Briefing

iied URBAN CRISES

Policy pointers

Area-based approaches (where humanitarian organisations apply multi-sector, participatory methods in specific areas of a city) can work if particular urban locations have acute needs. These approaches must be linked to city-wide/regional plans and policies.

Support for urban planning after a humanitarian crisis can empower communities and local government to identify needs and priorities and manage their recovery. It can also build local capacity for long-term development planning.

Establishing recovery and reconstruction planning task forces can improve activity coordination and increase local government capacity to coordinate future planning; they should be led or supported by the mayor and include community representatives.

Recovery and reconstruction plans can help local governments to manage the situation; improve coordination; link relief, recovery and development; and provide entry points for national agencies and donors.

Thinking bigger: area-based and urban planning approaches to humanitarian crises

Policymakers and donors are calling for a paradigm shift in humanitarian response in urban areas:[1] moving away from processes focused on individuals or households to approaches that intervene at a larger scale. We looked at two larger scale approaches: first reviewing the literature on 'area-based approaches' to urban crisis response (participatory approaches to providing multi-sectoral support in specific geographic areas); and then investigating UN-Habitat's experience of supporting locally led urban planning at the neighbourhood, district and city scale. We found that area-based approaches may be appropriate if particular locations have a high concentration of needs, but to be effective they must be linked to city-wide or regional plans and policies. Our research suggests post-crisis urban planning can provide this policy and planning framework, while empowering communities and local government to identify their needs and priorities and manage their own recovery. However, significant support may be required to build local capacity.

Targeting humanitarian assistance in urban areas is particularly challenging given the size, diversity and mobility of urban populations. Humanitarian agencies have traditionally provided support to individuals or households, but in cities those in need of assistance may be difficult to identify, moving from one place to another and distributed across a wide geographical area. Consequently there are calls for fundamental change in humanitarian practice: moving away from processes focused on individuals or households towards approaches that can intervene at a larger scale. We looked at some of the possibilities and challenges of two approaches: targeting specific areas of a city ('area-based approaches') and providing urban planning support.

Working at a larger scale: targeting areas

Area-based targeting approaches are participatory approaches to providing multi-sectoral support in specific geographic areas, such as a neighbourhood, settlement or district. Like system- and market-based approaches, an area-based approach is a method of moving beyond the individual or household level, and may be appropriate if specific locations within a city have a high concentration of needs.

Our review of the literature[2] found that area-based approaches can:

- Prevent the creation or reinforcement of tensions and inequalities within an area

• Act as a valuable catalyst for local change

• Provide a mechanism for effectively focusing resources

A key finding was the need to link area-based interventions to wider city or regional plans and policies

• Prevent consultation fatigue for disaster-affected populations

• Mobilise a 'bottom-up' approach, and

• Attract investment, and prevent mainstream programmes and services being overstretched.

However, if poorly designed and implemented, area-based approaches can:

• Increase inequalities between the target area and surrounding neighbourhoods

• Create an unnecessary distraction from the underlying problem

• Shift responsibility onto the wrong stakeholder and prevent action

• Be costly to implement and an ineffective use of resources

• Take a long time to deliver

• Lead to a disconnect between local plans and wider city or regional plans, and

• Be difficult to monitor and evaluate.

A key finding from our literature review was the need to **link area-based interventions to wider city or regional plans and policies**. By viewing area-based approaches as elements within a larger plan for the whole city, it is possible to ensure they focus on the most appropriate areas, make the best use of available resources, and compliment other humanitarian and development interventions. This is where area-based approaches link to **urban planning** — typically a key local government responsibility, particularly after urban crises (when there are both urgent needs and opportunities to reduce future risk).

Working at a larger scale: providing urban planning support

While local governments may be closely connected to communities and their self-identified needs — and so in some ways well placed to lead on overarching urban planning activity — they typically have limited resources and capacity, especially when a crisis increases pressure on available staff. Our research investigated practical examples where UN-Habitat supported urban communities and

local government to manage their own recovery process by **providing urban planning support**. We looked at two case studies: the city of Banda Aceh, Indonesia, following the Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami in 2004,[3] and Tacloban City in the Philippines, following super typhoon Haiyan in 2013.[4] Table 1 summarises the scale and nature of the assistance given and the outcomes.

The case studies showed that playing a role in developing recovery and reconstruction plans at neighbourhood, district or city scale can empower urban communities and local governments to identify their own needs and priorities, and to manage their own recovery process. However, external support is often necessary to enable this: the knowledge, experience, time, tools or technology needed to lead this challenging process is often lacking locally, particularly given that the families, communities or workplaces of government staff and officials are likely to have been affected by the crisis and that carrying out immediate activities may leave them little capacity to plan for the future. Table 1 indicates the many contextual and programmatic factors that affected the support UN-Habitat opted to deliver in each situation, and their ability to do so.

Considerations for effective support. Based on this research, we suggest that organisations intending to support urban communities and local government to undertake effective post-crisis urban planning should consider:

• **The most appropriate speed and scale of the intervention given the context and their own mandate, capacity and funding.** For example, if the organisation can secure sufficient funding and capacity, then supporting urban planning at multiple scales with high levels of community participation can be considered. Alternatively, even short-term funding can enable the rapid development of a city-level plan to both inform a broader strategy for the response and identify specific areas that would benefit from more detailed area-based approaches.

