

A photograph of a woman wearing a light-colored headscarf and a soldier in camouflage gear, both in a snowy environment. The woman is looking down, and the soldier is partially visible next to her.

Report

# Disaster risk reduction in conflict contexts

An agenda for action

Katie Peters

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Cover photo: A Canadian soldier frisks a contractor working in Forward Operating Base (FOB) Frontenac in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan.  
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## About this report

This report is part of the project ‘When disasters and conflict collide: uncovering the truth’, a collaboration between the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the Overseas Development Institute (ODI). The lead researcher is Katie Peters, Senior Research Fellow, ODI ([k.peters@odi.org.uk](mailto:k.peters@odi.org.uk)).

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Peters, K. (2019) *Disaster risk reduction in conflict contexts: an agenda for action*. London: ODI ([www.odi.org/publications/11408-disaster-risk-reduction-conflict-contexts-agenda-action](http://www.odi.org/publications/11408-disaster-risk-reduction-conflict-contexts-agenda-action))

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## Multimedia content

- Online feature including videos from Colombia, Lebanon, and Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Disaster Risk Reduction, Ms Mami Mizutori ([www.odi.org/disasters-conflict](http://www.odi.org/disasters-conflict))
- Podcast series: *When disasters and conflict collide* ([www.odi.org/opinion/10507-podcast-series-when-disasters-and-conflict-collide](http://www.odi.org/opinion/10507-podcast-series-when-disasters-and-conflict-collide))
  - Episode 1: *Conflict: the elephant in the diplomatic meeting room*
  - Episode 2: *The politics of disasters*
  - Episode 3: *A call to action*

All reports and content as well as information on the project can be found online: [www.odi.org/projects/2913-when-disasters-and-conflict-collide-uncovering-truth](http://www.odi.org/projects/2913-when-disasters-and-conflict-collide-uncovering-truth)

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## Foreword

Everyone has the right to protection against hazards, regardless of whether they live in a relatively peaceful and stable society, or one where challenges associated with violence, conflict and fragility are rife. Where these challenges exist, vulnerabilities are highest and capacities to manage disaster risk are often insufficient. For these reasons, conflict contexts require dedicated support on disaster risk reduction.

Our role as the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction is to support states in the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030). Unfortunately, in contexts where disaster risk is high and increasing, other development challenges also prevail, including ones exacerbated by violence, conflict and fragility. Supporting those most at risk of disasters and ensuring that ‘no one is left behind’ means striving to find ways to apply the ideas, knowledge and skills from the disaster risk reduction community to contexts where conflict may unfortunately be the norm. But this has been a challenging area of work for the disaster risk reduction community, and one that requires urgent redress if we are to achieve the commitments set out under the Sendai Framework.

Disaster risk reduction naturally takes preventive action seriously, advocating for more investment in preparedness and mitigation. This position has transformed the agenda from better managing disasters to reducing disaster risk. Flexibility, the ability to work within complexity and the nimbleness to respond and incorporate large-scale shifts in global agendas are required now more than ever. In this spirit, greater collaboration is required between the disaster risk reduction and peacebuilding and conflict prevention communities. The disaster risk reduction community should not be seen as a separate actor; rather disaster risk reduction should be integrated into the platforms and processes that exist in fragile and crisis settings.

After all, we have a shared vision and a common goal. We strive for a peaceful world – where people are protected from the impacts of disasters and conflicts, and where prevention of disaster and conflict risk is part of routine policy, planning and investment processes, and broader efforts to achieve risk-informed sustainable development – as articulated within the *Global assessment report 2019*.

The body of research by ODI reported on here signals a much-needed and meaningful change in the attention given to conflict contexts by those working on disaster risk reduction. The findings highlight that, while there is evidence of good practice – even in some of the most difficult operating environments – much more needs to be done to ensure, for example, that adequate protection is provided to communities most at risk. Technical, financial and political support is required to enable states to protect their citizens against disaster risk in extremely volatile circumstances. This will require a sea change in the way decision-makers, donors, governments and operational agencies pursue disaster risk reduction in contexts affected by violence, conflict and fragility.

**Ms Mami Mizutori, Assistant Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction in the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction**

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# Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>About this report</b>  | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Acknowledgements</b>   | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Foreword</b>   | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>List of boxes, tables and figures</b>  | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Acronyms</b>   | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Executive summary</b>  | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>1 Introduction</b>   | <b>13</b> |
| 1.1 Defining the problem  | 14        |
| <b>2 DRR strategies in conflict contexts</b>  | <b>21</b> |
| 2.1 Global and regional frameworks  | 22        |
| 2.2 National strategies   | 22        |
| 2.3 From strategy to tangible change  | 23        |
| <b>3 Intersecting disaster and conflict risk: insights from Colombia, Afghanistan, Lebanon and Chad</b> | <b>25</b> |
| 3.1 Conflict displacement and hazard exposure: the case of Colombia                                     | 25        |
| 3.2 Linking conflict prevention and DRR: the case of Afghanistan  | 27        |
| 3.3 Conflict preparedness as an entry point for DRR: the case of Lebanon                                | 28        |
| 3.4 Alternative framings of risk management as an opportunity for DRR: the case of Chad                 | 29        |
| 3.5 Insights from the case studies  | 29        |
| <b>4 Key findings</b>   | <b>33</b> |
| 4.1 Enabling environment: strategies, projects and understanding vulnerability                          | 33        |
| 4.2 Understanding and action: tools, approaches and collaborations                                      | 34        |
| 4.3 Investment: gaps and opportunities  | 36        |
| 4.4 Evidence and learning: risk tolerance, intersectionality and undocumented experience                | 36        |
| <b>5 Conclusions and future options</b>   | <b>41</b> |
| 5.1 Ensure DRR is fit for purpose in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence                       | 41        |
| 5.2 Encourage a multiplicity of approaches to DRR   | 42        |
| 5.3 An agenda for action  | 43        |
| 5.4 Recommendations for actionable approaches   | 44        |
| 5.5 Linking evidence to policy and action   | 48        |
| <b>Bibliography</b>   | <b>49</b> |
| <b>Annex 1 Case study selection</b>   | <b>51</b> |

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# List of boxes, tables and figures

## Boxes

|              |                            |           |
|--------------|----------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Box 1</b> | Definitions                | <b>14</b> |
| <b>Box 2</b> | The scale of the challenge | <b>16</b> |
| <b>Box 3</b> | Sendai Framework Target E  | <b>21</b> |

## Tables

|                 |  |           |
|-----------------|--|-----------|
| <b>Table A1</b> | Risk management rankings of selected countries | <b>51</b> |
|-----------------|--|-----------|

## Figures

|                 |   |           |
|-----------------|---|-----------|
| <b>Figure 1</b> | Current framings of the relationship between disaster and conflict risk           | <b>15</b> |
| <b>Figure 2</b> | The role of violence, conflict and fragility in the construction of disaster risk | <b>16</b> |
| <b>Figure 3</b> | Key insights from the four country case studies                                   | <b>26</b> |
| <b>Figure 4</b> | The continuum of options for action   | <b>43</b> |

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# Acronyms

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| <b>CADRI</b> | Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative                           |
| <b>DRR</b>   | disaster risk reduction  |
| <b>EU</b>    | European Union   |
| <b>GFDRR</b> | Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery                  |
| <b>GNDR</b>  | Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction |
| <b>OECD</b>  | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development               |
| <b>SDGs</b>  | Sustainable Development Goals  |
| <b>UNDP</b>  | UN Development Programme   |
| <b>UNDRR</b> | UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction                                |

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# Executive summary

There is substantial experience and an extensive literature on humanitarian responses to disasters in conditions of conflict. But little attention has been paid to adapting disaster risk reduction (DRR) policies, programmes and strategies to such contexts. The prevention of disasters and of conflict have largely been treated separately, governed by different frameworks, managed by different institutions and theorised and conceptualised in very different ways. Disaster policy and practice has thus far failed to make adequate links with conflict vulnerabilities or the practice of conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and in policy spaces disaster risk management is often portrayed as an apolitical endeavour.

This report brings together evidence, experience and ideas from a year-long project on ‘When disasters and conflict collide: uncovering the truth’. Through extensive literature reviews and case study work, the project has interrogated the connections between violent conflict and disaster risk to explore how DRR policy and practice can better reflect the realities of social conflict in interventions in fragile and conflict-affected contexts. The study explores the extent to which issues of conflict feature in DRR strategies at the global, regional and national levels, and offers insights into disaster and conflict risk from case studies on Colombia, Afghanistan, Lebanon and Chad.

The moral imperative for focusing attention on how best to deliver DRR in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence is that it is precisely in such contexts that disaster vulnerabilities are highest. There is also a practical dimension. Standardised approaches in complex conflict-affected contexts often fall short, and can even directly or indirectly cause harm. Given the prevalence of violent conflict across the globe, this is not a marginal concern. And there is a political dimension. Only with concerted attention on how to deliver DRR

in such contexts will the collective ambition to achieve the Sendai Framework targets and contribute towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development be realised in a way that genuinely ‘leaves no one behind’.

## Key findings

While there is growing operational and policy interest in accelerating disaster resilience in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence, research across the study highlighted pressing limitations that need to be addressed if we are to collectively take forward this agenda for action:

### Enabling environment: strategies, projects and understanding vulnerability

- Conditions of conflict are largely treated as an externality to the disaster and DRR context.
- Efforts towards effective DRR in conflict contexts are overly projectised and piecemeal.
- Insufficient attention is being given to understanding the role of fragility, conflict and violence in disaster vulnerabilities.
- Claims that DRR tools and frameworks adequately consider fragility, conflict and violence are not substantiated with evidence.
- ‘Do no harm’ and conflict sensitivity are currently under-utilised in DRR intervention design, delivery and monitoring processes.
- Collaborations between the DRR community and peacebuilding and conflict prevention specialists are yet to be established.
- Conventional arguments for investing in DRR may not gain traction, with governments typically labelled as fragile or conflict-affected.
- No financing mechanisms exist which specifically target financial support to DRR in conflict contexts.

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## Investment: gaps and opportunities

- Financial and technical support to national disaster management agencies is urgently needed in conflict contexts.
- Risk management interventions not labelled as DRR are routinely disjointed or discounted from discussions on progress in DRR.

## Evidence and learning: risk tolerance, intersectionality and undocumented experience

- Little is known about individual risk tolerances and how they shape individual decisions in contexts of intersecting disaster and conflict risk.
- Individuals' roles in disaster and conflict risk creation are often downplayed or overlooked.
- Intersectional approaches to DRR in conflict contexts are negligible.
- There is vast undocumented, uncollated and unverified experience and evidence on how to enable DRR outcomes in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence.

## Recommendations for actionable approaches

### Strategy and financing

#### Integrate conflict considerations into DRR strategies

- DRR strategies that do take conflict into account should be documented and analysed to act as a reference guide for governments wanting to consider conflict in the design of DRR strategies.
- Where links between DRR and conflict have been written into strategies, these should be capitalised on to develop a body of work on what joint programme design and delivery could look like in practice. A technical advisory group should be established to support governments to take the lead in this.

#### Invest in DRR activities in contexts affected by fragility, conflict and violence

- Donors should conduct a review of DRR investment portfolios to frame recommendations for enhancing investment opportunities in DRR. Reviews could be

undertaken by individual donors, or collectively through a shared methodology and generic set of recommendations convened by an independent group, or via existing mechanisms such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) risk and resilience group.

- Earmarked funding for DRR in conflict contexts is required. Donors such as Germany and Switzerland could consider offering dedicated financing to programmes that explicitly address the intersection of disaster and conflict risks.
- A multi-donor pooled fund for disasters and peace could be established to provide financial and technical advisory support to governments on policy design, build the capacity of national disaster management agencies, implement projects with improved monitoring processes that link tracking of changes in disaster and conflict risk and pursue independent research to plug evidence gaps.

