

Survivor-Led Response: Local recommendations to operationalise building back better

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ABSTRACT

Despite decades of interventions, emergency response is yet to be integrated effectively with long-term development. NGOs have suggested resilience as a potential framework for bridging this gap. Simultaneously, there has been a push towards localisation in development programming and a call for a shift of power towards those affected by crises. However, resilience is a largely theoretical concept that has been driven from the top-down and as such lacks local voice and a means for practical implementation. This paper responds by investigating resilience building as a mechanism to align short term humanitarian aid with longer-term development from the perspective of crises survivors and local field staff involved in eight humanitarian interventions. Transformative, adaptive and absorptive modes of resilience are identified. Six mechanisms for Survivor-Led Response are proposed: psycho-social support, early livelihood support, community empowerment, community cohesion, government collaboration and addressing the root causes of vulnerability. Survivor-Led Response and reconstruction show demonstrable ability to enhance local capacity and improve development prospects and, as such, should remain an overarching ambition of humanitarian interventions in the context of the SDGs and Build Back Better agenda.

1. Introduction

The Sendai Framework [1] calls for a Build Back Better Agenda: for countries to work with agencies leading response and reconstruction to take on the responsibility for enhancing local development opportunity and wellbeing through their actions. This is an urgent and challenging agenda. There are few cases where humanitarian response has accelerated human flourishing. Ambition stalls at ‘doing no harm’, and even this aim is too often missed. To offer specific programming input to move beyond this impasse a Christian Aid-led consortium of humanitarian NGOs and King's College London studied eight events from the perspective of local survivors. This differs from previous analysis which has focused on the views of those responsible for programming. Findings confirm a desire for Survivor-Led Response and reconstruction to Build Back Better, and identify six priority mechanisms proposed by local actors. This does not provide a complete template for Building Back Better. Taking account of structural conditions and long-term processes (such as global environmental change) may not be visible locally, but the results do identify a core set of principles and a tangible agenda to move the Build Back Better agenda forward.

The importance of enhancing local leadership, including through the promotion of local viewpoints in response and reconstruction programming, has broader significance through the World Humanitarian Summit, Localisation Agenda [2]. This encourages national and international NGOs to facilitate more locally-led response and financing for humanitarian action. The timeliness and importance is reinforced by initiatives such as the Charter for Change [3], the Grand Bargain [4] and Time to Let Go [5] which are increasingly influential throughout the humanitarian and development sector. These initiatives advocate for the benefits of shifting power from donors and INGOs to local actors and locally-led responses. Investment in community preparedness allows a more effective and efficient humanitarian response as well as smoother transition to recovery and development [1]. For this to happen an evidence base is needed of pathways for moving towards locally led action. Survivor-Led Response provides one such approach.

Bene et al.'s [6] framework was deployed as an analytical framework to distinguish between the absorptive, adaptive and transformative facets of resilience in humanitarian action. This was applied to eight humanitarian interventions across seven countries (Bangladesh, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Indonesia, Kenya,

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Pakistan and the Philippines). These interventions were selected to cover a diverse range of scales of crisis, hazards (including conflict, cyclone, drought, floods, tsunami and typhoon), and development contexts. The aim was to identify local views common to these diverse contexts as a starting point for the design of localised resilience-building agendas.

The paper first outlines the relationship between Build Back Better, resilience thinking and long-standing debates on the linking of relief, rehabilitation and development, followed by a methodological note. Results provide a summary of local perceptions of resilience and identify six core recommendations for Survivor Led Response. The paper concludes with reflections on implications for the wider international aid sector.

2. Resilience and the humanitarian sector

Resilience has many faces, and one application of resilience aims to describe interventions that draw development gains from humanitarian action. From this perspective, the UNISDR Sendai Framework [1] calls on nation states and their partners to build resilience through response and reconstruction by Building Back Better. Enhancing sustainable development through humanitarian action is ambitious. Many responses are challenged even to reach pre-disaster standards of land distribution, livelihood, housing, health and ecological integrity. To date, most of this debate on the barriers to better linking humanitarian response to long term development has been framed by the viewpoints and experiences of donors [7] and humanitarian agencies [8–10] rather than the views and preferences of the local actors who are central to humanitarian responses. Their input has remained at the edges of debate, too often filtered through expert and professional opinion. It is here that this paper makes its contribution.

