

Why is community action needed for disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation?

SUMMARY: Residents in cities in high-income nations do not need to organize to build the roads, drains, good quality buildings and other infrastructure that protect them from storms or most other disaster risks. But hundreds of millions of urban dwellers in low- and middle-income nations lack this protection and often live on floodplains or slopes at risk of landslides. In the last decade, there has been a much greater appreciation of the importance of community organization for these people in reducing the risks of disasters and in post-disaster responses. Community organizations can be effective in their own right, but can also enhance the effectiveness of local government action when they work together; and external funding is only as effective as the local institutions through which it is channelled. This Brief shows how support for community organizations, including those formed by disaster survivors, can achieve far more effective post-disaster responses and, in the longer term, more effective responses to disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation.

I. RESPONDING TO DISASTERS

When disasters happen, the speed and effectiveness of response depends heavily on local organizations that can respond to the needs of those most vulnerable and affected. The impact of most disasters is concentrated in particular locations where lives and livelihoods are lost, houses and infrastructure damaged or destroyed, and health and education compromised.⁽¹⁾ It is also at the local level that much of the risk from storms, heavy rainfall and other triggers for disasters can be reduced. Much of the responsibility for disaster risk reduction falls to local governments; much of the death and destruction from disasters results from their failure to act on this responsibility. Pre-disaster planning, awareness and readiness within local government and civil society organizations are critical. Most disasters can be anticipated. In this way, community action and partnerships with local government are central not just to minimizing disaster risk but also in responding and to shaping recovery in ways that build on local knowledge and strengthen local livelihoods and quality of life.

Many case studies show the importance of community action for disaster risk reduction, for post-disaster rebuilding and for climate change adaptation. For instance, disaster-affected communities can rebuild their homes and livelihoods far more cheaply and effectively than external agencies.⁽²⁾ After the devastating 2004 tsunami that struck the coast of Thailand, Bang Muang camp was set up to provide shelter for 850 families who had lost their homes. The camp was managed by the survivors. They set up working groups to address their different needs – housing (mapping where they used to live to help plan rebuilding efforts), livelihoods, welfare, children's activities, food supplies and cooking, camp hygiene, water supply and medical care. Tents were organized in groups of 10 within three zones, each with a representative, and every evening, meetings were held that anyone could attend. This system not only ensured that the camp ran efficiently but also helped prepare the survivors for the longer-term tasks of negotiating with the state and external agencies to obtain secure land and also for rebuilding and livelihoods. In May 2008, the coastal tidal surge caused by Cyclone Nargis killed more than 100,000 people in Myanmar and left hundreds of thousands of families homeless.⁽³⁾ The funding available did not appear sufficient to re-house everyone. But local communities working together showed that they could build better houses for one-seventh of the cost external agencies were paying, strengthening themselves in the process. In a group of 18 villages whose houses

1. See the paper by Jorgelina Hardoy, Gustavo Pandiella and Luz Stella Velásquez Barrero listed on the back page.

2. See the paper by Diane Archer and Somsook Boonyabancha listed on the back page.

3. See the paper by Diane Archer and Somsook Boonyabancha listed on the back page; see also <http://www.achr.net/Download%20Library/ACHR%20Disaster%20Seminar%20Nanjing%20Nov%202008.pdf>

This Brief draws on discussions at a meeting in London in 2010 organized with the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) on community-driven disaster risk reduction, in preparation for *Revealing Risk, Redefining Development: The 2011 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction*. Thus, it draws on presentations and comments by Bina Agarwal, Somsook Boonyabancha, Norberto Carcellar, David Dodman, Kris Ebi, Arif Hasan, Jorgelina Hardoy, Cassidy Johnson, Andrew Maskrey, Diana Mitlin and Mark Pelling. It also benefited from comments on earlier drafts by Sheridan Bartlett, Cassidy Johnson and Mark Pelling.

4. See the paper by Mark Pelling listed on the back page.

5. See the paper by C Ramachandraiah listed on the back page.

6. United Nations (2009), *Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction: Risk and Poverty in a Changing Climate*, UNISDR, Geneva, 207 pages.

7. United Nations (2011), *Revealing Risk, Redefining Development: The 2011 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction*, UNISDR, Geneva, 178 pages. For example, this report notes that mortality risk from tropical cyclones is around 225 times greater in low-income nations than in OECD nations, even as similar numbers of people are exposed to cyclones of the same intensity. See also the many background papers prepared for this report, which are available at <http://www.unisdr.org/we/inform/gar>.

