cost due to fewer overheads and potentially being “more resilient to periodic bouts of insecurity than larger scale contractor arrangements run by international staff, who often require greater security guarantees.”¹³⁶ International staff, including private sector contractors, will nevertheless require a minimum level of security, as well as banking facilities and transportation links. Moreover, in a conflict situation people may be afraid that participation in a CDR process will signal that they are siding with one conflict party.

¹²⁹ GFDRR, *Disaster Recovery*, 22.

¹³⁰ Luke Kelly, *The Role of UN Humanitarian Forums Involving Conflict Parties in Conflict Situations* (K4D Helpdesk Report, Institute of Development Studies, 2019), <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/14492>.

¹³¹ Sara Pantuliano, “A ‘Principled’ Approach to Complex Emergencies: Testing a New Aid Delivery Model in the Nuba Mountains”, *Disasters* 29, no. s1 (June 2005): 52–66, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0361-3666.2005.00284.x>.

¹³² Patel et al., “Delivering the Promise”.

¹³³ Lizanne McBride and Alyoscia D’Onofrio, “Community-Driven Reconstruction: A New Strategy for Recovery”, *Humanitarian Exchange* 39 (June 2008): 4–7, <https://odihpn.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/07/humanitarianexchange039.pdf>.

¹³⁴ Cyrus Samii, *Revisiting Community-Driven Reconstruction in Fragile States*, WIDER Working Paper (UNU-WIDER, February 2023), 1, <https://doi.org/10.35188/UNU-WIDER/2023/334-5>.

¹³⁵ Jennifer Bealt and S. Afshin Mansouri, “From Disaster to Development: A Systematic Review of Community-Driven Humanitarian Logistics”, *Disasters* 42, no. 1 (January 2018): 124–48, <https://doi.org/10.1111/disa.12232>.

¹³⁶ Sarah Cliffe, Scott Guggenheim, and Markus Kostner, *Community-Driven Reconstruction as an Instrument in War-to-Peace Transitions*, CPR Working Paper (World Bank, 2003), <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/307821468764666040/community-driven-reconstruction-as-an-instrument-in-war-to-peace-transitions>, 5

| | Central Government has Legitimacy and Capacity | Central Government has Legitimacy but Lacks Capacity | Central Government has Capacity but Lacks Legitimacy |
|--|---|---|--|
| Local Administration has Legitimacy and Capacity | Direct partnership between central government fund and communities or partnership between local administration and communities. | Partnership between local administration and communities, with strong visible role for central government. | Limited partnership between local administration and communities. Should be adjusted with progress in peace or reconciliation talks or democratization. |
| Local Administration has Capacity but Not Legitimacy | Direct partnership between central government fund and communities. Sufficient role to prevent opposition must be found for local administration. Must adapt with later discussion on reform of local administration. | Partnership between NGOs or private sector and communities. Should quickly move to direct central government-community partnership as capacity develops. Sufficient role to prevent opposition must be found for local administration. Must adapt with later discussions on reform of local administration. | Limited partnership between NGOs or private sector and communities. Sufficient role to prevent opposition must be found for local administration. Should be adjusted with progress in peace and reconciliation talks or democratization. |
| Local Administration has Collapsed but Trusted Local Political Structures Exist | Direct partnership between central government fund and communities. Appropriate involvement of local political structures. Must Adapt with later discussion on formation of local government. | Initial partnership between NGOs or private sector and communities. Should quickly move to direct central government-community partnership as capacity develops. Appropriate involvement of local political structures. Must adapt with later discussions on formation of local government. | Limited partnership between NGOs or private sector and communities. Appropriate involvement of local political structures. Should be adjusted with progress in peace and reconciliation talks or democratization. |

Figure 3: : Design choices in relation to local and national governments (Cliffe, Guggenheim, and Kostner, *Community-Driven Reconstruction*, 8)

The relationship of CDRs to local and national governments is important. Ideally, government should provide an enabling response, as a CDR is unlikely to be able to address every need:

There are however limitations on the scope of reconstruction needs which a community driven approach can effectively address. A large part of the reconstruction programme may comprise rehabilitation of secondary infrastructure such as trunk roads or hospitals. This infrastructure generally spans a geographical area too large to be addressed through a community planning

approach. Less obviously, there are some important aspects of societal recovery which community decision-making may not identify or prioritize, either because the communities do not have relevant information or because they do not prioritize activities where the benefit is primarily external to the community. Examples include environmental and health issues, which typically require more external information and advocacy than a pure CDR approach is able to provide.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ Cliffe, Guggenheim, and Kostner, *Community-Driven Reconstruction*, 4.