Aligning development and humanitarian assistance seems straightforward and sensible; yet implementation has proven challenging [11,12]. Solutions to this impasse have been sought in better understanding how disasters occur. Debate has shifted from conceptualising disasters and humanitarian response as a linear progression, to understanding the cyclical nature of disaster management [12] where development, response, preparedness and recovery can overlap. In response, donors have supported aid agencies through, for example, flexible programming to allow emergency response to support longer term resilience building; flexible funding mechanisms, such as USAID's 'crisis modifiers', to meet newly emerging short-term needs within long-term projects; and programmes that seek to build capacities to address existing and future risks such as DFID's Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters programme [13].

In practice, the international aid sector continues to struggle to align preparedness, response and development interventions. Within the context of humanitarian response, the holism associated with wider thinking on resilience as a management approach offers an opportunity to bring together the two types of international assistance by focusing management through flexibility, innovation, preparedness and cross scale integration [14]. But here again, resilience is constructed largely through the perspectives of implementing agencies.

3. Linking relief and development

Conceptualisation of the relationship between disaster response and underlying development has evolved from discussion of a relief continuum [11], to the relief contiguuum [15] and the securitisation of humanitarian interventions [15]. All three positions have been criticised for under-theorising the complexity of interaction between humanitarian and development interventions [14]. More recently calls were made to understand resilience's role in the debate [12,14].

The relief continuum presents a linear relationship between response and development. Consequently, policy recommendations focus on innovating methods for progressing from humanitarian aid to

development programming. Uncertainty around what should be handed over, to whom and when, led to criticism that this linear model was unable to capture the complexities of intervention and the cyclical, multiple stages of crises management [4].

In response, the contiguuum offers a more comprehensive and holistic model. It is cyclical, explores all stages of post-disaster response and recognises that linking relief and development should be about all events, not just natural disasters, and non-events (everyday life) as well. It takes a human rights approach, specifically focusing on duty bearers' responsibility and the ability of people to claim their rights. It incorporates governance and introduces the idea that a shock or crisis can create the social, political and economic space needed to address root causes of vulnerability and tackle human rights issues [12,15–17]. In its turn, the contiguuum approach has been criticised for assuming a stable government willing and able to take up responsibility for citizens' welfare and for conceptualising crises as one-off events. The contiguuum does not fit well with the challenges of protracted crises and events that can lead to, trigger or act as a catalyst for future shocks, stressors and crises [12,15,18].

The 1990s was a period of considerable debate around humanitarian neutrality, drawing on experience from interventions in Somalia, Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. Following the 9/11 World Trade Centre attack in 2001, the international development sector began to align more closely with the securitisation agenda. Greater attention in aid and development budgets was given to terrorism, global security and stabilisation. Consequently, the World Bank began to receive pressure to deliver assistance to failed states. Here, the need to better link humanitarian support with longer-term development became politicised and intertwined with the war on terror [20]. This new era of aid politicisation has created an environment where interventions have been increasingly scrutinized on the principles of humanitarian neutrality, impartiality and independence [12,15] making it harder to bridge between emergency response and development programming.

Strategic reviews of the humanitarian sector, such as the UK government Humanitarian Emergency Response Review [20] questioned the goals of humanitarian assistance, as well as the actors and capacities required to deliver it. Whilst a greater focus on working in protracted crises has seen increasing innovation and cross-disciplinary work to better align humanitarian and development interventions, significant tactical and systemic problems still exist and the development of a practical methods for overcoming them are under-developed [12,15].

Ultimately, there appears to be an absence of a strategic framework and set of common principles that span the humanitarian and development sector [15]. More work is required to trial, pilot and document sustainable humanitarian response programmes that link to longer term development initiatives [11,12,15]. Mosel and Levin [12] outline six ways in which the humanitarian and development sector could begin aligning work in practice. They encourage humanitarian interventions to (1) be flexible and risk-taking with an openness to learning, (2) begin with a thorough contextual and political analysis, (3) work with local institutions, (4) include joint analysis and learning at country level, (5) be centred on realistic programming and (6) promote adaptive capacity. The guidance outlined in this paper builds on these principles to articulate a community-centred mechanism for Building Back Better.