8. See Samenow, Jason (2011), "Spring extreme weather events in 2011 in the US: historic and record setting", available at http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/capital-weather-gang/post/spring-extreme-weather-events-in-2011-in-us-historic-and-record-setting/2011/06/15/AGVMkOXH_blog.html.

had been damaged by the cyclone, the settlement committees worked together to examine the scale of housing need and to prioritize the most urgent cases and agree who would get what kind of support. All construction work was undertaken by residents, who bought materials and built collectively, keeping costs so low that they were able to repair or rebuild all the homes.

But is this focus on community organization appropriate for urban contexts? And what are the limits? Community organizations cannot design and build the citywide infrastructure that is so important for resilience to storms and heavy rainfall. Working with community organizations on risk mapping and raising awareness can lead to small works that community groups can undertake – building small bridges across drainage canals, making schools safer, increasing community knowledge of evacuation procedures. But it does not put in place the large-scale infrastructure that reduces risk – such as drains and road and bridge networks that can cope with sudden, much increased volumes of water.⁽⁴⁾ The devastating floods in the town of Kurnool in India in 2009 illustrate the need for far better regional water management and a local government that is far better prepared to manage floods and evacuate people.⁽⁵⁾ Most of the urban dwellers most at risk from disasters (and climate change impacts) are low-income groups living in informally built settlements. Community action can do little if these settlements are on flood plains or steep slopes at risk from landslides, and local governments are unwilling or unable to ensure the provision of infrastructure and services needed to reduce risk. Community action and organization cannot ensure good management of land use for expanding cities so that new developments avoid dangerous sites and are served with infrastructure. Community action cannot put in place the building codes and standards that help ensure buildings can withstand extreme weather or, where needed, earthquakes. Nor can it bring in expert help and large funding from outside in the aftermath of a disaster. Is community action really only about working with community organizations in (mostly informal) settlements at risk, to evacuate residents to safer places when a storm approaches or heavy rainfall is expected?

In cities in high-income nations, inhabitants of residential neighbourhoods do not need to join together in organizations to address disaster risks or demand from government the infrastructure and services needed for disaster risk reduction. Here, city structures and infrastructure are mostly resilient to extreme weather and all but the most extreme earthquakes. There is universal provision of the necessary infrastructure – piped water supplies and provision for sanitation within everyone's home, drainage, electricity, telephones and all-weather roads and paths. There are local institutions to ensure that these are provided and that buildings and enterprises meet health and safety standards that take into account extreme weather or other hazard events. Urban populations take for granted that such institutions, infrastructure, services and regulations will protect them, and they expect that these will be adjusted to cope with climate change. Their effectiveness is not easily measured because you cannot measure what does not happen. But these provisions prevent disasters. In most instances of unusually heavy rainfall or unusually high winds, there are no fatalities.

Many of the measures that reduce disaster risks in these cities were established to meet everyday needs, not to prevent disasters. But sewer and drainage systems that serve daily requirements can also be made to cope with storms. Good quality health care services and emergency services (including fire services, police and ambulances) that meet everyday needs also form a critical component of disaster risk reduction and rapid, effective post-disaster response. One gets a sense of their effectiveness by looking at the decline in disaster-related deaths and injuries over time in cities in high-income nations; also by comparing disaster-related deaths and injuries in cities in high-income nations with those in low- or middle-income nations with comparable levels of exposure to extreme weather.⁽⁶⁾

The monetary cost of having government (or government-funded) institutions take all of these measures is routinely funded through charges and taxation. And where private companies or non-profit institutions provide some of the key services, the framework for provision and quality control is supplied by local government or local offices of provincial or national government.

There are still lapses in high-income nations – important lapses that mean catastrophic disasters such as the impact of Hurricane Katrina on New Orleans, the impact of the heat wave in Europe in 2003 and the impact of the tsunami in Japan in 2011. And although the risk of death from extreme weather has decreased substantially in high-income nations and is much lower than in other nations,⁽⁷⁾ there are still examples each year of disasters in some locations. Often, these were caused by extreme weather with unusual or even unprecedented intensity (see, for instance, the devastation caused by extreme weather events in the USA throughout 2011⁽⁸⁾). But in many cities in low- and middle-income nations, events that would be counted as major disasters in high-income nations are regular occurrences; in some cities, they occur every year. But most of these are not recorded in international disaster statistics. They may also get little attention nationally or even locally, as the deaths and most of the damage occur in "informal settlements".