• **Building the capacity of local government.** If city officials lack the time, skills or experience to lead recovery planning, this can be undertaken by the assisting organisation as long as local government remains heavily involved and there is political support for it. Alternatively, seconding experienced urban planners from other cities into local government can provide the additional knowledge, experience and capacity to lead the planning process from the crisis-affected area. Providing additional support through

Table 1. UN-Habitat's support for locally led urban planning in Banda Aceh and Tacloban

	Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
Banda Aceh	Funding National staff (political and technical expertise) International staff (technical expertise) Tools, technologies and methodologies Data	Community land ownership mapping Community Action Planning (CAP) Neighbourhood- and ward-level spatial planning Sub-district strategic and spatial planning Integrating the sub-district plan into the city plan Establishing an urban task force Dissemination of information	Land ownership maps Community action plans Neighbourhood- and ward-level spatial plans Sub-district strategic and spatial plan	Increased capacity of urban communities and local government for urban planning, communication and coordination	Social, economic and environmental recovery and development of the city Inputs into annual participatory development planning Integration of the sub-district plan into the regional spatial plan and mid-term development plan of Banda Aceh city
Tacloban	Funding National staff (political and technical expertise) International staff (technical expertise) Tools, technologies and methodologies Data	Forming the Tacloban Recovery and Sustainable Development Group (TACDEV) Developing the Tacloban Recovery and Rehabilitation Plan (TRRP) Presenting, updating and finalising the TRRP Drafting inputs into the Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP)	Tacloban Recovery and Rehabilitation Plan Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment Draft Local Shelter Plan	Empowered local government with increased capacity to: identify problems and tools, make decisions, advocate for support, coordinate activities and access funding	Social, economic and environmental recovery and development of the city

Influencing factors (risks and assumptions)

Programmatic factors:

- Adequate funding over a suitable period of time
- Sufficient staff with necessary knowledge and experience
- Staff are based in the city
- Sufficient institutional capacity and guidelines
- Organisation is working at multiple levels (ward, city, national)
- Recovery and rehabilitation plans have adequate detail on implementation or are supported by further documentation
- Adequate analysis and management of interdependencies between the different projects
- Adequate participation of stakeholders
- Having an exit strategy

Contextual factors:

- Type, impact and complexity of the crisis
- Support, commitment, capacity and experience of local stakeholders (especially the city mayor)
- Motivation and capacity of communities to engage in urban planning (especially if they are displaced and may have lost community leaders)
- Existence of policies on key issues such as 'no build zones' and support for renters and informal settlers
- Relationships between key decision makers — particularly between local and national government
- Existence (or lack) of government reconstruction agency to provide coordination and leadership
- Availability of data
- Availability of suitable land
- Consistent attendance at meetings

partnerships with national or international organisations can also provide 'surge' capacity or specific technical expertise if required.

- **Establishing a recovery and reconstruction planning task force.** Task forces can improve coordination between stakeholders and increase the capacity of local government to coordinate future planning activities. The study found that if these were either led by or had significant backing from the mayor, then key stakeholders prioritised the planning process and the plans received more political support. It is important that decisions made by the task force are shared with all stakeholders (particularly those from affected communities) in an appropriate format so that they can hold the task force accountable and make informed decisions.

- **Working with communities and community leaders.** Depending on the impact of the disaster, this might require building up from the household to neighbourhood and larger scales, while working with both families that have remained in-situ and those that are displaced. Community leaders can play a critical role in liaison, but newly elected officials may require additional support and time to gain respect. Working with communities requires skills, experience, time and resources to engage them in a meaningful way. While young local facilitators may be highly motivated, know the local culture and context, and quickly gain the trust of communities, they are likely to need high levels of guidance and support from the implementing organisation.

- **Advocating for provincial and national government support.** The support of provincial and national government (potentially represented by a reconstruction agency) can provide standards or guidelines for locally led urban planning, as well as technical expertise and coordination. Conversely, a poor relationship with higher levels of government can limit opportunities to access funding and delay or derail the planning process. It is important for humanitarian and other organisations to establish and maintain positive relationships with all levels of government and to advocate for swift, clear and appropriate guidance on key planning issues such as resettlement. It is also important to document and share knowledge created at local level (for example, successful pilot projects) and to advocate for dissemination and replication.

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Notes

[1] See page 12 of: Parker, E and Maynard, V (2015) Humanitarian response to urban crises: a review of area-based approaches. IIED, London. http://pubs.iied.org/10742IIED / [2] Parker, E and Maynard, V (2015) Humanitarian response to urban crises: a review of area-based approaches. IIED, London. http://pubs.iied.org/10742IIED / [3] Yoseph-Paulus, R, Maynard, V, Parker, E and Garcia, D (2017) Urban planning in Banda Aceh: supporting local actors after the tsunami. IIED, London. http://pubs.iied.org/10844IIED / [4] Parker, E, Maynard, V, Garcia, D and Yoseph-Paulus, R (2017) Urban planning following humanitarian crises: Supporting local government to take the lead in the Philippines following super typhoon Haiyan. IIED, London. http://pubs.iied.org/10813IIED