3.1. Community resilience for practical and localised relief to development

The resilience agenda came to the fore during the UN International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction in the 1990s and the subsequent Hyogo Framework for Action 2005–15 [21,22]. These initiatives were themselves an extension of the "build back better" debate of the 1980s and have been returned to the Sendai Framework in its call for Building Back Better. A parallel process was ongoing within the climate change community. Both communities of practice developed their own definitions, terminologies, departments and dedicated funding. The IPCC Special Report on Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters

to Advance Climate Change Adaptation [23] was an important publication that brought the two sectors closer [19].

Only in the late 2000s did disaster risk reduction (DRR) practitioners begin systematically exploring resilience as a term to describe interventions that can support the wellbeing of risk exposed communities [24]. DFID promoted this view of resilience, initially within the humanitarian sector through the Building Disaster Resilience Community programme (2007–2010), followed by initiatives such as Enhancing Community Resilience Programme (2011–2016) in Malawi and BRACED (2014–2017), which pushed forward a more integrated approach between DRR and climate change adaptation. Some actors have made efforts to integrate more local views into their work. For example, the Interagency Resilience working group of UK based humanitarian agencies, set up by DFID as part of its Programme Partnership Agreement (2011–2016), helped to transform resilience into practical action. This approach promoted the deployment of recurrent vulnerability and capacity assessment as a key feature for community-based resilience implementation.

4. Methods

This study investigated views of 83 local actors and 244 survivors from eight humanitarian interventions, deployed by seven different International Non-Government Organisations (INGOs) within the Linking Preparedness Response and Resilience in Emergency Contexts (LPRR) project consortium. As an inductive study, the sample aimed for a diverse set of cases reflecting different NGO characteristics, hazard types, vulnerability and development trends. Individual cases were identified by partner INGOs. The characteristics of the case study sites are outlined in Table 1.

Data were collected through three qualitative methods:

1. Semi-structured interviews with key informants including local leaders and first responders (8–10 respondents per study site)
2. Semi-structured interviews with community members (5–10 respondents per study site)
3. Focus group discussions (FGDs) with local community members. The FGDs included risk and resilience mapping as the primary data collection method. (2 per study site including 8–12 respondents in each).

Within each study site purposive sampling was adopted to identify and target specific respondents for interviews and FGDs. In addition, household interviews and FGD participants were selected to achieve a diverse mix of respondents which included intervention beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries (where a blanket approach of aid had not been taken), as well as a mixture of gender, age, (dis)ability and, if contextually appropriate, different ethnicities, castes and tribes. Data sets were transcribed and analysed through NVivo software (for full methodological notes see individual case study reports on the DEPP Learning Platform [25]).

During interviews, respondents were asked to reflect on their own vision of a resilient community, whether they felt the community had coped, adapted or transformed to/with the crises, what challenges they face in recent response and reconstruction and what they would recommend should be done before or during future crises to better position humanitarian and development interventions to ensure long term community resilience building.

4.1. Caveats and limitations

The researcher's affiliation with gatekeeper INGOs in the LPRR consortium may have led local respondents to adjust their responses. This was minimised by speaking with a range of stakeholders using mixed methods. Language and cultural barriers were difficult to overcome but sensitive methods such as open discussion were used when

Table 1
Eight Interventions.

Location	Hazard	Crises drivers	Year, duration of intervention	Context	Impact
Philippines, Manila	Typhoon Ketsana	Marginalisation of urban poor. Lack of land rights	2010: 3 years	Urban	Displacement, loss of housing, loss of livelihoods, loss of land rights
Philippines, Ormoc	Typhoon Haiyan	Remote location. Poor access to area for emergency response. Livelihoods reliant on one crop (coconuts)	2014: 2 years	Rural	Large scale loss of life, loss of housing, loss of livelihoods
Kenya, Nairobi	Drought, political instability and food insecurity	Poor seasonal rains and political insecurity surrounding the elections (2011–2012) pushed food prices up.	2012: 6 months	Urban, informal settlement	Increased malnutrition, child malnutrition, increased rates of violent crime, prostitution and school drop outs
Indonesia, Banda Aceh	Tsunami	Ongoing conflict between the government and GUM rebel group.	2004: 4 years	Peri – urban and rural, protracted conflict	Large scale loss of life, destruction of housing, infrastructure and livelihoods
Pakistan, Sindh	Floods	Government control over locations in which international agencies were allowed to work	2012: 3 years	Rural	Loss of life, loss of housing, loss of livelihoods
Colombia, Cacarica	Conflict & Displacement	Lack of land rights. Marginalisation of Afro Colombians. Ongoing conflict between government, paramilitary and rebel groups	1998 – present 3-year project within long term, 20 year country programme	Rural, protracted conflict	Loss of life, displacement, loss of land rights, loss of livelihoods
Bangladesh, Patuakhali	Cyclone	Reoccurrence of seasonal floods and cyclones	2013: 3 year project	Rural	Loss of life, loss of housing, loss of livelihoods
DRC, South Kivu	Conflict & Displacement	Ongoing conflict between government and rebel groups. Continuous displacement	2012: 9 months	Rural, protracted conflict	Loss of life. Ongoing and recurrent displacement; loss of homes and livelihoods