No families in urban areas in high-income nations, however poor, expect to live in homes made of temporary materials, built on land that they occupy illegally; or to have to walk several hundred yards to collect water from a communal standpipe shared with hundreds of others; or to have no toilet in their home, no drainage system and no service to collect household wastes. Of course, there are still

9. See the paper by Mark Pelling listed on the back page.

10. See the paper by Norberto Carcellar, Jason Christopher Rayos Co and Zarina O Hipolito listed on the back page.

11. See, for instance, Patel, Sheela (2004), "Tools and methods for empowerment developed by slum dweller federations in India", *Participatory Learning and Action* 50, IIED, London; also Mitlin, Diana (2008), "With and beyond the state: co-production as a route to political influence, power and transformation for grassroots organizations", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 20, No 2, October, pages 339–360.

12. See the paper by Cassidy Johnson listed on the back page.

13. See the paper by Jorgelina Hardoy, Gustavo Pandiella and Luz Stella Velásquez Barrero listed on the back page.

14. See the paper by Jorgelina Hardoy, Gustavo Pandiella and Luz Stella Velásquez Barrero listed on the back page.

15. Velásquez, Luz Stella (1998), "Agenda 21; a form of joint environmental management in Manizales, Colombia", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 10, No 2, October, pages 9–36; also Velásquez, Luz Stella (1999), "The local environmental action plan for Olivares bio-comuna in Manizales", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 11, No 2, October, pages 41–50.

16. See the paper by Jorgelina Hardoy, Gustavo Pandiella and Luz Stella Velásquez Barrero listed on the back page.

17. See Patel, Sheela, Celine d'Cruz and Sundar Burra (2002), "Beyond evictions in a global city: people-managed resettlement in Mumbai", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 14, No 1, April, pages 159–172; also Weru, Jane (2004), "Community federations and city upgrading: the work of Pamoja Trust and Muungano in Kenya", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 16, No 1, April, pages 47–62; and Karanja, Irene (2010), "An enumeration and mapping of informal settlements in Kisumu, Kenya implemented by their inhabitants", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 22, No 1, April, pages 217–239. Many more papers on this topic will be published in the April 2012 issue.

particular groups, settlements or buildings in high-income nations that are not adequately protected, but they represent a small proportion of the urban population. In many cities in low- and middle-income nations, by contrast, these families make up 30–60 per cent of the population.

II. WILL COMMUNITY ACTION DETRACT FROM GETTING GOVERNMENTS TO TAKE ACTION?

There is a very large and growing urban population in low- and middle-income nations where disaster risk reduction is beyond the capacity of local governments,⁽⁹⁾ thus individual, household and community action in this regard becomes more important. One common criticism of a focus on community action is that it may divert attention away from the changes needed within government. But getting governments to fulfil their roles and responsibilities requires community organization and action. This does not replace local government action nor absolve local government of its responsibilities – but it draws attention to the priorities of at-risk communities and demonstrates more effective ways to act. One good example of this is the responses developed by the Homeless People's Federation of the Philippines, working with its support NGO the Philippine Action for Community-led Shelter Initiatives, following six major disasters. These responses included community-rooted data gathering (assessing the severity and scope of destruction and victims' immediate needs); trust and contact building; support for savings; the registering of community organizations; and the identification of needed interventions, including building materials loans for house repairs.⁽¹⁰⁾ Here, as in the work of other national federations of shack or slum dwellers,⁽¹¹⁾ the community initiatives were intended to show local government the capacities of their member community organizations in addition to carrying out urgently needed tasks. In Iloilo, the local government recognized the urban poor and their support organizations as partners in the city's development. Because of resource sharing, the scale of what could be done in the delivery of housing, upgrading, post-disaster assistance and other services was much greater. Technical support from local universities and colleges could also be drawn in. But partnerships such as these need partners who want to work together and who see the utility of doing so. This goes beyond contracting community organizations to undertake certain tasks; rather, local government recognizes and supports the capacity of these organizations to influence priorities and approaches. By contrast, after the 1999 earthquakes in Turkey, the government sought to control all responses and did not see the utility of working with community organizations. Government agencies did not recognize the needs and rights of tenants who lost homes in the earthquakes. Women's groups also had trouble getting their perspectives validated by local governments.⁽¹²⁾ Effective disaster risk reduction is not possible if local governments do not recognize the perspectives, needs and rights of those most impacted or those most at risk.⁽¹³⁾

