COMMUNITY-MANAGED DISASTER RISK REDUCTION IN FRAGILE AND CONFLICT AFFECTED AREAS

BRIDGING THE OPERATIONAL GAP BETWEEN DISASTER RESILIENCE AND CONFLICT PROGRAMMING

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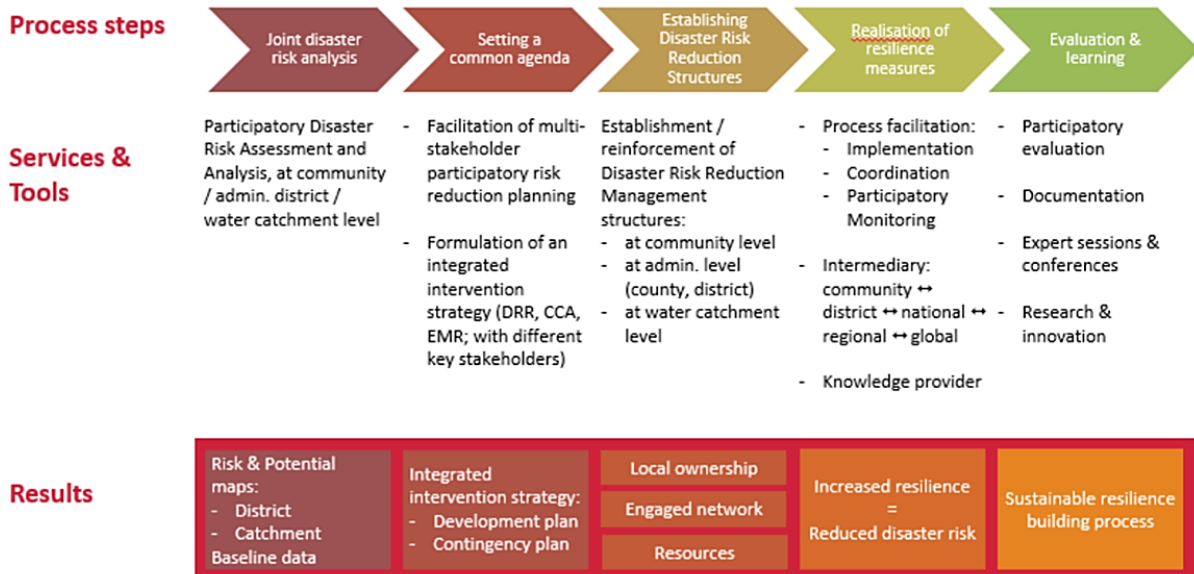Cordaid
BUILDING FLOURISHING COMMUNITIES

INTRODUCTION

This article is published as part of a 6-month thesis research. Aiming to bridge the operational gap between disaster-resilience and conflict programming, the following components of the research will be presented: the outline, findings, conclusions and recommendations. The research was commissioned by Dutch NGO Cordaid, as part of the graduation trajectory of BSc 'International Development Management' specializing in 'Disaster Risk Management' at 'University of Applied Sciences Van Hall Larenstein'.

AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The objective of the research was to propose a suitable adaption to Cordaid's existing 'community-managed disaster risk reduction' (CMDRR) approach, in order for it to work more effectively in fragile and/or conflict affected areas. The approach is currently very strong in building disaster resilience on the community level, by facilitating a process wherein community-members are enabled to lead risk assessments (on the basis of identified hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities) that feed into the design of resilient community action-plans (RCAPs), which are to be carried out by capacitated and organized communities. Yet, this approach is not fully able to effectively address conflict or conflict risks. Integrated disaster-conflict approaches are still absent in today's development sector; As this research aims to fill this gap, it can be considered as pioneering.

FIGURE 1 » **CMDRR PROCESS STEPS**

SOURCE : Cordaid CMDRR Process June 2019

Cordaid's strategy is to work IN and ON fragility. Fragility is a situation wherein states are unable to provide necessary systems and structures for citizens to thrive and develop, leaving them vulnerable in the face of a multiplicity of risks. Disaster and conflict have the potential to be a root cause of fragility or exacerbate pre-existing levels of fragility. Resilience, on the flip-side of fragility, is the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the

preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions. Thus, Cordaid needs to be prepared to work IN and ON conflict next to its disaster-resilience scope, as conflict can negatively affect fragility.