### Operations

#### Develop an integrated cadre of DRR and conflict specialists supported by training

- Significant investment in upskilling disaster expertise in issues of conflict, peace and security is required, and vice-versa. Existing manuals and training materials – used by the DRR and conflict prevention cadre – will need to be adapted and tested with intended users.
- Collaborative teams with disaster and conflict expertise should be established to explore and exploit opportunities for linked DRR and conflict prevention. One entry point could be using an integrated cadre of DRR and conflict specialists for early action and preparedness programmes around disaster and conflict risk. Over time, disaster and conflict expertise should be made mandatory in all stages of intervention design and delivery.

#### Adapt DRR decision-making processes, tools and approaches to include greater consideration of conflict conditions and indicators

- DRR programmes, projects, investments and approaches should be revised to systematically consider conflict dynamics.

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Efficiencies can be made by like-minded agencies working collaboratively to make necessary revisions and technical guidance notes, for example NGOs through the Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Disaster Reduction (GNDR), UN agencies via the Capacity for Disaster Reduction Initiative (CADRI), or donors via the Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) Consultative Group.

## Convening and representation

### Formalise a community of practice and establish annual conferences on DRR in conflict contexts

- There is a need to formalise a ‘DRR in conflict’ community of practice, a network managed by a secretariat and overseen by an advisory board. An annual international conference, an ‘Action agenda on disasters, conflict and peace’, should be convened to provide space for sharing lessons, ideas and expertise across government, non-government, academic and private sector actors.
- Better sharing of existing knowledge and practice is required. The secretariat should oversee a process to scope options for an online platform or adaptations to existing knowledge hubs. A quarterly newsletter should also be produced, to share stories, events, job opportunities and new developments on the topic.

- The 2020 edition of the *Global assessment report* should continue to feature issues of fragility, conflict and violence through dedicated chapters exploring progress in attaining the goals of the Sendai Framework in such contexts.

## Evidence

### Harness operational learning to deepen understanding of the benefits and limitations of DRR in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence

- A systematic review of evidence should be undertaken to catalogue and synthesise practical examples of DRR interventions. Existing networks such as GNDR could be utilised to gather examples, while independent research may be required to verify claims by individual agencies about the positive impacts DRR interventions have had on conditions of peace.

### Learn from affected people’s experiences and coping capacities and how they deal with linked disaster and conflict risk

- Longitudinal studies and life histories could help develop a deeper understanding of vulnerability over an individual’s life course. There is little research exploring the role of alternative governance mechanisms and parallel governance structures in violent and armed conflict contexts.



Rebels from the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA) at Abeche market, eastern Chad. Many of the Sudanese rebels, who are fighting the Sudanese government forces in Darfur, operate out of Chad. © Teun Voeten/Panos.

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# 1 Introduction

Since the 1970s, an emerging body of work has sought to deepen and nuance understanding of the construction of disaster risk, and the intersection of natural hazards with violence, conflict and fragility. Mami Mizutori, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction, has openly endorsed this agenda,<sup>1</sup> and put political weight behind the need to accelerate action on this topic, including at the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction 2019. For the first time, the *Global assessment report on disaster risk reduction* for 2019 includes a substantive chapter on disaster risk reduction strategies in fragile and complex contexts, and a formal session on the topic was included on the 2019 Global Platform agenda. According to the co-chair's summary (UNDRR, 2019b: 5):

The interplay between disasters, climate change, environmental degradation, and fragility should be recognized, including in the context of water-related risk. The Global Platform underscored the security implications of climate change and disasters and encouraged more context-specific disaster risk reduction and resilience building strategies in conflict-affected countries and fragile contexts based on risk assessments that integrate disaster, climate risks and conflicts.

This explicit recognition of the connections between conflict and disaster risk at the global

level is reflected regionally, including through the inclusion of a special session on conflict at the Africa–Arab DRR Platform and Ministerial Meeting in Tunis 2018. It seems policy traction has finally arrived.

Yet responding to these emerging opportunities remains a challenge. Governments want to know what a DRR strategy adapted to conflict contexts looks like – and yet there are none. Operational agencies want good practice guidance on integrating conflict analysis and conflict-sensitive approaches into DRR programming – and yet these are few and far between and not independently verified.<sup>2</sup> And donors want advice on where, when and how to invest in DRR in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence – and yet knowledge and evidence on what investments are appropriate and viable remain piecemeal and fragmented.

This study is the final output of a year-long project looking at DRR in conflict contexts. The project, a collaboration between the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and ODI, explored the current state of the evidence; reviewed international, regional and national DRR strategies and progress towards Target E of the Sendai Framework; and looked at specific cases of DRR in conflict contexts in Afghanistan, Chad, Colombia and Lebanon.<sup>3</sup> This paper synthesises the key findings of this work, and provides a set of recommendations for policy-makers and practitioners to advance this agenda. Change will not happen overnight, but it is afoot.

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1 Interview with Ms Mami Mizutori ([www.odi.org/when-disasters-and-conflict-collide](http://www.odi.org/when-disasters-and-conflict-collide))

2 An exception being UNDP programming in 2011 ([www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/crisis%20prevention/DisasterConflict72p.pdf](http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/crisis%20prevention/DisasterConflict72p.pdf))

3 The four cases were shortlisted by an advisory group based on selection criteria as outlined in Annex 1.

## 1.1 Defining the problem

Conflict is an element of all societies, and can be understood as an inherent part of social change; whether it can be managed in ways that are non-violent varies considerably across different societies. Different governance systems, the distribution of power and power relations within a society, the intersectional<sup>4</sup> composition of society, the constellations of actors present and other considerations all expose fault-lines in society that have to be ‘managed, mitigated, and resolved in nonviolent manners through, for example, political processes ... formal and informal judicial systems, local dispute mechanisms, or dialogue (UN and World Bank, 2018: 8).

This study is concerned with contexts where conflict turns violent, and specifically where it

increases vulnerability and exposure to disaster risk, undermines states’ and societies’ coping capacities, exacerbates disaster impacts and/or impedes effective disaster risk governance. Violent conflict can take various forms, including interstate war, armed conflict, civil war, political and electoral violence and communal violence, and can involve many actors, including states and non-state parties, such as militias, insurgents, terrorist groups and violent extremists (OECD, 2016; 2018). The paper also considers structural violence, or violence that is built into a country’s social, political and economic fabric. Areas affected by violent conflict typically feature widespread violence, political instability, ineffective institutions, insecurity, repression and human rights abuses and violations of international law (OECD, 2016; 2018).

### Box 1 Definitions

Regarding disaster and disaster risk reduction, the paper follows the definitions used by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR):<sup>1</sup>

Disaster: ‘A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts’ (UNISDR, 2017a).

Disaster risk reduction: ‘preventing new and reducing existing disaster risk and managing residual risk, all of which contribute to strengthening resilience and therefore to the achievement of sustainable development’ (UNISDR, 2017a).

Various definitions of ‘armed conflict’ have been proposed, but there is no consensus on an operational definition. The Geneva Conventions define an international armed conflict as any form of armed violence by one state against another, whether declared or not. No specific definition for internal armed conflict is offered beyond the stipulation that it is non-international in character. Other definitions use a proxy of battle-related deaths to define the threshold at which an armed conflict can be said to exist (the Uppsala Conflict Data Program and the Peace Research Institute Oslo (UCDP/PRIO) suggests in excess of 25 deaths in a calendar year), but defining what precisely constitutes a battle-related death is contentious.

1 According to the definitions provided by the Open-Ended Working Group on Terminology and Indicators, convened by UNDRR to support the delivery and monitoring of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030.

4 Intersectionality can be defined as ‘the interaction between gender, race, and other categories of social difference [e.g. ethnicity, caste, class, age, disability, religion, education, sexuality and relationship status] in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these intersections in terms of power’ (Davis, 2008: 68; Lovell et al., 2019).

**Figure 1 Current framings of the relationship between disaster and conflict risk**



Disaster risk is constructed, not inherent: the effects of disasters on people and communities are the outcome of a combination of the hazard itself, exposure (of people, but also material assets, structures and infrastructure), vulnerability and capacity (Wisner et al., 2004). With the exception of the hazard itself, none of these risk factors is politically neutral: ‘Even when we cannot keep infrastructure standing, typically we can and should stop people dying. We can and should

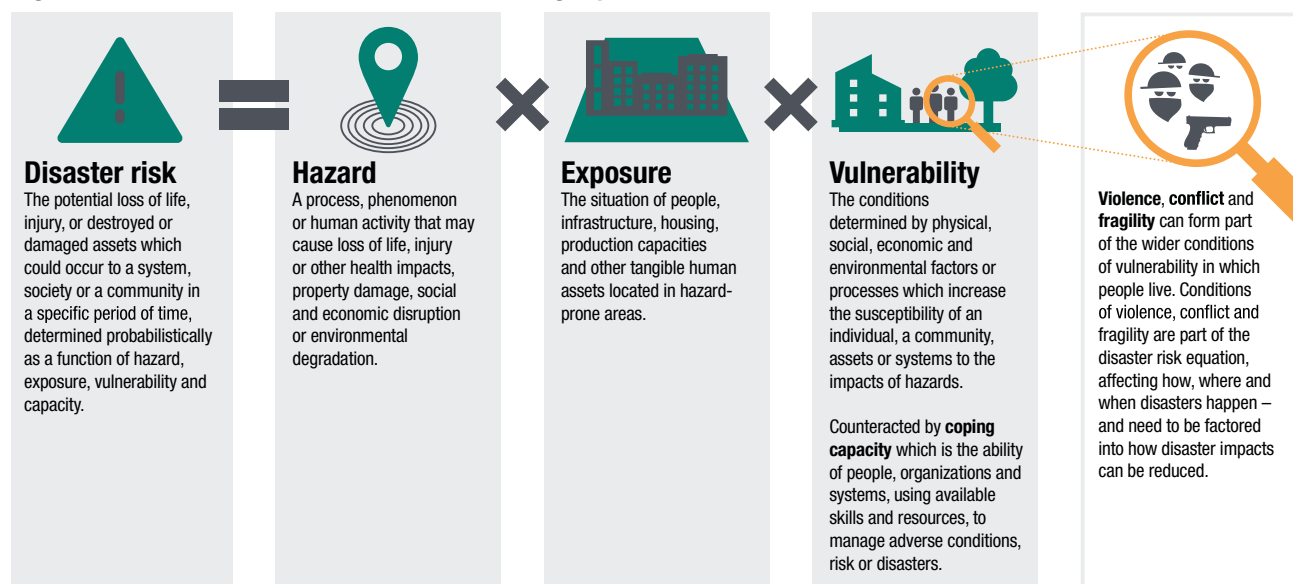
protect our most valuable possessions, and we can and should deal with devastation. We often choose not to, through political processes such as resource allocation, injustice, discrimination and inequity. None of these processes comes from nature, so the disaster is about us, not the environment’.<sup>5</sup>

People typically live in hazard-prone areas, such as marginal sites on the edges of cities at risk of landslides or floods, because their circumstances leave them no other choice

## Box 2 The scale of the challenge

The true picture of disaster impacts in contexts also affected by issues of fragility, conflict and violence, and the vulnerabilities that expose societies to disaster impacts, is little known. Quantitative analysis tends to separate out natural hazards from incidents of conflict, and while efforts to assess co-location have produced statistics – such as that 58% of disaster deaths occurred in the top 30 fragile states over the period 2004–2014 (Peters and Budimir, 2016: 5) – there are significant data and knowledge gaps on current vulnerabilities and future trends. Anecdotal evidence from interviews with DRR specialists suggests that disaster impacts often go un- or under-reported in contexts where violence and volatility inhibit data collection and reporting (CRED and UNISDR, 2016 and Development Initiatives, 2017, in Peters, 2017: 12). Given that the incidence of violent conflict is increasing – it has doubled between non-state armed groups, for instance, since 2010 (UN and World Bank, 2018: 13–14; OECD, 2018) – and conflict is known to increase vulnerability to natural hazards, it is reasonable to assume that disaster risk is also on an upward trajectory.