Table 2
Resilience experienced.

Case Study	Absorbing (Coping)	Adapting	Transforming
Bangladesh	Evacuating when hearing warning	Diversifying income	Addressing core issues in society to change attitudes and perceptions; Reshaping women's role and decision-making power in society
DRC	Running and hiding; Taping chicken beaks shut. Making hide outs in the forest; Cooking for rebel groups	Creating EWS for rebel groups approaching; Creating community savings groups to work together	None
Indonesia	Opening homes to everyone and cooking enough food for everyone. Taking in lost children	New livelihoods, preparedness, Early Warning System and DRR module in school curriculum	End of conflict; Acceptance of rebel group as political party
Kenya	Prostitution; Crime; Dropping children out of school; One meal a day	Creating Savings	None
Pakistan	Evacuating houses	Raising houses	Challenged women's place decision making power in society and female education
Philippines: Haiyan	Sheltering in school in the storm	Diversifying livelihoods, disaster preparedness plans, EWS	Challenged elderly peoples place and decision-making power in society
Philippines: Ketsana	Evacuating homes	Diversifying livelihoods, developing a people's plan, government lobbying	None

possible, or structured interview guides also helped to minimise bias introduced by translation. Furthermore, the research team worked closely with local in-country researchers to align terminology in translation. Finally, high staff turn-over and the loss of institutional memory meant information on past events was difficult to obtain and verify. Logistical issues such as accessing remote sites and obtaining visas has meant some of the most vulnerable populations were not as easy to include. These constraints were felt across the studies but most severely in the DRC.

5. Results

Survivor recommendations for building back better are contextual, shaped by experiences of local and humanitarian actor behaviour during specific events. This section provides context by reporting on the meanings of resilience presented by respondents and actions identified by respondents that led to household coping, adaptation and transformational change. The section then presents challenges and recommendations for action to build back better from the viewpoint of survivors.

5.1. The meaning of resilience

Reported perspectives of survivors on the meanings and practice of resilience spoke to individual needs and priorities (e.g. the need for secure tenure, flood walls, income or early warning systems). The predominant view of resilience was that it was held in tension between a desired independence from international actors and yet being able to access external support when needed. Practicing resilience meant having the skills, knowledge, information and capacity to meet individual needs whilst knowing how and where to ask for external support for local objectives. Discussions of resilience and the scope for humanitarian action to build this into programming returned again and again to issues of local agency, empowerment, decision making power and the ability to influence day to day life. Such language defined independence and directly linked resilience to local aspirations for well-being, hope and dignity.

A resilient community – one that could voice and approach its desired future - was associated with supportive government (and freedom from government pressures where the state was party to conflict, as in Colombia and DRC), good governance, local social cohesion and independence from international support. A desire for independence from international actors did not signify an unwillingness to engage. Respondents supported international agencies that recognised a moral obligation to help local actors strengthen their relationship with the

government, support them to advocate their needs and specifically build the capacity of the government to effectively protect and prepare at risk communities from future crises. This view was reflected by survivors and local international NGO (INGO) staff. As one INGO field officer stated: “Bring the community and the local government together, to work hand-in-hand”. In summary, local respondents did not want international assistance to disappear, but wanted to gain greater control over delivery and to be able to initiate, as well as be consulted on, programming to protect local capacity from being overwhelmed through humanitarian actions.

5.2. Local perceptions of resilience as coping, adaptation and transformation

The resilience of local actors is an aspiration approached through a range of locally deployed actions. Making sense of these actions, the study deployed Bene et al.'s [6] framework and asked participants whether they felt the community had coped, adapted or transformed. In sum, the majority of participants described deploying their own capacities to absorb and adapt. Partnership with extra-local actors was required (government in particular) to be able to realise transformational aspects of resilience (Table 2).