In order to formulate suitable recommendations to improve the CMDRR approach, three elements are central in the research. First, a case study is undertaken, focusing on a CMDRR project (Pro-Act) that took place in South Sudan (2015-2019) which is a highly fragile and conflict affected context. Secondly, an extensive and in-depth literature study is done providing rationale for the objective and to gain other important insights. Lastly, it will cover and cocreate a Cordaid designed 'conflict risk analysis toolkit', which is part of a 'Community of Expertise on Conflict' initiative and includes the design of the new toolkit and integration of the toolkit into CMDRR.

FIGURE 2 » **HAZARD ASSESSMENT EXERCISE IMVEPI REFUGEE SETTLEMENT**

SOURCE : Eelke Boerema

FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

The Pro-Act case was thoroughly examined and revealed that it had positive effect on (risk for) conflict on community level, next to food security strategies and disaster-resilience enhancing elements. Specific activities like the establishment of peacebuilding committees that facilitate peace dialogues between conflicting community groups, establishment of marketplaces for trade and spreading of peace- and early-warning messages have effectively reduced the number of violent incidents and increased social cohesion in project areas.

Obstacles raised

The issue is that the achieved results have been insufficiently documented in project documents and reports due to a lack of indicators regarding the conflict and security situation in the project areas.

Due to a missing baseline study, insufficient analysis at the inception and inflexible and rigid decision-making and reporting mechanisms, there was insufficient monitoring and evaluation and inconclusive impact assessment. This caused the inability to learn from any impact and the inability to 'showcase' the Pro-Act for attracting additional funding.

Pro-Act also suffered under the eruption of extreme politically driven and violent conflict, leading to displacement of project participants and staff and resulting in a one-year delay. With Dutch MFA funding, Cordaid was financially capacitated to provide much needed humanitarian aid, alleviating suffering and ensuring a quicker reboot of the project.

Substantiating the findings with previous literature
Literature has provided a strong fundament for acknowledging the dynamic and influential relationship between disasters and conflicts and proves that there is high need for integrated approaches that enhance community resilience in the face of disasters AND conflict (risk). Moreover, it acknowledges that fragility finds its roots in disaster AND conflict, and as such resilience approaches have to address both. It also became clear that the data-dap issue could be due to the application of rigid and inflexible decision-making and reporting mechanisms, while providing a framework for more adaptive programming that enables continuous learning.

Literature also provided rationale for the need for a conflict (risk) analysis tool, as analysis forms the fundament of every development program. A conflict (risk) analysis tool enables organisations to design conflict-sensitive ('do-no-harm') strategies and to formulate specific activities reducing the effects of and risk for conflict on the community level. Literature also provided necessary analytical elements and best practices for conducting conflict analysis which are integrated in the conflict risk analysis (CRA) toolkit. Cordaid designed the toolkit for conducting conflict analysis on organisational and communal levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS
The findings of the research have led to the following recommendations:

- Develop quantitative and qualitative indicators for conflict-related work for baseline assessment, M&E and impact evaluation to enable learning, adaptive programming and attracting funding opportunities;
- Include a budget line for responding to ever-changing fragile context and integrate a humanitarian aid component to be able to adapt in times of conflict outbreak in project areas;
- Further research literature that provide strategies for 'community-managed' remote M&E practices and indicators with integration of adaptive decision-making and reporting mechanisms in program design;
- Continue piloting the CRA toolkit to research its applicability, then integrate it with the existing risk assessment tool to design an integrated disaster-conflict assessment tool.

These steps are a first step towards a fully integrated disaster-conflict approach. If done accordingly, Cordaid could grasp a major opportunity, making it better equipped for programming in fragile and conflict affected areas while aligning to political trends (EC Nexus) and access to additional funding opportunities.