CDRs therefore need to find ways to work with local and national administrations (see Figure 3, previous page). In situations where the administration lacks capacity, a CDR can try to increase the capacity of local administration. However, if the population mistrusts the government and governance is poor, the CDR may be isolated. It could then seek to be a 'relative island of integrity' that can be emulated. Ways to stop government actors from blocking CDR activities include setting up a committee so that they can be paid honoraria or other funds. If the national government is hostile, it may be possible to pilot a CDR approach – as governments tend to face pressure to reconstruct, they may have to support the CDR. Similarly, if local administrations are unsupportive "it may nevertheless still be possible to pilot the approach or to engage in discussions with local leadership which allow time to reach a consensus".¹³⁸

Much of the assessment of a CDR's impact focuses on measuring its sustainability and service delivery, rather than on strategies for its implementation. A recent review found that "CDR interventions are shown quite generally as delivering effectively on immediate material reconstruction needs", especially when the difficult conditions of post-conflict and disaster contexts are considered. In explaining different degrees of success, the review concludes that "well-financed, ministry-managed" processes in Sierra Leone and Afghanistan were more successful than NGO-led processes with less funding in the DRC and Liberia.¹³⁹

The ability of CDR projects to work with national and local governing authorities is shaped by context. CDR projects may therefore not have the intended effects on governance norms. Curato considers how 'governance logics' shape community participation in different areas of Tacloban in the Philippines, with a focus on how community decisions are made.¹⁴⁰ Similarly, ethnographic research on Indonesia shows the processes involved in linking community development and reconstruction agendas with governance. Heijmans traces how community organisations in Indonesia engaged creatively, tactfully, and shrewdly with citizens and different

layers of government to build support for flood mitigation efforts.¹⁴¹

Research on participatory development from the DRC – a context characterised by poor governance – found that CDR projects did not circumvent the power of local elites (chiefs and church leaders) or instil practices of democratic accountability in the population. Nevertheless, elites were often supportive of CDR projects because they saw them as ways to bolster their own legitimacy, rather than simply means to appropriate resources.¹⁴²

The example of post-conflict Lebanon raises the possibility that the imposition of Western good governance norms can be destabilising "in a deeply divided society like that of Lebanon in which minor changes can affect a finely tuned political balance or longstanding and widely accepted political practices."¹⁴³ A contrast can be made between Western governance-focused reconstruction and Gulf countries' focus on built reconstruction, with Gulf donors often better able to navigate the complex politics of Lebanon.

The example of Chad shows the need and potential for a reconceptualisation of DRR in FCAS. In contexts where institutions are weak, existing networks and projects supported by donors can be used as entry points. Chad is a fragile state rife with fractured governance, clientelism, corruption, lack of trust in the government, and lack of resources. Peters, Holloway, and Peters argue that "[w]hile Chad currently lacks effective policy and institutional arrangements for DRR in the conventional sense, it does have a relatively strong institutional and operational framework to address drought and food insecurity, partly because these areas attract external donor support." DRR efforts should work through these networks, rather than the state.¹⁴⁴

138 Cliffe, Guggenheim, and Kostner, *Community-Driven Reconstruction*, 6.

139 Samii, *Revisiting Community-Driven Reconstruction*, 3.

140 Nicole Curato, "From Authoritarian Enclave to Deliberative Space: Governance Logics in Post-Disaster Reconstruction", *Disasters* 42, no. 4 (October 2018): 635–54, <https://doi.org/10.1111/disa.12280>.

141 Annelies Heijmans, "The Everyday Politics of Disaster Risk Reduction in Central Java, Indonesia", in *Disaster, Conflict and Society in Crises*, ed. Dorothea Hilhorst (Routledge, 2013), 223–40.

142 Patrick Kyamusugulwa and Dorothea Hilhorst, "Power Holders and Social Dynamics of Participatory Development and Reconstruction: Cases from the Democratic Republic of Congo", *World Development* 70 (1 June 2015): 249–59, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2015.02.002>.

143 Hamieh and Mac Ginty, "A Very Political Reconstruction", 112.

144 Katie Peters et al., *Pursuing Disaster Risk Reduction on Fractured Foundations: The Case of Chad* (Overseas Development Institute, 2019), <https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/12878.pdf>, 6.

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