Figure 2 The role of violence, conflict and fragility in the construction of disaster risk



Note: definitions of key terms including ‘disaster risk’, ‘hazard’, ‘exposure’, ‘vulnerability’ and ‘coping capacity’ are sourced from the UNISDR terminology guidance ([www.unisdr.org/we/inform/terminology](http://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/terminology)) accompanying the Sendai Framework (UNISDR, 2015). Source: Peters, 2018: 9.

<sup>5</sup> Dr Ilan Kelman, *When disasters and conflict collide* podcast ([www.odi.org/opinion/10507-podcast-series-when-disasters-and-conflict-collide](http://www.odi.org/opinion/10507-podcast-series-when-disasters-and-conflict-collide)).

or because access to economic opportunities outweighs perceptions of hazard risk. Likewise, vulnerability to the impacts of a hazard, and the capacity to weather those impacts and recover from them, is a function of physical, social, economic and environmental conditions. Within this, violence and conflict act as multiplying or reinforcing factors. Beyond the immediate impacts of violent conflict itself, communities forced to flee violence are highly likely to have fewer financial or social assets and capital, increasing their vulnerability to hazards and reducing their capacity to cope with their effects. Throughout the case studies for this research we see how the intersection of hazards and violent conflict deepens vulnerability and increases exposure, exacerbating disaster risks.

While there is substantial experience and an extensive literature on humanitarian responses to disasters in conditions of conflict, little attention has been paid to adapting DRR policies, programmes and strategies to such contexts. The prevention of disasters and of conflict have largely been treated separately, governed by different frameworks, managed by different institutions and theorised and conceptualised in very different ways. Disaster policy and practice has thus far failed to make adequate links with conflict vulnerabilities or the practice of conflict prevention and peacebuilding, and in policy spaces disaster risk management is often portrayed as an apolitical endeavour.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, a discourse around disasters that normalises the factors that produce vulnerabilities – particularly for the poorest in a society – effectively removes from consideration and action the political factors driving disaster risk. This can be contentious because it implies ‘moving away from the relative safety of apolitical and technocentric approaches to risk reduction to an approach where issues of power and politics come to the fore’ (Peters, 2018a: 7). But the fact that, in many contexts, bringing a political perspective and analysis to DRR is difficult does not make it less necessary.

DRR is already taking place in contexts of violent conflict: the question is the extent to which practitioners, policy-makers and governments are prepared to acknowledge this and explicitly work to better understand and act on that knowledge.

The consequences of inaction on disaster and conflict risk are all too familiar, and documented in devastating detail in global reports on poverty and crisis (WEF, 2019). With growing awareness of the compounding impact of climate change, on climate-related disasters and socioeconomic systems more broadly, the ability to sustain life is coming under ever more threat. While more effort is required to establish the basic foundations for better risk management, such as systematically integrating climate change scenarios into DRR plans, we remain far from any common acceptance of DRR as a public good (UNDRR, 2019a). Current financing models continue to plough money into post-disaster response, recovery and reconstruction which ‘only succeeds in accumulating risk over time’ (UNDRR, 2019a: 22), when we know that action prior to a disaster is much more efficient and cost-effective (UNDRR, 2019).

The moral imperative for focusing attention on how best to deliver DRR in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence is that it is precisely in such contexts that disaster vulnerabilities are highest. There is also a practical dimension. Standardised approaches in complex conflict-affected contexts often fall short, and can even directly or indirectly cause harm. Given the prevalence of violent conflict across the globe, this is not a marginal concern. And there is a political dimension. Only with concerted attention on how to deliver DRR in such contexts will the collective ambition to achieve the Sendai Framework targets and contribute towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development be realised in a way that genuinely ‘leaves no one behind’.

There’s a saying that ‘disasters do not discriminate’ – this is conceptually and practically false. Disasters are neither natural nor

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<sup>6</sup> There is also no consensus on the definition of the term ‘conflict prevention’, though there is general agreement that it involves ‘strategies for preventing disputes from escalating into conflict, and for preventing the recurrence of conflict’ (UN, n.d.). Here, conflict prevention is understood as ‘Actions undertaken to reduce tensions and to prevent the outbreak or recurrence of violent conflict and which include both short-term actions and longer-term engagement’ (OECD, 2018: 141).

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conflict-neutral: when disaster risk is constructed, there are differentiated vulnerabilities and differentiated risks. Advancing DRR in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence has the potential

to advance the way we think about and act on disaster risk, as well as providing opportunities and possibilities for enhancing DRR in such contexts to support those most vulnerable to disasters.





Teachers and students conduct a safety drill, coordinated by volunteers from the Lebanese Red Cross, at Al-Quba School in Tripoli, Lebanon. © Thomson Reuters Foundation/Heba Kenso.

## 2 DRR strategies in conflict contexts

DRR strategies are the cornerstone of formalised action for reducing natural hazard-related risk, including in contexts affected by violent conflict. National DRR strategies provide a means for governments to lay out how they plan to protect their citizens against current and future disaster risk, and act as an instrument for holding governments to account for their actions (or inaction) (Peters et al., 2019b: 6). Under Target E of the Sendai Framework, governments have committed to increasing the number of national and local DRR strategies globally by 2020 (see Box 3). This in itself would be an important first step in institutionalising DRR, and is in sharp contrast to the previous Hyogo Framework, which focused on institutions and processes, rather than national strategies and plans. While progress overall has been ‘steady’, albeit slow (UNDRR, 2019a), and baseline data is scarce

and disputed, it appears that coverage of DRR strategies across scales in conflict and post-conflict contexts is low, and these contexts are least likely to have DRR strategies. Where DRR strategies exist, there is a disconnect between people’s lived experiences of intersecting disaster and conflict risk and recognition of the dynamic conditions of conflict in policy documents:

There is very little in the way of best practice, guidance and advice on how to convene a process to design a DRR strategy in a conflict context, or what an effective DRR strategy looks like for conflict contexts. The feasibility of replicating processes designed in relatively peaceful contexts in societies divided by conflict poses additional challenges that are yet to be fully

### Box 3 Sendai Framework Target E

Target E of the Sendai Framework (UNISDR, 2015: 12) is to ‘Substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020’. As part of the linked reporting between the Sendai Framework and other Agenda 2030 processes, progress on DRR strategies will help deliver the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). As part of the global monitoring process to track progress on the Sendai Framework’s seven goals, two indicators for Target E have been agreed:

- E1 – Number of countries that adopt and implement national DRR strategies in line with the Sendai Framework.
- E2 – Percentage of local governments that adopt and implement local DRR strategies in line with national strategies.

To help quantify progress, a set of 10 key elements have been identified which characterise local to national DRR strategies. Five levels of implementation have been identified, ranging from ‘comprehensive’ to ‘limited’, each with different scores.

Source: Peters, 2019d: 12.

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addressed in strategy implementation guides (UNISDR, 2018, cited in Peters et al., 2019b: 13).

## 2.1 Global and regional frameworks

References to conflict are virtually absent from the Hyogo Framework, and over its 10-year implementation period neither UNDRR nor stakeholders took any explicit steps to address the role of conflict in driving vulnerability to natural hazard-related disaster risk under the umbrella of the Framework. Likewise, conflict has not been included in any meaningful way in the successor Sendai Framework, despite pressure from international NGOs and some Member States for the inclusion of conflict and related terms during the consultation and drafting process: ‘During the negotiation process these were removed as many government delegations perceived the inclusion of the terms armed conflict and foreign occupation as too political’ (Walch, 2015, in Peters and Peters, 2018). As a result, very little policy space at the global level has been opened up on the need for, or how to adapt, DRR in conflict contexts.

At the regional level, there are references to conflict in strategies and key policy frameworks, particularly in Africa, which first developed its strategic vision for DRR in the African Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2005–2010, followed by multiple programmes of action. While none of the documents reviewed for this research goes into substantial detail about when or how to address the links between conflict and disaster, the relationship between the two is consistently referred to. For example, the Regional Strategy is clear that ‘disaster risk results from the interaction between natural technological or conflict induced hazards and vulnerability conditions’ (AFDB et al., 2004: 9, cited in Peters, 2019d: 17), and states that conflicts can increase the risk of natural hazard-related disaster, and that disasters can influence the form, onset and intensity of conflict. This has continued to the present: the current African Union and member states programme of action for 2015–2030 calls for ‘Enhanced mutual reduction of disaster risk, fragility and conflict’ (African Union Commission, 2016: 24, in Peters and Peters, 2018).

Sub-regional organisations such as the East African Community (EAC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) similarly recognise the interaction between hazards and conflict; according to the EAC’s Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Strategy 2012–2016, for example: ‘it is understood that disaster risks result from the interaction among natural, technological or conflict induced hazards and vulnerability conditions’ (EAC Secretariat, 2012: 9, cited in Peters, 2019d: 18).

Asia is one of the most advanced regions with regard to DRR policy, coordination and financing, and several regional strategies, frameworks, plans and policies for DRR have been developed and ratified. However, very few consider the links between disaster and conflict beyond reference to sexual and gender-based violence and a concern for human security more broadly. For example, the Asia Regional Plan for Implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2020 promotes gender-sensitive approaches to DRR, including ‘prevention and response to gender-based violence’ (UNISDR, 2016: 8, in Peters, 2019d: 19), but does not extend this to include other forms of social and political violence and conflict. Likewise, conflict is notably absent from strategies at the sub-regional level.

## 2.2 National strategies

At the national level, the study reviewed DRR strategies in five countries: Afghanistan, Chad, Colombia, Haiti and Liberia (Peters et al., 2019d). Each presents a very different conflict context and hazard profile, and each is at a very different stage in the development of the policy and institutional architecture for DRR, from relatively mature structures in Colombia to weak institutional, policy and legal frameworks in Chad, Haiti and Liberia, all of which lack any form of national DRR strategy. Official disaster management policies in Afghanistan recognise the complex inter-relationship between disaster and conflict, and set out broad aims around peace and collaboration, though it is unclear how the country plans to achieve these goals. What policy documents exist in Chad do not discuss in any detail how conflict has contributed to vulnerability in a country with chronically poor development

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indicators, nor do they reflect on how DRR could or should be done differently in a context of conflict. For Colombia, officially a post-conflict environment but one where high levels of violence persist, the institutional framework is more advanced, but there is no specific guidance on how DRR should be done in conflict-affected contexts, and conflict is not mentioned in the country's DRR strategy or policy framework. Despite decades of political violence, the main documents governing Haiti's DRR efforts are concerned more with poverty as a driver of vulnerability. And in Liberia, while policy documents acknowledge how social conflict has contributed to vulnerability to disaster and the effects of climate change, specific references to conflict typically look back to the 14-year civil war that ended in 2005, and do not reflect a proactive policy approach to the problems facing the country today.

## **2.3 From strategy to tangible change**

Consideration of the challenge conflict presents to DRR delivery and manifestation of disaster risk is not systematically included in regional and national DRR frameworks and strategies, or

in non-governmental tools and approaches (see Peters et al., 2019c). Where it is mentioned, this may be because a country's definition of disasters and crisis encompasses both natural hazards and man-made crises (e.g. conflict), meaning that a broad cross-section of threats and hazards fall under a single policy framework. In such cases, as in Lebanon, there is limited evidence to show that this leads to differences in the way DRR and disaster management are framed and actually pursued (see Peters et al., 2019b). Even where (perhaps for political reasons) conflict is not explicitly recognised in regional or national DRR strategies – as in Colombia – risk reduction activities still need to be designed and delivered in ways that are sensitive to the dynamic conditions of conflict. Elsewhere, in Chad for example, substantial effort and investment is required to shore up capacity for drafting DRR strategies, and to consider conditions of conflict as part of the operating environment in which those strategies will need to be delivered. This is where our attention turns next: a sub-set of contexts where intersecting disaster and conflict risk presents challenges and opportunities for advancing DRR.