The majority of absorption strategies relied on individual capacities – temporary evacuation for example. Adaptation actions centred on livelihood diversification that required more substantive economic and other assets (including social capital) and access to information and were constrained by wider infrastructure assets such as transport networks to access market. Transformation was associated with making direct and purposeful change in political and decision-making systems. Change that opened scope for enhanced sustainable development and Building Back Better. Transformative action was reported from the Philippines (elderly) and Pakistan (women). Here, local actors strengthened ongoing processes of social change through response and reconstruction. Elsewhere local actors reported feeling unable to act because of a lack of resources or support to advocate for change. Here is an opportunity for humanitarian actors to support local processes of Building Back Better.

Directing local risk management capacity into the constrained practices of absorption and adaptation placed the household as the primary institution and responsible actor for post-disaster response and recovery. Local actors filled a gap left by a lack of organised state and NGO response. Households filling gaps relied predominantly on coping mechanisms that allowed survival [17] but reduced the resource base and options for longer-term wellbeing. This should be a concern for humanitarian and development actors with poverty reduction

Table 3
Challenges for local actors in recovering under existing response and reconstruction programming.

#	Challenge	Number of citing respondents
1	Trauma, mental, emotional and spiritual impact of crises	66
2	A lack of decision making power to respond to crises themselves	56
3	Lack of access in and out of the community (poor roads, lack of roads)	46
4	Lack of focus on livelihoods, left community disempowered and aid dependent	44
5	Community togetherness was undermined, fragmented or reduced	43
6	Conflict or insecurity	28

mandates. Exceptions were found in observed transformative actions. Transformative change actions were associated with humanitarian programming that had engaged with local actors to jointly reflect on and develop strategies to challenge root causes of risk that would otherwise reproduce vulnerability post-disaster and limit equitable and sustainable development.

5.3. Survivor Identified challenges and recommendations

Building from the local actions identified in Table 2, respondents identified challenges that existed despite their own and NGO-led interventions, and recommendations for NGOs to strengthen local actors through response and reconstruction. Challenges and recommendations are aggregated (Tables 3 and 4) and show similar priorities. In addition to challenges and recommendations, respondents expressed an aspiration for Survivor-Led Response and reconstruction. This formed the overriding theme of statements from respondents with recommendations offering mechanisms through which Survivor-Led Response could be built into programming to build back better.

Calls for Survivor-Led Response was a reaction to the experience of survivors who had been marginalised from their own recovery through a lack of decision-making power. Feelings of disempowerment were identified as challenges embedded in the management but also the scope of humanitarian programming, for example where there was inadequate support for locally determined psychological care. This was not only for extreme cases of trauma but for more commonplace experiences of depression and stress. Also important as a challenge and recommendation was the need for rapid support of livelihoods. Without this, respondents reported feeling disempowered, facing a drift into aid dependency, even if temporary, and increased risks of community breakdown.

Identified as challenges, but not developed further in recommendations for future programming were the consequences of broken transport routes and of local conflict – both of which impacted on local social and economic capacity to recover. To an extent, these concerns were captured in the recommendation that survivor led response should aim to tackle root causes, which were very context

dependent but included conflict, insufficient market access and social isolation.

Recommendations focussed on operational relationships. There was an emphasis on mechanisms to support community cohesion, two-way dialogue between community and humanitarian actors and between any humanitarians and local government. Local government was often seen as integral to local leadership in response and reconstruction. Tables 3 and 4 include the number of respondents citing for each priority. This is included to indicate relative importance. Psychological support and rapid livelihoods support stand out as leading priorities for local respondents.

These findings offer deployable recommendations that if combined offer a roadmap for bridging humanitarian and development interventions in response and reconstruction. They describe a policy space for transformational community resilience-building through empowering local actors to shape reconstruction for development opportunity and Build Back Better.

6. Discussion

This section revisits in more detail the six recommendations identified in Table 2 and presents these as elements of a Survivor-Led Response and Reconstruction to help deliver the Build Back Better agenda. We comment on this approach below and then discuss its components.

6.1. Survivor-Led response and reconstruction

“Let the people design the response. Then they would respond immediately” (Crisis survivor).