Manizales in Colombia provides an example of a city that has integrated disaster risk reduction into its development plans and environmental management.⁽¹⁴⁾ The city government has also established an insurance programme for buildings that provides coverage for low-income households. But this is a city government that has long worked with community organizations and other civil society groups in addressing environmental and development issues.⁽¹⁵⁾ Other city examples show deficiencies in this regard. For instance, in the city of Santa Fe in Argentina, the inadequacies in local government responses to flooding show the importance of effective disaster preparedness provision for each neighbourhood, and of civil society groups' ability to influence local government responses for relief, rebuilding and for measures to reduce risk from future floods.⁽¹⁶⁾

III. MAPPING RISKS AND VULNERABILITIES

One important contribution of community action is helping to provide the detailed, locally rooted information base that government action requires in each neighbourhood of a city and its surrounds and that it so rarely has. Indeed, there may be very little official information about risks and vulnerabilities in informal settlements, even as these have a large proportion of the housing stock and concentrate much of the disaster risk. There is also the problem in many nations of no recent census – or of census data that are not made available to local authorities in a form that allows its use for risk mapping in each neighbourhood. It is difficult for city governments to fill this data gap, as attempts to gather information will usually be viewed with suspicion or even hostility by the inhabitants of informal settlements. If a government has failed to provide them with infrastructure and services and declared them illegal, often threatening them with eviction, why would the data gatherers be trusted? And in any case, how can data gatherers from outside a settlement know whether the data they collect are correct, especially if they are to be used for determining households' eligibility for upgrading or re-housing after a disaster?

A well-developed alternative approach has been tried and tested in many cities, and this is to involve the inhabitants of the informal settlements and their organizations in this data gathering and analysis.⁽¹⁷⁾ In the Philippines, the Homeless People's Federation and its support NGO PACSII are

18. See the paper by Norberto Carcellar, Jason Christopher Rayos Co and Zarina O Hipolito listed on the back page.

19. See the paper by Caroline Moser and Alfredo Stein listed on the back page.

20. See the paper by Mark Pelling listed on the back page.

21. See the paper by Cassidy Johnson listed on the back page.

22. See the paper by Cassidy Johnson listed on the back page.

23. See, for instance, IFRC (2010), *World Disasters Report 2010: Focus on Urban Risk*, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Geneva, 211 pages.

24. Sistema Nacional para la Prevención y Atención de Desastres.

25. SINAPRED (Sistema Nacional para la Prevención, Mitigación y Atención de Desastres).

26. See the paper by Jorgelina Hardoy, Gustavo Pandiella and Luz Stella Velásquez Barrero listed on the back page; also Von Hesse, Milton, Joanna Kamiche and Catherine de la Torre (2008), "Contribución Temática de América Latina al Informe Bial y Evaluación Mundial Sobre la Reducción de Riesgo 2009", contribution to the GTZ-UNDP Background Paper prepared for *The 2009 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction*, UNISDR, Geneva, Switzerland.

27. See the paper by Ronju Ahammad listed on the back page.

28. This is less the case in Latin America, although the innovations there do not receive the attention they deserve because much of the key literature is in Spanish and Portuguese.

identifying and profiling at-risk communities in 12 cities and 10 municipalities. Federation members and leaders focus on informal settlements located under bridges, near cliffs and other landslide-prone areas, on coastal shorelines and river banks, in public cemeteries, near open dumpsites and in flood-prone locations.⁽¹⁸⁾ Participatory studies in the cities of Mombasa and Esteli demonstrated the vulnerability of low-income groups and what they see as the most serious hazards. They also identified ways of adapting household and community assets to limit damage from disasters and help build long-term resilience. Community discussions also identified the institutions that support this and those that do not.⁽¹⁹⁾ Risk mapping in Santo Domingo, Georgetown, Port-au-Prince and Cap Haitien engaged citizens in at-risk areas to work with project team members, but it proved difficult to get the necessary balance between accuracy and awareness raising and community building. In Guyana, a lack of technical capacity led to maps having limited practical use; many simply showed road networks with an arbitrary line to indicate that flooding was a greater hazard further inland. By contrast, risk mapping in Cap Haitien used Geographic Information System maps, which local government was more ready to accept, but these were only accessible through a small number of computers and proved short-lived as computers broke down. In Santo Domingo, technical mapping was undertaken in parallel with community mapping, and both types of data combined. This worked well, as it gave a visible face to the project and helped consolidate the leadership group while providing full information.⁽²⁰⁾