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# 3 Intersecting disaster and conflict risk: insights from Colombia, Afghanistan, Lebanon and Chad

This section highlights key insights from the four case studies selected for this project: Colombia, Afghanistan, Lebanon and Chad. The studies are not comparative, but were chosen to illustrate different aspects of the disaster–conflict nexus (see Annex 1 for the selection criteria). In Colombia, the study found harrowing personal testimonies of the lived experiences of repeated conflict displacement and hazard exposure (Siddiqi et al., 2019). Colombia also provides examples of the politicisation of disaster events. Afghanistan offers examples of operational agencies integrating conflict analysis tools into DRR project design and delivery (Mena et al., 2019), revealing a shift away from hazard-focused infrastructure projects towards a more holistic approach to risk. Here, commitments to ‘do no harm’ are bringing DRR and conflict prevention ambitions closer together. In Lebanon, the work of the Lebanese Red Cross shows how communities’ concerns for conflict risk can be used as an entry point for establishing long-term relationships which, over time, can be harnessed to include a broader range of hazards – including fire and seismic risk (Peters et al., 2019b). Lebanon also shows how even relatively stable and peaceful societies can be affected by a turbulent undercurrent of inter- and intra-community tensions. Finally, Chad illuminates how a history of conflict and institutional and governance

limitations can stunt the development of effective disaster risk governance (Peters et al., 2019d). Chad currently has no DRR strategy, and technical and financial capabilities are insufficient to deal with the risks facing the country. At the same time, important progress has been made on response and risk management in relation to drought and food insecurity, raising the question whether DRR outcomes could be pursued through sectors with existing political traction, rather than starting with a blueprint for DRR (which is typically a top-down state-centric approach).

## 3.1 Conflict displacement and hazard exposure: the case of Colombia

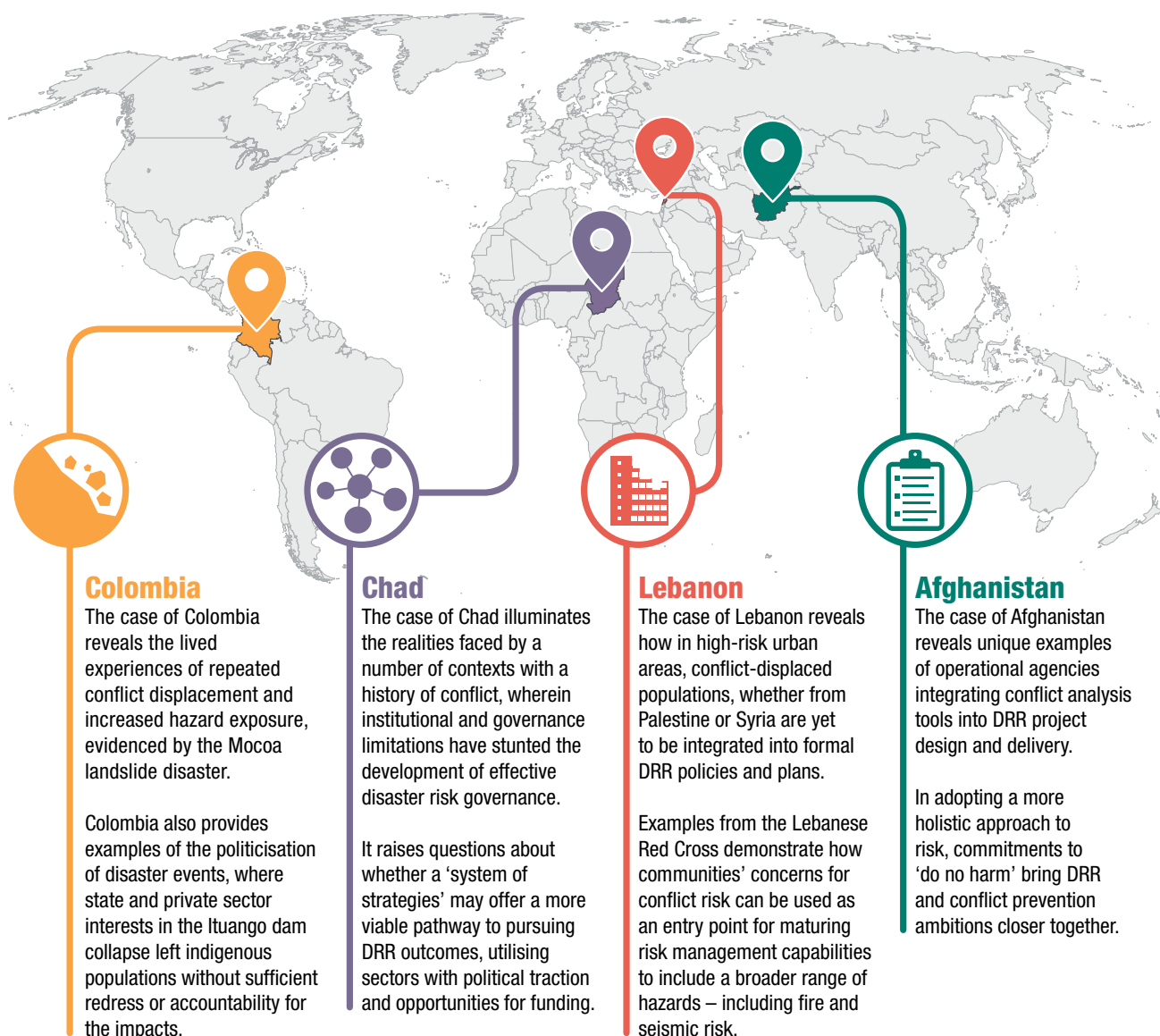
Colombia is one of the most hazard-prone countries in Latin America, exposed to cyclones, coastal and river flooding, earthquakes, landslides and volcanic activity. Millions of people are displaced due to violence and conflict, and levels of poverty and income inequality are high. Against this background, the government has made significant strides in implementing more effective disaster risk management frameworks, though for a range of reasons major disaster events still exceed national capacity to respond. The combination of Colombia’s turbulent and violent political history, large-scale displacement and high

exposure to a range of hazards means that conflict looms large as a root cause of disaster risk, and as the operational context in which disaster risk management is delivered.

The experience of intersecting disaster and conflict risk permeates people's lives, whether that be increased exposure to landslides because conflict-related displacement forces families into high-risk areas; severe trauma from repeated cycles of vulnerability and violence related to disasters and conflict; or inadequate responses to disasters, reinforcing perceptions of an 'uncaring' state. While the country has one of the most advanced disaster risk management systems in South America, with mature policy and institutional capabilities and

political support, risk accumulation in urban areas is a major and growing concern – related to the increased exposure of people displaced by conflict, as well as inadequate implementation of well-intentioned national DRR plans at the subnational and local levels. National institutions responsible for disaster risk management and for victims of conflict operate independently of each other, leading to institutional neglect of conflict as the context in which DRR ambitions are being pursued. Lack of funding, corruption and insufficient decentralisation of resources also hamper effective DRR, and a general lack of community engagement means that approaches to risk reduction tend to be top-down.

**Figure 3 Key insights from the four country case studies**



This country case study critically analysed two recent disasters: a landslide in the Mocoa area in 2017 and the structural failure of a dam resulting in severe flooding of the Cauca River in 2018. The landslide was caused by heavy rain coupled with erosion and lack of vegetation on surrounding slopes; some 300 people were killed, and thousands more lost their homes. Most of the people affected had received little in the way of preparedness support and their involvement in rehabilitation efforts has been minimal. In the aftermath of the disaster, many simply returned to the same dangerous areas, leading some officials to claim that their vulnerability was their responsibility as they ‘chose’ to live in hazard-prone areas. The second disaster, the flooding of the Cauca River, was a result of structural failures in a privately constructed hydropower dam. Since the flooding was not the result of a natural hazard the government refused to categorise it as a ‘natural disaster’, effectively preventing many of those affected from accessing relief; limited efforts were made to define responsibilities for the response, and the government did not act to hold the private company building the dam accountable. This exacerbated community feelings of marginalisation and further undermined levels of trust in the government, which were already under strain after decades of conflict.

Both disasters show how inadequate prevention and mitigation measures hamper efforts to build disaster resilience, as well as doing little to repair already strained state–citizen relations. Both events also highlight the importance of rights and political representation in a country with a history of state violence against its citizens. In a domain where disasters are still often regarded as apolitical events, the narrative around the Cauca River floods in particular is inherently politicised at the level of the affected population, where resentment towards an ‘uncaring’ state is strong. As such, the linked discourses of injustice, insecurity and disasters cannot be separated from the history of state–society relations in Colombia, and the decades of violence perpetrated against civilians.

### 3.2 Linking conflict prevention and DRR: the case of Afghanistan

Afghanistan has suffered numerous disasters in recent years, including floods, storms, droughts and landslides affecting millions of people. The country has also faced three decades of violent conflict, civil war and insurgency; thousands have been injured, killed or forced to flee their homes. Protracted conflict and state fragility have weakened disaster risk management and increased people’s vulnerability to natural hazards. In 2018, more than 4 million people were at risk of natural hazards, three times more than the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance as a result of the conflict (OCHA, 2018: 4).

The Afghan case challenges the commonly held belief that conflict contexts are no place for DRR (Peters, 2017). The study found examples of implementing agencies actively seeking to bring together ambitions to reduce disaster risk and conflict escalation at the local scale. These adapted approaches to DRR reveal new insights about how different forms and types of conflict manifest at different levels and scales (national, provincial and local) and the implications of this for implementation of DRR at the local level. These insights also point to limitations in knowledge. For example, implementation is focused on government-controlled areas, leaving a void of understanding and action on risk reduction in volatile parts of the country, and vulnerability assessments overlook issues of violence, potentially leading to partial understandings of the root causes of disaster risk, and in turn exacerbating social conflict as a result of that misunderstanding.

Conversely, while it is not the norm for DRR projects to explicitly consider conflict or actively work to address or prevent it, evidence was found of a number of aid agencies adapting their approach to DRR by undertaking conflict analysis and committing to principles of ‘do no harm’. Although not specifically oriented towards conflict resolution or peacebuilding, practitioners strongly believe that these approaches can help reduce the

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risk of conflict. The study identified a number of projects that shed light on how DRR approaches can adopt conflict-sensitive elements, including developing and testing a tool to analyse conflict, the integration of conflict risk in project planning and decision-making and a project aiming to address forest degradation through committees and procedures focusing on the management or resolution of conflict.

### 3.3 Conflict preparedness as an entry point for DRR: the case of Lebanon

Compared to the other studies for this project, Lebanon appears relatively peaceful and stable. But that peace is fragile, and underpinned by a delicate sectarian balance in the context of long-standing and deep-seated political and communal tensions that have led to violent conflict in the recent past and could do so again. Political fragility is exacerbated by corruption, inadequate urban governance and inequitable access to rights and resources for the country's substantial population of refugees and internally displaced people. The country is also significantly affected by volatility in neighbouring states. While disaster risk is low compared to other countries in the region, Lebanon is vulnerable to earthquakes, flash flooding, wildfires, landslides, tsunamis, winter storms and slow-onset droughts; during one week of research for this study, a winter storm forced the evacuation of 600 Syrian refugees from camps in the Bekaa Valley, a landslide blocked a major road connecting the capital and serious flooding affected informal coastal settlements.

But the Lebanon case also offers insights into how disaster resilience might be achieved through different entry points away from the standard focus on hazard profiles as the starting point for discussions of natural hazard-related disaster risk. In Lebanon, conflict risk (both sectarian violence and cross-border conflict with Israel) features much more prominently as a public concern than disaster risk. The work of the Lebanese Red Cross (LRC) reveals how concerns over conflict risk can provide

an impetus to advance risk management capabilities more broadly. The LRC has established long-term relationships and sought to build trust among communities with a history of violent conflict. Through this, it has been able to promote collaborative mechanisms for emergency preparedness even among conflicting communities, using school safety programmes as an entry point to conduct joint activities with conflicting parties in an effort to rebuild societal cohesion. Over time, efforts to prevent and prepare for conflict have expanded to cover threats and hazards that otherwise would not feature prominently in the public mind, including seismic risk, flooding and fires. Approaches to DRR in contexts such as Lebanon, in a complex environment of sectarianism where communal tensions have created what many interviewees referred to as a 'fragile peace', requires skills and processes directed at the management of social tensions and conflict alongside the essential technical capacities to deliver DRR.