“If we don’t ask the community what they want then how can we expect the design to be fruitful in the long term?” (Field staff).

“A big problem is the community feeling: they have no power, no hope. Help them run the response. We need to inspire them. Encourage them and support them to realise they do have power over their situation. They need to motivate each other to raise each other out of their situation” (Field staff).

Fig. 1 represents the integrated, survivor-led vision called for by respondents. Each component is connected and feeds into the vision of a Survivor-Led Response and reconstruction process that can help deliver the aims of the Build Back Better agenda. Local actors do not offer a panacea: power inequalities, domination and exploitation are as prevalent locally as they are in wider social systems. However, opening up response and recovery management to more meaningful local leadership, generates spaces that are created for local reflection on development and for the taking of responsibility for building future visions for daily life. This is an important element of psychological recovery.

Survivor-Led Response is the norm in the immediate aftermath of disasters, before external aid arrives. The views expressed in this study show that when it does arrive, existing humanitarian programming fails to harness local capacity in response and reconstruction. It misses an opportunity to leverage these periods to support transformative processes of social enhancement. Rather, local agency is in danger of being

Table 4
Recommendations for improving response and reconstruction programming to enable build back better approach.

Priority rank group	Recommendation	Number of citing respondents
1	Include psychological support in humanitarian programming	118
1	Include livelihoods and savings from the start of an intervention	109
2	Enable a greater level of community participation and cohesion at all stages of the intervention	48
2	Strengthen two-way communication between NGOs and community members	48
2	NGOS should work closer with the government to raise awareness of risk, advocate for community needs and build government capacity	42
2	Tackle root causes of vulnerability from the outset of a humanitarian response, through a rights based protection oriented lens.	35

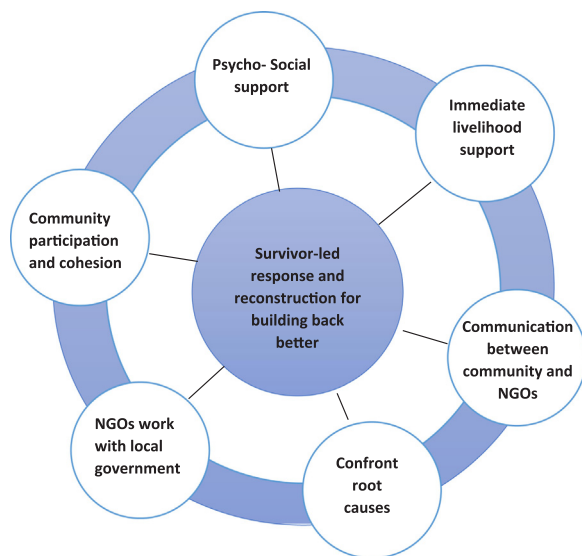


Fig. 1. Survivor led response for building back better.

suppressed or distorted through humanitarian engagement. This keeps response and reconstruction trapped in cycles of absorptive and adaptive modes of resilience and misses an opportunity to build on local ambition for transformation as part of resilience building.

In the Philippines case studies, survivors explained responding to the crises long before INGOs arrived. They felt if they had been in control of the response they would not have suffered long delays in receiving aid. In Indonesia, crises survivors felt that if they had been empowered to run the response, aid dependency could have been avoided. Respondents explained that the way in which the INGO's and local NGO's disseminated aid after the 2004 tsunami created a culture of dependence to the point where community members would not even participate in a community meeting without some form of financial incentive.

Equally, local respondents argued that once opportunities for local leadership had been created, the priorities of psychological support, livelihoods, communication, social cohesion and working with the government were required to sustain and further strengthen individual, household and community resilience over time and at scale.

6.2. Components of a Survivor-Led Response strategy

The following sections detail the components of a survivor led response strategy, as identified by local respondents and presented in Fig. 1. These offer a set of practical mechanisms for the programming and evaluation of Survivor-Led Response. In presenting these recommendations, we recognise that it is challenging to programme for local leadership, whilst ensuring inclusion, adhering to the 'do no harm' standards and avoiding (re)enforcing existing power inequalities and marginalisation that may already exist in communities.

Component 1: Include psychological support

"Psycho-social support is an essential area of learning and capacity building that our staff, volunteers and communities still need." (Field staff).

"Understanding what trauma is and how to deal with it needs to happen before an individual can think about building their resilience. You need to mentally and emotionally bring them back first." (Field officer).