IV. SHOULDN'T GOVERNMENTS TAKE THE LEAD ROLE IN POST-DISASTER RECONSTRUCTION?

Central government institutions often see it as their role to organize post-disaster response and determine whose needs should be addressed. In the aftermath of a disaster, these tasks are seen as technical issues, and it is not uncommon for central government agencies to take them over from local governments.⁽²¹⁾ In Turkey, after the 1999 earthquakes, massive regeneration was planned and undertaken by government (mostly central government), with little or no involvement of those affected. Here, as in many other nations, government took on more than it could do effectively. Many community-based and civil society-supported initiatives for disaster recovery developed, but mostly as reactions to gaps in the state's top-down approaches to recovery. Many groups tried to cooperate with the state system, but the scale, scope and success of their efforts were stifled by a lack of government support. Key issues raised by civil society groups included not only the exclusion of many of those affected but also the need for government agencies to be open and honest about the disaster recovery activities and development they were planning and implementing.⁽²²⁾

Disaster risk reduction in urban areas has been most successful where local governments have the knowledge and capacities to act and where they are accountable to those most at risk, thus ensuring that disaster risk reduction serves them. The key role of national governments here is to provide the legislative framework, funding and support for local capacities and institutions capable of responding to disaster risk (and the links these have with provision for everyday needs). It is local governments that need to bring coherence to agendas that, historically, have been tackled in isolation – development, disaster risk reduction, post-disaster response and now climate change adaptation.

Much of the innovation in this strengthening of local government has taken place in Latin America, which is also where the concept of disaster risk reduction (i.e. understanding and removing the structural causes of disaster risk) was first developed and applied by city governments.⁽²³⁾ In many nations, disaster risk reduction in cities has been strengthened by decentralization reforms that increased the power and financial capacity of city governments and also by new legislation and support structures for local organizations. Several Latin American countries have new or amended legislation to support disaster risk reduction – for instance in Colombia, where a new national law on this is supported by a National System for Prevention and Response to Disasters.⁽²⁴⁾ The National System for Disaster Prevention, Mitigation and Response,⁽²⁵⁾ developed in Nicaragua, shares some of the approaches in Colombia. However, there is a worry that local governments will be allocated responsibilities for which they lack the capacities and resources.⁽²⁶⁾ No government gets recognition for the disasters its programmes have prevented – and so risk reduction investments are not seen as priorities and have to compete for scarce resources with what can be judged to be more pressing needs. This is only overcome where, as in Manizales, disaster risk reduction is seen as part of local development, and where collective interests overcome individual and party political interests.

In Chittagong, Bangladesh's second largest city, there is little connection between the formal institutional structure for disaster preparedness and the groups most at risk from extreme weather disasters. Meanwhile, local government lacks the capacity to act. The national government may be taking climate change adaptation seriously, but focusing on urban adaptation or strengthening urban government capacity to reduce the vulnerability of low-income groups is not one of its policy priorities.⁽²⁷⁾

It is not only in Bangladesh that discussions of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation fail to address urban issues – or the role of urban contexts and urban governance systems in greatly increasing or decreasing disaster risk.⁽²⁸⁾ Most such discussions also pay little attention to local

governments – including their roles and responsibilities and their relations with the inhabitants and civil society organizations within their jurisdictions. Discussions of “good governance” focus on the national level, when it is local governance failures that account for so much disaster risk and vulnerability to climate change.

V. DOESN'T DISASTER RESPONSE OR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION REQUIRE FOREIGN EXPERTISE AND FUNDING?

The needs and priorities of disaster survivors often get trampled as international aid is mobilized and international agencies rush to disaster sites. International agencies have budgets that they need to spend and what gets implemented is a list of (often ill-coordinated) projects approved by external funders. As with development, the effectiveness of international funding is dependent on the quality and orientation of the intermediary (mostly local) institutions through which external funding is channelled. A description of disaster response in Banda Aceh after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami referred to the “second tsunami” that hit communities there – the rushing in of international agencies, each with its own budgets and priorities – and the difficulty for survivors to influence the process and to get support for their priorities.⁽²⁹⁾ Post-disaster response can be a positive opportunity for change if there is a clear understanding that survivors are not victims but agents for change – as demonstrated in the examples from Thailand and Myanmar mentioned earlier.

VI. FLEXIBLE FINANCE FOR “BUILDING BACK BETTER”

Immediately after a disaster, funding needs to support collective capacity and enhance the knowledge and resources of survivors.⁽³⁰⁾ A fund that survivors manage collectively can give them a measure of independence and be flexible enough to allow survivors to collectively work out their particular development needs. The allocation and use of funds cannot be too strictly controlled or dependent on too many procedures for approval. The fund’s management must also avoid rewarding community leaders who have more power. Having separate fund accounts for different functions allows them to be managed by different sets of people, balancing out power within the community and improving the transparency of contributions to the fund. Ideally, everyone should have a say in how the funds should be used.