The case of Lebanon is also revealing because it challenges perceptions among DRR policy-makers, practitioners and donors of what a conflict context looks like. The topic of 'when disasters and conflict collide' is not solely about states of active armed conflict and intensive disaster risk. Lebanon's 'fragile peace', risk accumulation and complacency about seismic risk point to the urgent need for accelerated action on DRR in ways cognisant of the fragility interviewees spoke of: deep-seated political, social and communal tensions form the landscape for DRR efforts in the country, including the marginalisation of conflict-displaced populations from neighbouring countries from formal disaster risk management coordination mechanisms. Mainstream guidance on DRR, which advocates for a 'whole of society' approach, 'inadvertently implies (or is misconstrued to imply) intra-societal cohesion' which is often absent (Peters et al., 2019b: 11). This suggests the need for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the shades of conflict inherent in any society, and a more sophisticated analysis of the politics and dynamics of inclusion and exclusion.

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### 3.4 Alternative framings of risk management as an opportunity for DRR: the case of Chad

The fourth case explored in the research is Chad, a country perhaps better known for humanitarian action in response to drought, food insecurity and, more recently, the impacts of climate change. But it also exemplifies many of the challenges facing governments and agencies seeking to enhance DRR in contexts where conflict has undermined the foundations required for basic development, economic growth and disaster risk governance. Indeed, interviewees for the study repeatedly commented that DRR in Chad is ‘destined to fail’ because the country lacks a minimum level of governance and political will, and a weak social contract between citizens and the state following years of civil war, clientelism, inadequate governance and corruption, making a state-centred approach to DRR extremely problematic. The presence of Boko Haram across the Lake Chad Basin adds a further layer of difficulty.

Chad highlights the level of basic development and governance functioning required to enable conventional approaches to DRR, but this is rarely discussed or quantified, or alternatives identified when those basic foundations are limited or ineffective, or the state and development processes create inequalities that exacerbate disaster risk. There is limited political traction for DRR and low technical capacity, leading to the conclusion that ‘more’ is needed – more technical capacity, more financial resources and more political support. While all of these things are indeed in order, Chad’s participation in other forms of risk management arrangements, for instance in relation to drought or food insecurity, may provide an opportunity to advance DRR outcomes under the guise of other terms; this could be more effectively captured by interpreting a DRR strategy as a ‘system of strategies’. If so, standardised approaches – such as the establishment of a national DRR policy and platform, focal points and earmarked funding – may not be the most effective way to advance action on DRR.

Taking a ‘networked’ approach, meaning starting with what exists and recognising where there is political traction, could provide more

viable entry points. While Chad currently lacks effective policy and institutional arrangements for DRR in the conventional sense, there is a relatively strong institutional and operational framework around drought and food insecurity, backed by donor support. Climate change adaptation is also a priority in the government’s national development planning process. Using these entry points would effectively turn the concept of DRR on its head: instead of starting with a standard blueprint for DRR, DRR would be treated as an outcome, where multiple actors and interventions contribute to DRR ambitions.

### 3.5 Insights from the case studies

Findings from the cases studies echo experiences from more peaceful or stable societies, such as the need to move from crisis response to risk management, as in the case of Chad; or the need to better understand vulnerability to disaster risk, as in Lebanon; or to view alternative framings of risk management as an opportunity – including but not limited to climate change and peacebuilding – as in the case of Afghanistan; or to establish clear legal responsibility for hazards beyond natural hazards, as in the case of Colombia. Across all contexts, dedicated support to national disaster management agencies is required to design, deliver and report on national to local DRR strategies in ways that are cognisant of issues of fragility, conflict and violence. As Lebanon shows, where financial and technical support is provided to national agencies, progress can be made in laying the foundations for greater awareness of and political support for DRR.

The findings also point to new opportunities and entry points for advancing DRR in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence in ways that are specific to those contexts. A strong theme across the case studies is the need to find ways to strengthen the social contract through DRR actions (or, as a minimum, not undermine or aggravate relations between the state and citizens through DRR and disaster response). Protection also featured heavily, and the need to strengthen protection against disaster risk for conflict-displaced populations – particularly in urban areas – and marginalised or excluded

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communities more broadly through intersectional approaches to linked disaster and conflict vulnerabilities. Curbing risk creation featured prominently, linked to rapid urbanisation, population growth and the need for sustainable, risk-informed development processes. Finally, the studies collectively highlight the need for better collaboration between stakeholders and agencies across the disaster, climate, conflict and

peace specialisms. Only by establishing better working relationships will it be possible to create space in which to trial joint technical teams, linked programme and investment design and, for example, the integration of DRR into post-conflict reconstruction and recovery processes, and conflict sensitivity and conflict prevention into DRR ambitions. We take these ideas forward in the final section of the report.





Afghan National Army soldiers use shovels to dig snow off the road in Daub Pass after a winter storm hit southern Afghanistan. © Staff Sgt. Brian Ferguson/DVIDSHUB.

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# 4 Key findings

The operational and policy interest in accelerating disaster resilience in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence has been abruptly confronted by the reality that DRR has a long way to go to build the foundations to deliver on these ambitions. This section identifies some of the most pressing limitations that need to be addressed if we are to collectively take forward this agenda for action. These limitations point to future directions for enhancing and advancing action to support those most at risk, detailed in the concluding section of the report.

## 4.1 Enabling environment: strategies, projects and understanding vulnerability

### 4.1.1 Conditions of conflict are largely treated as an externality to the disaster and DRR context

The political palatability of including and describing conflict in DRR strategies varies considerably between contexts. This study's review of DRR strategies reveals wide variations, from no inclusion of conflict-related terms even in contexts experiencing significant violent conflict, such as Colombia, through to recognition of conflict as a driver of vulnerability to disaster risk, as in the Africa Regional Strategy for DRR (Peters et al., 2019d). Afghanistan's national strategy describes how coping capacity for disasters has been undermined by decades of conflict (ibid.). However, the study found no examples of a DRR strategy that fully and explicitly analyses conditions of conflict and their influence on vulnerability and exposure to hazards, and uses that knowledge to shape the design and delivery of a DRR strategy.

### 4.1.2 Efforts towards effective DRR in conflict contexts are overly projectised and piecemeal

Projectised approaches concentrated on specific sectors (as identified by Wilkinson et al., 2017 in a sub-set of relatively peaceful and stable countries) are producing piecemeal efforts that will not create the foundations for effective DRR at the scale required in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence. Preparedness, and in some countries (for example Lebanon) a focus on specific sectors such as education, may be a useful place to start, but require extension and expansion. Too often, strategies are little more than lists of planned or unfunded activities. This points to the need for comprehensive DRR strategies across scales, as articulated through Target E of the Sendai Framework, designed in ways that genuinely internalise the complexity of conflict, especially at the subnational level. This in turn will require funding mechanisms that focus on building disaster risk governance capacities and risk management as a system, rather than through discrete projects.

### 4.1.3 Insufficient attention is paid to understanding the role of fragility, conflict and violence in disaster vulnerabilities

A focus on hazard mapping remains prevalent, with less attention to understanding patterns of vulnerability, or vulnerabilities, threats and hazards beyond the traditional purview of natural hazards, to include a broader scope of environmental, technological and biological hazards as articulated in the Sendai Framework. The intersection of disasters and conflict is a clear route through which to concentrate attention on vulnerability and potentially even link to the concepts of risk-informed sustainable development as articulated in the *Global*

*assessment report 2019* (UNDRR, 2019a). The complex nature of the disaster–conflict interface also allows links to be made to human mobility (internally within countries and across borders), situations of protracted crisis, human and national insecurity and the impacts of climate variability and extremes, among other issues. In Somalia, the intersection of drought, famine and violent conflict has led to complex patterns of internal and cross-border displacement driven by multiple intersecting vulnerabilities. Tools, data platforms and monitoring systems are moving in this direction – examples include the OECD’s Resilient Systems Analysis, the INFORM risk management index and UNDRR’s Sendai Framework Monitor. These steps are however yet to lead to tangible changes in the design and delivery of DRR strategies and interventions in conflict contexts.

## **4.2 Understanding and action: tools, approaches and collaborations**

### **4.2.1 Claims that DRR tools and frameworks adequately consider fragility, conflict and violence are not substantiated with evidence**

There is a need to improve DRR tools and technical frameworks so that they can be viable in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence. We found ample claims that tools and technical frameworks designed to identify, understand and act on disaster risk included issues of fragility, conflict and violence. However, a review of more than 50 vulnerability and capacity assessments and disaster recovery frameworks, including those used by NGOs, the GFDRR, the European Union (EU), UN Development Programme (UNDP) and World Bank, found limited evidence of issues of conflict being documented in ways that allow for lessons to be shared to improve practice in other contexts (Peters et al., 2019b). As consideration of conflict is not documented, we cannot say with any confidence whether issues of fragility, conflict and violence were taken into account as part of these processes. A substantive review of policy, practice and investment tools and technical frameworks and their application in practice is required, with a view to identifying areas for improvement and/or the need for new tools, or increased capacity to use existing tools and processes more effectively.

### **4.2.2 Do no harm and conflict sensitivity are currently under-utilised in DRR intervention design, delivery and monitoring processes**

Any DRR intervention has the potential to cause or exacerbate conflict between groups in a society as resources are provided to some and not others. It is imperative to actively prevent these potential negative impacts. As a minimum, DRR programming should integrate tried and tested tools and approaches such as do no harm principles and make use of insights from assessments such as conflict analysis – as in the Afghanistan case study. Proactive consideration of conflict-sensitive approaches to DRR could maximise the positive impacts of an intervention (which could in turn contribute to preventing or reducing conflict and support peacebuilding). In some contexts, interventions designed to support DRR may be in a position to support and empower communities, strengthen social cohesion, improve citizen–state relations and help prevent or resolve conflicts. There is anecdotal evidence of local NGOs using flood and drought risk management interventions to explicitly support conflict prevention objectives, including in Afghanistan and Somalia (Harris et al., 2013; Peters, 2017). However, most documented examples are by or in association with the implementing organisations, and would benefit from independent verification.

### **4.2.3 Collaborations between the DRR community and peacebuilding and conflict prevention specialists are yet to be established**

DRR stakeholders are well-versed in the value of collaboration with government and non-governmental stakeholders in hazard-prone areas, but in contexts also affected by violent and armed conflict the constellation of actors could be fundamentally different to those conventionally considered, including UN peacekeeping operations and agencies specialising in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The study found little evidence that the DRR community is actively engaging with expertise and agencies specialising in peacebuilding, conflict prevention, resolution and management and security, and there is little guidance on how to go about this. Establishing working connections across disaster and

conflict expertise at all levels could offer new opportunities to advance DRR ambitions, from linking at the local level to capitalise on agencies' technical understandings of risk, through to national-level strategies to ensure that one set of objectives does not undermine another. This could entail building DRR considerations into peacebuilding strategies, peacekeeping operations, conflict prevention programmes and post-conflict reconstruction plans. Priority could be given to post-conflict reconstruction processes such as those being designed by the World Bank, and other donors for Syria, as a first step towards establishing working connections across the disaster–conflict cadre.

Although those working on issues of conflict, security and peace often cite disasters as trigger points or spaces where new opportunities can arise for social change, the place of DRR in discussions on conflict and security has yet to move from discourse to practice. As an example, the security implications of climate change for conflict and security have been widely discussed, including repeatedly at the UN Security Council, with managing climate extremes and disasters often cited as a priority. This has yet to be harnessed by the DRR community as an opportunity to secure further commitment (and resources) to deliver on the ambitions of the Sendai Framework. DRR could be presented as an under-utilised contribution to the prevention of conflict impacts resulting from climate-related disasters. Caution will be needed to ensure that disasters and DRR are not unduly securitised or reframed as a security threat (as has been the case for climate change: see Peters, 2018a).