"My husband did not speak for weeks because of the trauma. He could not participate because he could not speak" (Crisis survivor).

An overwhelming number of respondents identified mental health as an essential component of individual, household and community resilience. Crises survivors and first responders reported that the mental, emotional and spiritual impact of a crisis significantly limited the ability of a community to bounce back better and engage and participate in interventions. Failing to address these impacts exacerbated dysfunctional social behaviour such as social withdrawal, crime, alcohol and drug abuse.

In Banda Aceh, Indonesia, respondents explained that the level of distress that the survivors had experienced meant that a high number of survivors struggled to speak at public events and participate in reconstruction and livelihood programmes. In Indonesia and the Philippines, where psychological support was received, this was the most valued component of response.

"The best thing was the trauma centre, it changed the way we think about wellbeing. It is a very positive outcome" (Crisis Survivor).

"Counselling is crucial, give them hope, emotional and spiritual support" (Field staff).

In Nairobi, survivors of sexual abuse following a food security crisis explained that the lack of psychological support and lack of a faith leader meant they were still struggling to come to terms with why they were attacked. This had impacted their self-worth and led to a high number of survivors turning to prostitution to make enough money to feed their families; and alcoholism and drugs to cope with the difficult conditions life.

It is noticeable that both conflict response interventions in Colombia and the DRC already had psychological support as a fundamental component identified by respondents as a core strength of both programmes. Here, psychological support mechanisms were directly linked to strengthened social cohesion and community togetherness as self-help groups were established.

Component 2: Early focus on livelihoods, income generation, cash and savings

"Allow us to economically thrive and to live in peace and we will look after ourselves" (Crisis survivor).

"The most important thing is getting a source of income back as soon as possible" (Crisis survivor).

These two quotes reflect the importance placed on early livelihood recovery for survivors to regain their independence as soon as possible post-event. Respondents highlighted the benefits of income generation and cash programmes for acting as an immediate buffer between the crisis and (re)establishing a secure income.

In Banda Aceh, the failure of humanitarian programming to adequately support the re-establishment of original or alternative livelihoods left some survivors worse off economically than before the 2004 tsunami. In Colombia, DRC, Kenya and the Philippines, survivors expended savings and food surplus to protect productive assets in the face of potential future events. Sustainable livelihoods are a necessity for any resilience strengthening initiative post- and pre-event.

Component 3: Support community cohesion and establish effective communication between crisis survivors

"We are stronger together. Organise, organise, organise for everyone to come together and work together as a unit. Only then can you rise up and change your circumstances." (Crisis survivor).

Respondents stated that feelings of community cohesion (togetherness) enabled community strength and the ability to work together required for at-risk households, and by extension for communities, to cope, adapt and transform with risk. Community cohesion

strengthened well-being through shared social values and the recovery of a common sense of place and belonging. Social cohesion was vulnerable to both the disaster event and external interventions, especially for large events with multiple, often overwhelming, external agency activity. Respondents called for external actors to be sensitive to this.

Component 4: Establish effective two-way communication between crisis survivors and implementing organisations

“Clear communication is needed. Mouth-to-ear communication wasn’t successful and that many crises survivors got confused, information was misinterpreted, other information was brought in. This resulted in making people frustrated and angry at each other” (Field staff).

“We didn’t know when the NGOs were coming, we didn’t want to go to work in case we missed them and missed out on receiving help. We didn’t understand why some people received help and others did not. This made some people very angry with each other” (Crisis survivor).

Whilst an event can bring people together, unclear communication about humanitarian programming can exacerbate pre-existing community tensions, fractions and divides. Two-way communication during the humanitarian response phase was central to prevent erosion of, and help build, social cohesion. A resilient community should have strong community cohesion [2]. However, there will always be winners and losers and trade-offs in adaptation [17,27] with clear communication between local actors and external agencies an essential part of any intervention [26,28]. Our findings suggest that local actors are best placed to make decisions on any trade-offs, thus reinforcing the case for local inclusion, and potentially leadership, in response management.

Component 5: Work with the government to coordinate interventions

“A lot of people have been complaining about the lack of coordination. Lots of different groups and organisations doing the same thing” (Crisis survivor).

“Collaborate with the government. The government must support you and you must accept support from the government. You must go together. Help the project bring the government and people together” (Field staff).