There is also the obvious importance of building a collective spirit from the start, so that communities see each other as allies and partners and not as competitors for external funding. The fund can encourage people to discuss their needs with each other and can strengthen the community decision-making processes, which then become a new way of doing things. When survivors are organized, this may help them avoid inappropriate responses – including eviction. All the above implies less focus on what governments should do and more focus on what governments should allow and support communities to do.

VII. SOME RULES OF THUMB FOR POST-DISASTER RESPONSE

- **Focus on the local.** Use local materials, draw on local skills and use local masons;⁽³¹⁾ decentralize funding to the lowest rung of government; avoid unnecessary restrictions (for example, funding being available only to people with bank accounts).
- **Avoid problems brought by out-sourcing.** Many national governments and international agencies set reconstruction priorities and hire local companies to build or rebuild housing and infrastructure without local consultation. These companies feel no need to discuss what they do with those who have been affected. Success is judged by how many houses are built. Often, what is built is unnecessarily expensive, of poor quality and in the wrong place. There is little consideration of how to support local communities in planning and rebuilding.
- **Work instead with communities,** using their ability to organize, to negotiate, to act. Community organizations often need to recapture some of the roles taken on by NGOs. They can also help stand up to corrupt officials who want payments and agencies who want to control them. “Building back better”⁽³²⁾ usually requires changes in these power structures, which are usually not challenged by relief efforts. Organized communities can also push politicians into seeing the advantages of investing in risk reduction for low-income communities as part of everyday development initiatives.
- **Avoid post-disaster disasters such as eviction.** Following a disaster, eviction is almost always an issue as survivors are not allowed to return to their settlements to rebuild. Governments often want to re-allocate these sites to more profitable ventures, and local developers can be quick to use the post-disaster chaos to grab land or lobby government to get it. Communities need to be organized and often need to network and support each other in order to prevent this from happening. Low-income groups are always vulnerable and they will not get the support of the system unless they are organized. Pre-disaster eviction in the name of risk reduction is similarly open to distortion by vested interests.

29. Syukrizal, Ade, Wardah Hafidz and Gabriela Sauter (2009), *Reconstructing Life: After the Tsunami: The Work of Uplink Banda Aceh in Indonesia*, Gatekeeper Series 1371, IIED, London, 18 pages, available at <http://pubs.iied.org/14582IIED.html>. This also includes a case study of how survivors organized and implemented their own reconstruction programme.

30. See the paper by Diane Archer and Somsook Boonyabancha listed on the back page; this discusses the kinds of finance that can help in disaster recovery and stresses the need for flexible finance.

31. See the paper by Joel Audefroy listed on the back page.

32. See Lyons, Michal (2009), “Building back better: the large-scale impact of small-scale approaches to reconstruction”, *World Development* Vol 37, Issue 2, pages 385-398; also Lyons, Michal and Theo Schilderman (editors) (2010), *Building Back Better: Delivering People-centred Housing Reconstruction at Scale*, Practical Action Publishing, Rugby, 390 pages.

- **External support can divide communities.** Targeting relief at individuals (rather than communities) often causes competition between survivors, who take whatever they can without questioning its utility. When professionals and agencies try to do everything themselves, it can also encourage passivity among survivors. Where survivors are relocated into already settled areas it is also important to provide host and relocated communities with access to support to prevent local tensions.
- **Let affected people group together and develop their ways of working.** This includes choosing how to use money (and the criteria by which it is allocated) and how to help and support the poorest collectively. This means having funds in collective control but with transparent use and management; let the collective assess how to rebuild. Later, collective funds can develop into revolving funds.
- **Shift the focus from supply to demand.** External funding comes to a disaster site too slowly, with too many procedures, too many steps for approval, too many organizations involved. Big money gets stuck and does not reach those in need with what they need. Multiple bureaucracies, government ministries and agencies compete to control funding flows. Governments often rush through new regulations that hinder responses – even making the reconstruction of settlements illegal.⁽³³⁾ There is little recognition of what the relief agencies cannot do. Or cannot do well.
- **Building back better includes building better relations with government agencies.** Supporting communities and helping fund their initiatives can also do much to build people's and communities' relationships with local government. Where this happens, the scale and scope of what can be achieved increases greatly.

33. See reference 29.

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