#### **4.2.4 Conventional arguments for investing in DRR may not gain traction with governments typically labelled as fragile or conflict-affected**

Conventional messaging used to champion DRR action and investment is often ill-suited to conflict contexts. For example, cost–benefit analysis or value for money arguments can hold little sway in contexts where government resources are limited and the state does not invest in preventative measures or response, but relies on external humanitarian interventions. Equally, concepts of state responsibility to safeguard

all citizens equally may not have the desired impact – particularly where the state is complicit in processes of exclusion and marginalisation. The unfortunate reality is that DRR does not enjoy political support in many conflict contexts, and more politically astute ways of championing disaster resilience are required. DRR may be a new concept with limited financial backing (as in Chad), or concerns over safety, security, protection of civilians and civil order may take precedence and may deter DRR specialists from selecting high-risk countries as project sites. The study found no guidance on developing more politically attuned arguments for pursuing and investing in DRR in contexts of conflict and fragility. Work is needed to find effective arguments that do not rely on conventional messaging. In some contexts, demonstrating how a strengthened social contract may be politically astute might be attractive to governments seeking re-election; in others, a discourse of rights, protection and justice utilising strong civic voices and bolstering social movements or civil society organisations' calls for protection may be more effective.

#### **4.2.5 No financing mechanisms exist which specifically target financial support to DRR in conflict contexts**

Donor reluctance to invest in ex-ante measures in conflict contexts (Peters, 2017) appears to be lessening, partly in response to the focus on sustaining peace and prevention since Antonio Guterres began his tenure as UN Secretary-General. Interest in investing in fragile and conflict-affected contexts is strong among multilateral and bilateral actors such as the OECD and the World Bank. However, where DRR funding has been channelled to contexts labelled as fragile or conflict-affected, there is limited evidence that this has been accompanied by detailed or systematic consideration of conflict (Peters et al., 2019). For example, it is not unusual for large-scale investments to be designed solely by DRR experts, and there is little evidence of donors internalising the additional complexity of fragility, conflict and violence in the design, delivery and monitoring and evaluation of DRR initiatives. Investments, whether official development assistance (ODA) or other financial arrangements, cannot credibly be regarded as advancing action

on DRR in fragile and conflict-affected contexts without robust consideration of conflict dynamics.

The foundations are in place to support decision-making among donors via the OECD and GFDRR's new Disaster Risk Management-Fragility, Conflict and Violence Nexus Programme. Similarly, the creation of a dedicated workstream on capacity development for conflict contexts within CADRI could help generate impetus and build an evidence base on where, when and how to bolster national systems for disaster risk management in a range of contexts.

### **4.3 Investment: gaps and opportunities**

#### **4.3.1 Financial and technical support to national disaster management agencies is urgently needed in conflict contexts**

For governments facing fragility, conflict and violence, specific funding mechanisms are required to support the attainment of DRR outcomes. And, in the absence of central government support to national disaster management agencies or to incentivise such support, external resources are required. Donors are reluctant to invest directly, and few creative alternative means of channelling resources with appropriate safeguards have been pursued. But where financial support has been provided in collaboration with agencies to bolster national capacity, tangible outputs have been delivered and in some cases positive changes achieved. For example in Lebanon, the Disaster Risk Management Unit within the Prime Minister's Office has received financial support from Germany, Switzerland, the EU and UNDP, among others. Tangible progress has been made in hazard mapping, establishing coordination mechanisms for preparedness and response and in specific sectors including education.

It remains the case that too many of the most conflict-affected contexts fail to maintain a functioning national disaster management unit, and many are unable to keep pace with the required policy or technical documents, such as the development of local to national DRR strategies. Across many contexts, discrete funding is required to kickstart or bolster systems for disaster risk management. Where training is being provided by donor agencies such as the

Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) on aspects of DRR, tailored courses adapted for non-peaceful contexts are required.

#### **4.3.2 Risk management interventions not labelled as DRR are routinely disjointed or discounted from discussions on progress in DRR**

There is evidence of donors investing in conflict-affected contexts through programmes supporting disaster resilience, but without using the terminology of DRR or the policy hook of the Sendai Framework. Investments and programmes are typically framed around resilience, drought risk management or climate change adaptation. However, in the absence of the conceptual framing, terminology and overarching policy directive of DRR and the Sendai Framework, there is little evidence that such investments are tangibly supporting progress towards sufficient and sustainable systems for DRR. For example in Chad, investments in food security, drought risk management and increasingly conflict management have had negligible impact on formal national systems for DRR. It may be that alternative ways to track progress on DRR are required that better incorporate action on drought and climate risk management within progress towards the Sendai Framework goals. Moreover, where links are being made between, for example, DRR and climate change adaptation, including at the policy and programme level, work is needed to ensure that climate finance is channelled to support DRR action and barriers to climate finance investment in fragile and conflict contexts are overcome.

### **4.4 Evidence and learning: risk tolerance, intersectionality and undocumented experience**

#### **4.4.1 Little is known about individual risk tolerances and how they shape individual decisions in contexts of intersecting disaster and conflict risk**

A renewed focus on disaster- and conflict-affected people's agency, empowerment and capabilities is essential for DRR in conflict

contexts. This would align well with current policy commitments associated with ‘leaving no one behind’, the localisation agenda and practices of community-based disaster risk management. At-risk populations are capable of making choices that reduce their disaster risk when provided with adequate, appropriate and timely information, basic services and options. At the same time, individual risk tolerances (see Opitz-Stapleton et al., 2019) may mean that the dangers of living in a high-risk location are outweighed by other benefits, such as affordability and economic opportunities. Better understanding of individual decision-making processes and risk tolerances is required, especially within contexts of intersecting disaster and conflict risk.

#### **4.4.2 Individuals’ roles in disaster and conflict risk creation are often downplayed or overlooked**

Risk creation by people and political processes is rarely analysed or well understood, yet in contexts of conflict, decision-making processes to manage different types of risk and risk tolerances may be markedly different to non-conflict contexts. Individuals in positions of power may take decisions that reinforce or reproduce patterns of risk – being active agents in creating and maintaining the vulnerability and exposure of some groups over others. Measures that seek to reduce vulnerability to disaster risk are not politically neutral, but can be the site through which power is produced and reproduced. Expropriation of land for resettlement in post-disaster contexts can be highly contentious for those whose land is appropriated, as can the location of resettlement, for example where coastal communities are resettled inland and beachfront tourism supports private sector interests (Klein, 2007). Any consideration of DRR in such environments must embrace the reality that risk profiles are created in part by human decision-making and action, and that people inform and shape solutions and do not passively ‘receive’ DRR interventions. Closer attention therefore needs to be paid to the distribution of power and representation within DRR decision-making processes, and to ‘see’ those who are not well

represented in political spaces. Closer scrutiny is required, from a DRR perspective, of the relationship between citizens, the state and/or agencies, cognisant that the state may have actively made choices which produce vulnerabilities for some sub-sets of society over others.

#### **4.4.3 Intersectional approaches to DRR in conflict contexts are negligible**

Marginalised groups and individuals and those facing discrimination are most likely to be impacted negatively by disasters, but many DRR interventions are not designed explicitly with these groups and people in mind. Advances are being made through the promotion of intersectional approaches to DRR to better identify, understand and act on marginalised groups (Lovell et al., 2019), and on IDPs through the work of the IDMC, but an intersectional lens should be employed in all DRR interventions, especially in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence, given the risks of exploitation along intersectional lines (e.g. sexual and gender-based violence, child trafficking and neglect of older people).

Efforts to protect excluded and marginalised groups from disaster risk in conflict contexts may benefit from drawing on the language of human rights to press for greater action and accountability. Where the inclusion of certain groups is politically contentious, as is the case with Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, the Rohingya in Bangladesh and Venezuelans in Colombia, clarity is still required to ensure that, where the state is not willing or able to protect individuals, agencies have a clear responsibility and remit to do so. We are yet to find an example of a ‘live’ DRR strategy or set of interventions that embrace adaptive management practices, allowing for updates and adjustments in response to changing circumstances.

#### **4.4.4 There is vast undocumented, uncollated and unverified experience and evidence on how to enable DRR outcomes in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence**

There is a wealth of insight, knowledge and evidence on DRR in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence which has yet to be documented, shared and learned from in ways that help improve the design and delivery of

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policies and programmes. This study found evidence of conventional approaches to DRR being adapted specifically to accommodate contexts where violence and armed conflict presented additional challenges. This included the integration of conflict analysis into project design in Afghanistan, using conflict preparedness as an entry point for natural hazard preparedness in Lebanon, and combining DRR and conflict prevention in Somalia. Much more remains undocumented. The study found examples

of operational agencies being creative with terminology in order to make the case internally for risk management interventions. In Lebanon, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has a mandate to work strictly on issues of conflict and armed violence, but implemented initiatives for flood protection under a broad interpretation of its ‘protection’ mandate. Undoubtedly, experience of and learning around DRR in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence require further documentation and visibility.





FARC fighters, who have agreed to join the peace process in exchange for homes, unload materials used to build their new homes. © Mads Nissen/Panos.

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# 5 Conclusions and future options

## 5.1 Ensure DRR is fit for purpose in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence

Our collective understanding of disaster risk is maturing (UNDRR, 2019a). Governments, donors, policy-makers and practitioners are increasingly being encouraged to consider the complex interactions between natural hazards and conflict, as well as displacement, food insecurity and political instability – spaces where broader humanitarian, development and peace needs and ambitions converge. There are also increasing calls for cross-sectoral and long-term engagement in contexts where complex risks manifest, increasing the need for systematic approaches to address interlinked disaster and conflict risk. Deeper understanding of the implications of fragility, conflict and violence for DRR policy, financing and practice is necessary, not only to lay the foundations for achieving Target E of the Sendai Framework, but also to meet the ambitions of the SDGs to which Target E contributes, namely Goal 1 Target 1.5, Goal 11 Targets 11.5 and 11b and Goal 13 Target 13.1.

Current evidence on the disproportionate impacts of disasters in contexts affected by fragility, conflict and violence should be sufficient to prompt immediate and urgent attention by governments to do more to protect at-risk populations from known and preventable risks of natural hazards. Whether this happens, and at what pace, will be determined by how radical governments, donors and agencies are willing to be to act to reduce disaster risk and curb risk creation. Here we propose a range of possible options, from the minimal to the maximal: (1) business as usual; (2) adjusting conventional

approaches; (3) new and innovative approaches; and (4) actively seeking solutions beyond the current system.

Approaches to DRR in contexts affected by fragility, conflict and violence are not well documented, and investigations into their effectiveness are even more incipient. We know that such contexts are among the most challenging places to conduct risk reduction work and achieve DRR outcomes – a tough endeavour even in relatively peaceful or developed contexts. Where DRR does happen, policies, investments and programme responses largely replicate conventional approaches; they tend not to ask whether there are alternative or potentially radical or unorthodox options to be designed and pursued to further DRR outcomes in such contexts. To sufficiently mature DRR to be fit for purpose in different types of conflict contexts, we need to be asking whether conventional DRR strategies, financing mechanisms, approaches and tools are appropriate for contexts of fragility, conflict and violence, and if not, what adaptations are required. The answers may signal that, rather than retrofit current DRR practice to conflict contexts, it is time to overhaul conventional approaches in some contexts.