Effective coordination of interventions has challenged the humanitarian sector for decades. For respondents the solution lay in empowering local level agents to run the response themselves. Respondents also called for INGOs to work better with all levels of the government. Involving government in humanitarian interventions from the offset was key for long term community resilience. Respondents argued that the post disaster, humanitarian response phase provided an opportunity for external organisations to help strengthen the relationship between at-risk communities and government. It also created an opportunity to build the capacity of the government to prepare and protect communities in the future. Local actors reported that good governance and a good relationship between local government and community were critical components for the community to be able to function independently and to be able to take on greater leadership and management roles in recovery and risk reduction.

The international aid sector can no longer shy away from engaging with the government, even in conflict contexts [15]. In Colombia, humanitarian interventions utilised a human rights approach to reinforce government responsibility for citizens’ rights and provided a bridge between the government and community. In contrast, in DRC, respondents argued resilience could only be achieved with peace and peace could only be established in the long term with cooperation between the community and the government. Here, respondents explained that INGOs had a role in overseeing,

supporting and mediating the relationship between the government and community. Exactly how to do this in a conflict sensitive way, in contexts of high levels of corruption and in violent and oppressive states requires further attention.

Component 6: Address underlying causes of vulnerability: protect and prepare

“Include advocacy for root causes as the primary focus from the offset. Build capacity and confidence of community to advocate for their needs.” (Field staff).

“Look at the causes, why are we facing this disaster? Start addressing these issues with us and with the government” (Crisis survivor).

While the disruption created by a disaster can open opportunities for previously marginalised groups to challenge their positions in society, it is more commonly observed that already dominant groups extend their influence, deepening, inequality through response [12,15–17]. Respondents were clear in recognising this risk. In the Colombia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan and the Philippines Haiyan studies marginalised groups explained how they had successfully challenged their position and changed their decision-making power in the post-event phase, allowing communities to bounce back better opening pathways for transformation strengthening resilience and building back better.

In this context, respondents saw the role of the humanitarian sector as an enabling one, supporting the community in making best use of the post-disaster space to identify, challenge and advocate for change. In all case studies where this was successful, communities had been given the power to identify root causes, organise themselves and design their own response. In Bangladesh, women were supported to lead the humanitarian response reinforcing ongoing local changes in gendered relations. By being enabled to work and make decisions in the community, respondents explained that the women effectively reshaped their role and place in the community.

7. Conclusions

Survivor-Led Response offers a way to break the current impasse between humanitarian and development action. The results are pertinent to a range of ongoing international initiatives such as the Localisation Agenda and Charter for Change [3], the Grand Bargain [4] and Time to Let Go [5]. These initiatives advocate for radical changes in the design and implementation of interventions and are becoming increasingly influential throughout the humanitarian sector. A locally-led approach goes beyond Bene et al.’s [6] call for resilient approaches to be participatory, and provides a practical way to incorporate social values and local knowledge to challenge unequal power dynamics by mobilising the most vulnerable and ensuring marginalised groups gain decision-making power [27,29]. By allowing crises preparedness and response to be flexible enough to be locally-led and shaped by those living at risk, the institutional and organisational constraints can be challenged and transformation a possibility within the Build Back Better agenda.

Having identified the potential for community-led response to place resilience more centrally for those living with risk and poverty, the paper identifies five mechanisms that can constitute a baseline for programming development and evaluation. These are not intended to be a complete and constraining set of guidelines for all interventions, but rather a comprehensively-researched starting point for programming that seeks to move beyond the humanitarian-development impasse through the mechanism of enhanced local responsibility, and potentially, leadership. The elements of this agenda are: psycho-social support, early livelihood support, community empowerment, community cohesion, government collaboration and addressing the root causes of vulnerability. These are mutually reinforcing, for example: community cohesion and robust livelihoods support psychological health;

government collaboration can generate scope for addressing root causes.

Respondents identified challenges with implementing these recommendations and recognised they would require considerable policy commitment and investment in the preparedness phase to put appropriate knowledge, management systems and practical procedures in place. Locally-led approaches also pose challenges for upwards accountability. For example, in moving control from humanitarian actors to local actors, humanitarians can less directly guarantee to meet agreed standards, such as the Sphere Standards [30]. However, the five recommendations provide practical mechanisms for external actors to better support, and engage with, local actors in a way that is equitable and sustainable.

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