This critical questioning of normative DRR has been growing for some time. In an attempt to professionalise the sector, well-intentioned ‘best practice’ guidance and examples are touted but arguably have been misconstrued and equated with ‘one-size-fits-all’ approaches, which can be too simplistic a lens even in relatively stable contexts. All societies feature societal divisions, often leading to differential vulnerabilities. Conceptualisations of uniform or harmonious

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‘whole of society’ approaches reflect a tendency to deny, repress or avoid confronting realities of difference and social conflict. Yet denying or downplaying the existence of fragility, conflict and violence may inadvertently exacerbate existing conflict dynamics, undermine conflict prevention or peacebuilding opportunities or even generate new conflict dynamics.

## 5.2 Encourage a multiplicity of approaches to DRR

What we need therefore are a set of options, ranging from the advancement of DRR in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence, adapted to better reflect the complexities of such contexts, through to innovations which go far beyond the approaches and financing options currently promoted. These options are described next.

The default is to continue with business as usual approaches, extending current DRR policy, finance and practice to conflict contexts. Where these are sufficiently mature to take account of conflict dynamics, this may be effective in tackling disaster risk. Where they are not, ill-adapted approaches may produce unintentional negative impacts on conflict dynamics within a society.

Conventional DRR can be made fit for purpose in contexts affected by fragility, conflict and violence. This would require tweaks to better reflect societal and operational realities. For example, as a minimum we can begin doing things that are ‘no regrets’, such as integrating do no harm principles or embedding conflict analysis into DRR planning cycles. This would have the effect of encouraging conventional approaches to DRR to closely examine the context-specificities of fragility, conflict and violence, and encourage strategies and plans to achieve DRR outcomes in ways that recognise disaster and conflict risk as a product of their context – and DRR interventions themselves as part of that context. This is the basic assumption underpinning conflict sensitivity, and some agencies are exploring the value of embedding conflict-sensitive approaches into DRR processes. One limitation of this option is that the DRR community may remain relatively parochial, although ideally such approaches could be pursued in a collaborative

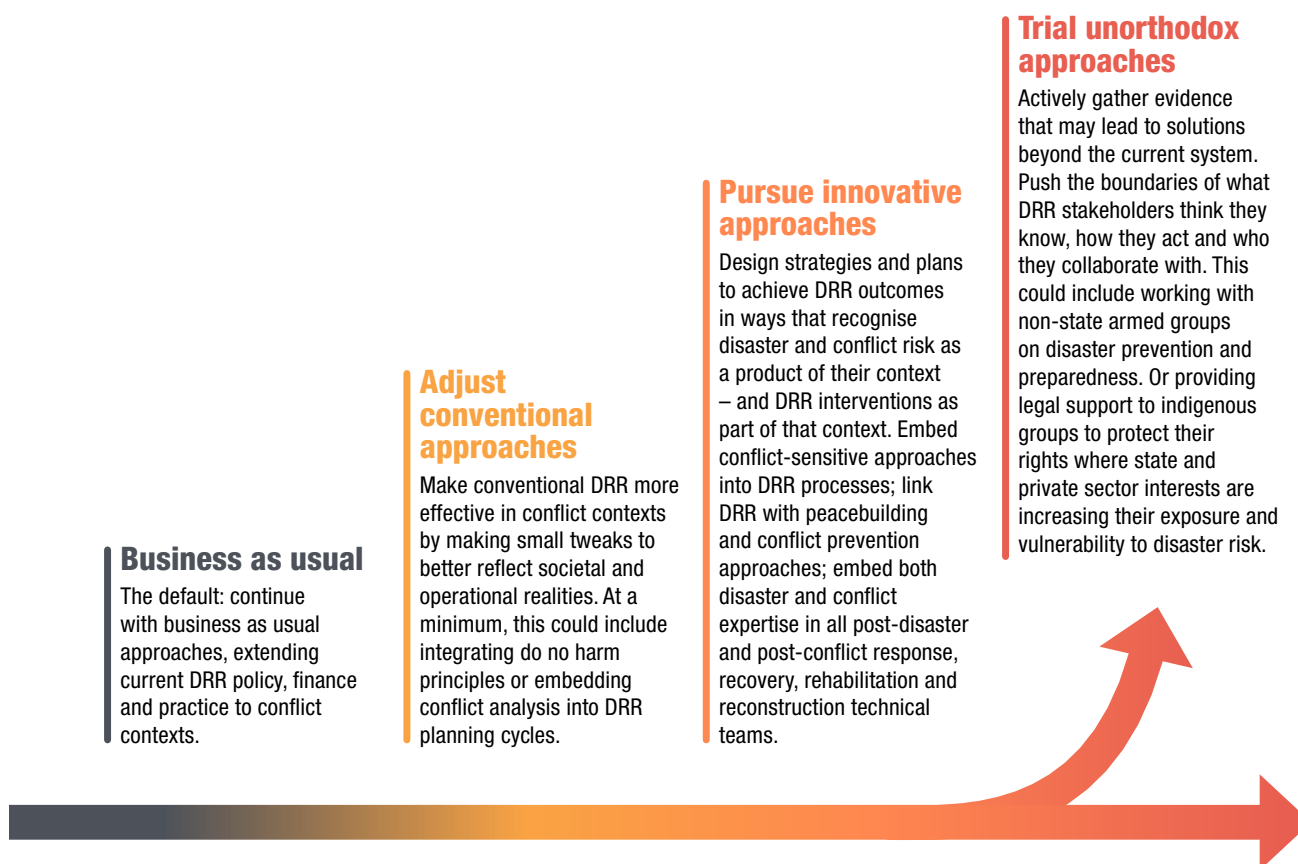
manner, linking with conflict specialists – leading on to more innovative approaches.

Going further, new and innovative approaches to DRR could involve establishing new collaborations between diverse technical specialists, creating linked processes for risk assessment and intervention design and new approaches to implementation and monitoring. Examples include linking DRR with peacebuilding and conflict prevention specialists to articulate and achieve joint outcomes in contexts where disaster and conflict vulnerabilities are linked. At its fullest extent this would require, for example, mandating disaster and conflict expertise in all post-disaster and post-conflict response, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction technical teams. Such collaborations may create space and political traction to explore whether and how DRR can be considered part of a process to build social cohesion and strengthen the social contract in conflict and post-conflict societies, and over time to interrogate the place of DRR in conversations around diplomacy and security (including climate security).

But normative approaches to DRR which adopt state-centric ideals may not be viable or appropriate in some contexts (see Peters, 2017). In contexts where the state is complicit in risk creation for marginalised or excluded groups in society, or where non-state armed groups control territory, or where individuals such as undocumented migrants are unaccounted for in official records, there may be a need to go further ‘outside the box’. One size will not fit all, and a multiplicity of ideas and approaches will be required to enable DRR to mature to the level of contextual specificity required to deal with granular differences that contexts of fragility, conflict and violence present to achieving DRR outcomes.

To genuinely ensure that ‘no one is left behind’, the DRR community will also need to learn about and trial unorthodox approaches to DRR in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence. This is the area we know least about. By gathering evidence on historical and current lived experiences of disasters and DRR in conflict contexts, it may be possible to garner ideas for solutions beyond the current system. This could involve pushing the boundaries of what DRR stakeholders think they know, how they act and who they collaborate with, to achieve

**Figure 4 The continuum of options for action**



disaster resilience in complex and dynamic conflict contexts, for example, working with non-state armed groups on disaster prevention and preparedness, or providing legal support to indigenous groups to protect their rights where state and private sector interests are increasing their exposure and vulnerability to disaster risk.

### 5.3 An agenda for action

Where governments and agencies position themselves in relation to these options will determine the specific policy, programming and financing changes required to accelerate action on DRR in conflict-affected contexts. It may be that, in some areas, governments and agencies commit to building on conventional approaches, such as integrating do no harm principles across DRR programming. In others, there may be willingness to trial innovative approaches such as integrating DRR outcomes into conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Potential examples

include working with non-state armed groups to pursue DRR, or linking with disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programmes to strengthen efforts to build social cohesion and support people's right to safety from the impacts of natural hazard-related disasters.

Exactly what constitutes a bold or innovative solution will vary depending on the context, and on the appetite for change. For some, integrating conflict analysis into programme design processes is, or should be, standard practice, but for others this may be highly innovative in itself. Likewise, engaging in a dialogue with non-state armed groups around DRR may be feasible in some contexts and politically unpalatable in others. How bold governments are willing and able to be will depend on a range of factors, including the specific conflict and hazard context, ability to leverage financial resources and technical capabilities, and the willingness and political appetite to tackle the reality that disaster risk is inherently political, as are the 'solutions'.

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## 5.4 Recommendations for actionable approaches

DRR policy, finance and programming need to be made fit for purpose in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence. This will mean encouraging multiple DRR policy, financing and programming options, to better reflect the diverse contexts where disaster risk is unnecessarily high and processes of risk creation are proliferating. Although far from exhaustive, below are some recommendations for action in four key areas: strategy and financing; operations; convening and representation; and evidence.

### 5.4.1 Strategy and financing

#### **Integrate conflict considerations into DRR strategies**

Quantitatively achieving Target E would undoubtedly be a major achievement. However, it may not be sufficient in itself to deliver DRR outcomes, if conditions of fragility, conflict and violence are not taken into account. Whether that requires explicit consideration of conflict dynamics in DRR strategies or better integration of conflict considerations into programming approaches and operational delivery – or a combination of the two – requires further investigation. DRR strategies which do take conflict into account should be documented and analysed to act as a reference guide for governments wanting to consider conflict in DRR strategy design. This would, for example, include the Afghanistan and Philippines DRR strategies, which explicitly discuss issues of armed conflict. UNDRR should be supported to respond to government requests for guidance on DRR policy design to reduce disaster risk in conflict contexts. One source of learning could be the support currently provided to Guinea Bissau and Cameroon.

Where ambitions to link DRR with conflict prevention aims have already been written into strategies, these should be capitalised on to develop a body of work on what joint programme design and delivery could look like in practice. Priority should be given to the African DRR Strategy, through an accompaniment process to help the African Union fulfil its commitments to link DRR and conflict

prevention. A technical advisory group with call-down capacity will need to be established to support governments to take the lead in this field.

As attention turns to having subnational DRR strategies in place by 2020, a call-down technical support service is also required to help local governments design and deliver subnational DRR strategies in ways that at a minimum avoid exacerbating existing conflict, and that ideally support conditions for peace. One entry point could be responding to the specific challenges of linked disaster and conflict risks in urban settings. For example, the Making Cities Resilient network should establish a thematic group to devise and action city-level conflict-sensitive DRR strategies. A cadre of experts could be established and provided with capacity-building and training on issues of conflict analysis and sensitivity.

We need to learn more about how to support government at all scales to deliver and monitor DRR strategies that take conflict into consideration. Deeper understanding of the implications of conflict on the delivery of DRR strategies may lead to changes in how countries are grouped and analysed when tracking progress against the Sendai Framework goals and targets. To support developments in monitoring processes, terms related to conflict should be included in the work of the Sendai Framework Hazard Terminology and Classification Review Task Team, coupled with thematic analysis on peace and conflict linked to the Sendai Framework Monitor reporting processes.

#### **Invest in DRR activities in contexts affected by fragility, conflict and violence**

Donors should conduct a review of their DRR investment portfolios, undertaking systematic assessment of prior, current and planned DRR interventions and investments in conflict-affected contexts. The specific methodology and scope will vary depending on the donor, investment portfolio and current mechanisms and safeguards in place. Reviews should aim to provide donors with recommendations for enhancing investment opportunities in DRR, as well as new or additional safeguards for ensuring that investments do not exacerbate societal tensions; for donors who already systematically consider conflict dynamics in DRR investments this may

be minimal work, but for others it may require a substantive overhaul of current processes and protocol. Reviews could be undertaken independently by donors with bespoke guidelines tailored to the donor in question, or collectively through a shared methodology and generic set of recommendations convened by an independent group, or via existing mechanisms such as the OECD risk and resilience group.

Earmarked funding for DRR in conflict contexts is required, from enhanced bilateral arrangements to committed finance to GFDRR's newly established Disaster Risk Management-Fragility, Conflict and Violence Nexus Programme. Donors such as Germany and Switzerland and others can lead the way by offering dedicated financing to programmes that explicitly address the intersection of disaster and conflict risks. Donors can design and institutionalise guidelines and minimum standards to ensure that conflict analysis is systematically integrated into project design and monitoring processes. In complement, to effectively lay the foundations for improved DRR project design, implementation and monitoring, donors must be willing to fund capacity-building and training to upskill DRR staff in issues of peace and conflict, and/or establish new collaborations with expertise in those fields.

More specifically, to accelerate action on DRR in conflict contexts to reflect the scale of the challenge and the high levels of need in contexts where disaster and conflict vulnerabilities intersect, a multi-donor pooled fund for disasters and peace could be established. The fund would provide financial and technical advisory support to governments on policy design, build the capacity of national disaster management agencies, implement projects with improved monitoring processes that link tracking of changes in disaster and conflict risk and pursue independent research to plug evidence gaps (see below). The fund would explicitly seek to support the attainment of the linked SDGs on reducing disaster risk and enabling peace, as well as providing technical inputs into the design of the post-2030 agenda.

## 5.4.2 Operations

### **Develop an integrated cadre of DRR and conflict specialists supported by training**

Significant investment in upskilling disaster expertise in issues of conflict, peace and security is required, and vice-versa. Existing manuals and training materials – used by the DRR and conflict prevention cadre – will need to be adapted and tested with intended users (be they civil servants, practitioners or others), from which e-learning courses and training programmes can be rolled out to help build capacities and share expertise and approaches. This will help lay the foundations for subsequent collaboration, including joint technical teams co-designing and delivering interventions.

There is a need to establish collaborative teams with disaster and conflict expertise working together to explore and exploit opportunities for linked DRR and conflict prevention outcomes. Priority could be given to capitalising on opportunities afforded by the post-disaster and post-conflict space, with teams comprising both sets of expertise. One entry point could be linking GFDRR with conflict counterparts in the World Bank in the post-conflict reconstruction processes in Syria. Other opportunities include using an integrated cadre of DRR and conflict specialists for early action and preparedness programmes around disaster and conflict risk in contexts such as Haiti, Myanmar and the Horn of Africa. Over time, disaster and conflict expertise should be made mandatory in all stages of intervention design and delivery in contexts where hazard and conflict risks are high.

A concerted effort is required to raise the visibility of DRR in the UN Secretary-General's sustaining peace and prevention agenda, as well as in dialogues on climate security – particularly where climate-related disasters are cited as a driver of conflict and security risks. Here, DRR could be considered as part of the potential solutions, and DRR actors could have a role to play in supporting agencies trying to overcome the barriers to channelling climate finance to fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Engagement in the adaptation tracks of the climate discussions, and

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Development and Climate Days on the margins of the Conference of Parties, offer starting points for such an endeavour.

**Adapt DRR decision-making processes, tools and approaches to include greater consideration of conflict conditions and indicators**

DRR programmes, projects, investments and approaches require revision to systematically consider conflict dynamics, as a minimum to avoid unintentionally exacerbating social tensions, exclusion and inequalities. Efficiencies can be made by like-minded agencies working collaboratively to make necessary revisions and produce technical guidance notes, for example NGOs through GNDR, UN agencies via CADRI or donors via the GFDRR Consultative Group. Adapting tools and approaches is as relevant for individual NGO projects as it is for large-scale investment processes, including for example multi-million-dollar post-disaster reconstruction investment processes.

Data needs to be collected to better understand the relationship between processes to achieve DRR outcomes and conditions of conflict and peace. While monitoring should always look at whether an intervention has (unintended) negative impacts, conflict contexts can rapidly evolve and thus require special attention. Each intervention in conflict contexts should include indicators on the impacts on the conflict context (in order to monitor conflict sensitivity). Interventions explicitly working ‘on’ conflict should have indicators which measure their planned impact on the conflict, thus assessing whether the intervention has increased peace or social cohesion or lowered the level of violence. This is as relevant for individual NGO projects at the local level as it is for government delivery of national strategies and plans and international reporting mechanisms such as the Sendai Framework Monitor. A technical group comprising specialists in monitoring and evaluation of DRR, conflict prevention and peacebuilding should be formed as part of the community of practice to develop guidance for states, UN agencies and NGOs on how to monitor, learn from and adapt DRR approaches to different types of conflict contexts.

### 5.4.3 Convening and representation

**Formalise a community of practice and establish annual conferences on DRR in conflict contexts**

There is a need to formalise a ‘DRR in conflict’ community of practice, a network managed by a secretariat and overseen by an advisory board. As a minimum, this should involve convening interested actors to share ideas, knowledge and evidence on how to pursue DRR in conflict contexts. The Secretariat would organise and maintain the network, including for example an annual conference, newsletter and online presence. This would build on the informal grouping of interested parties convened around the Fragility Forum. A terms of reference for the community of practice should include the ambition to chaperone and mobilise lesson sharing, policy engagement, financial investment and technical support on DRR in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence, across government and non-government actors.

An annual international ‘Action agenda on disasters, conflict and peace’ conference should be convened to provide space for sharing lessons, ideas and expertise across government, non-government, academic and private sector actors, with special emphasis on enabling change within affected communities. Making the conference a dedicated day ahead of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction could serve to link it to the existing DRR convening cycle. Preceding the annual conference, regional forums linked to existing DRR Regional Platforms should be convened to share new learning and innovations on DRR in conflict contexts, feeding into and sustaining knowledge generation and policy momentum for the theme at the local to international level.

Better sharing of existing knowledge and practice is required. The secretariat should oversee a process to scope options for an online platform or adaptations to existing knowledge hubs, for example creating a dedicated online space within PreventionWeb for publications and events specifically on the intersection of disasters and conflict. A quarterly newsletter should also be produced, to share stories, events, job opportunities and new developments on the topic.

Dedicated support is required from the UNDRR Science and Technology Advisory Group (STAG) to ensure integration of issues of fragility, conflict and violence in scientific work on disaster vulnerabilities. This will require the STAG to include social scientists who are experts in issues of conflict to ensure deeper consideration of the disaster–conflict nexus in subsequent research and advocacy priorities. There is also a need to expand the body of robust academic literature available, with donors providing financial support to enable grey literature to be translated into journal articles for rigour, credibility and longevity.

Building on the *Global assessment report 2019* chapter on this topic, the 2020 edition should continue to feature issues of fragility, conflict and violence through dedicated chapters exploring progress in attaining the goals of the Sendai Framework in such contexts. Where states via regional UNDRR offices have expressed a desire to integrate issues of fragility, conflict and violence into their regional assessment reports, funding will be required to help this request come to fruition. For example, the forthcoming (and first-ever) Arab States regional assessment report aims to include a chapter on the disaster–conflict interface, but the evidence base is nascent and requires attention. Prominent disaster publications, including GNDR’s *Views from the frontline* and the *World disasters report*, should dedicate upcoming themes to the specific intersection of disaster risk and fragility, conflict and violence.

#### 5.4.4 Evidence

##### **Harness operational learning to deepen understanding of the benefits and limitations of DRR in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence**

A systematic review of evidence should be undertaken to catalogue and synthesise practical examples of DRR interventions by ‘type’ (hazard focus, point in the disaster management cycle, scale etc.) alongside a typology of conflict. This would help deepen understanding of what has been tried and what has been learnt, and to use that understanding to inform investment decisions and operational design and delivery in other contexts experiencing similar challenges. One option would be to collate and synthesise findings

from monitoring and evaluation reports of DRR interventions in conflict contexts. However, as considerations of conflict are often neglected in formal DRR reporting, a more intense process of evidence collection may be required. Existing networks such as GNDR could be utilised to gather examples, while independent research may be required to verify claims made by individual agencies about the positive impacts DRR interventions have had on conditions of peace.

##### **Learn from affected people’s experiences and coping capacities and how they deal with linked disaster and conflict risk**

Research into the choices people make in response to intersecting conflict and disaster risks could provide a more grounded starting point from which to design policy, investments and interventions that complement people’s coping capacities and respond to their self-articulated visions for how to cope with disaster and conflict risk. Longitudinal studies and life histories in particular could help develop a deeper understanding of vulnerability over an individual’s life course. There is, for example, little research exploring the role of alternative governance mechanisms and parallel governance structures in violent and armed conflict contexts. One starting point could be cases from the Asia-Pacific, such as Taliban-controlled areas in Afghanistan, Mindanao in the Philippines and areas under the control of non-state armed groups in Myanmar. Such insights may lead to alternative approaches to those we have at present. Specifically, there is a gap in our understanding of what happens at the subnational scale, i.e. the provincial level, on the disaster–conflict nexus. For example, small commander, warlords, mid-range authorities: these actors operate in relation to slow- and fast-onset disaster risk. Are there any lessons to be learnt about how to conceive alternative visions of DRR that may be viable in such situations?

Gaps identified by the secondary literature review conducted for this study (see Peters et al., 2019c) included a concentration of research on a small number of high-impact disaster events, and a dominance of rural contexts as settings for action and learning. The four cases in this research go some way to broadening the evidence available,

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but further work is required to explore a broader range of examples, including on the links between disasters and conflict in urban settings.

## 5.5 Linking evidence to policy and action

Pursuing an agenda for action on DRR in contexts of fragility, conflict and violence requires significant investment – political, financial and technical – to address the gaps identified throughout this report. The current evidence base is concentrated on disaster events as the entry point for analysis, with a focus on local-scale disaster impacts. Little work has been done to make the links between people’s lived experiences, individual agency-led interventions and subnational and national policy implementation. Taking a longer-term historical perspective would help in developing recommendations for policy and practice – after all, DRR experts may need to think in multi-year or multi-decadal terms: in the Philippines, for example, it took more than 25 years for the government to shift from reactive emergency response to proactive disaster risk management policy and practice.

Better understanding is also required of how DRR interventions affect citizens’ perceptions

of the state. There is scope here for research into how DRR may help improve social relations, including between the state and citizens in conflict contexts, for instance whether advances in DRR have improved perceptions of government. There is unexplored potential for utilising DRR as an entry point for reworking power relationships to reduce risks at the local to national level, drawing on lessons from Latin America, where legal frameworks on DRR have been strengthened in response to advocacy that draws on a discourse of rights and protection.

Translating the findings of this study into tangible and practical guidance that governments, donors and agencies can use will require an action-oriented agenda spanning the full range of options, from business as usual through to unorthodox approaches. What cannot be overlooked is the need to bolster national disaster management agencies’ capabilities in conflict-affected contexts, to empower agencies to be able to reduce disaster risk for their citizens. In contexts where that is not viable, until then, alternatives need to be identified and pursued. As Ms Mami Mizutori states in the foreword to this paper, everyone has the right to protection against hazards, wherever and whoever they are.

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# Annex 1 Case study selection

The four cases were shortlisted by an advisory group based on a selection criteria including requirements for: a diversity in geographical spread; diversity in natural hazard and conflict risk profile; locations where there are known limitations or ineffective disaster risk governance; existing relationships with local partners and/or established contacts with the national disaster management agency; locations viable for conducting primary research but as yet relatively under-researched from a DRR perspective; and potential to allow for exploration of themes emerging from the review of secondary literature (see Peters et al., 2019c). Specific methodologies and research findings can be found in the individual case study reports.

**Table A1 Risk management rankings of selected countries**

|                    | INFORM RISK 2019<br>categorisation | INFORM RISK 2018<br>categorisation | INFORM RISK 2019<br>ranking | INFORM RISK 2018<br>ranking | Fund for Peace<br>Fragile States<br>Index 2018 |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>Afghanistan</b> | Very high                          | Very high                          | 4th                         | 4th                         | 9th  |
| <b>Chad</b>        | Very high                          | Very high                          | 7th                         | 3rd                         | 8th  |
| <b>Colombia</b>    | High                               | High                               | 29th                        | 29th                        | 71st   |
| <b>Lebanon</b>     | High                               | Medium                             | 36th                        | 50th                        | 44th   |



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