Report

Disaster risk reduction and protracted violent conflict

The case of Afghanistan

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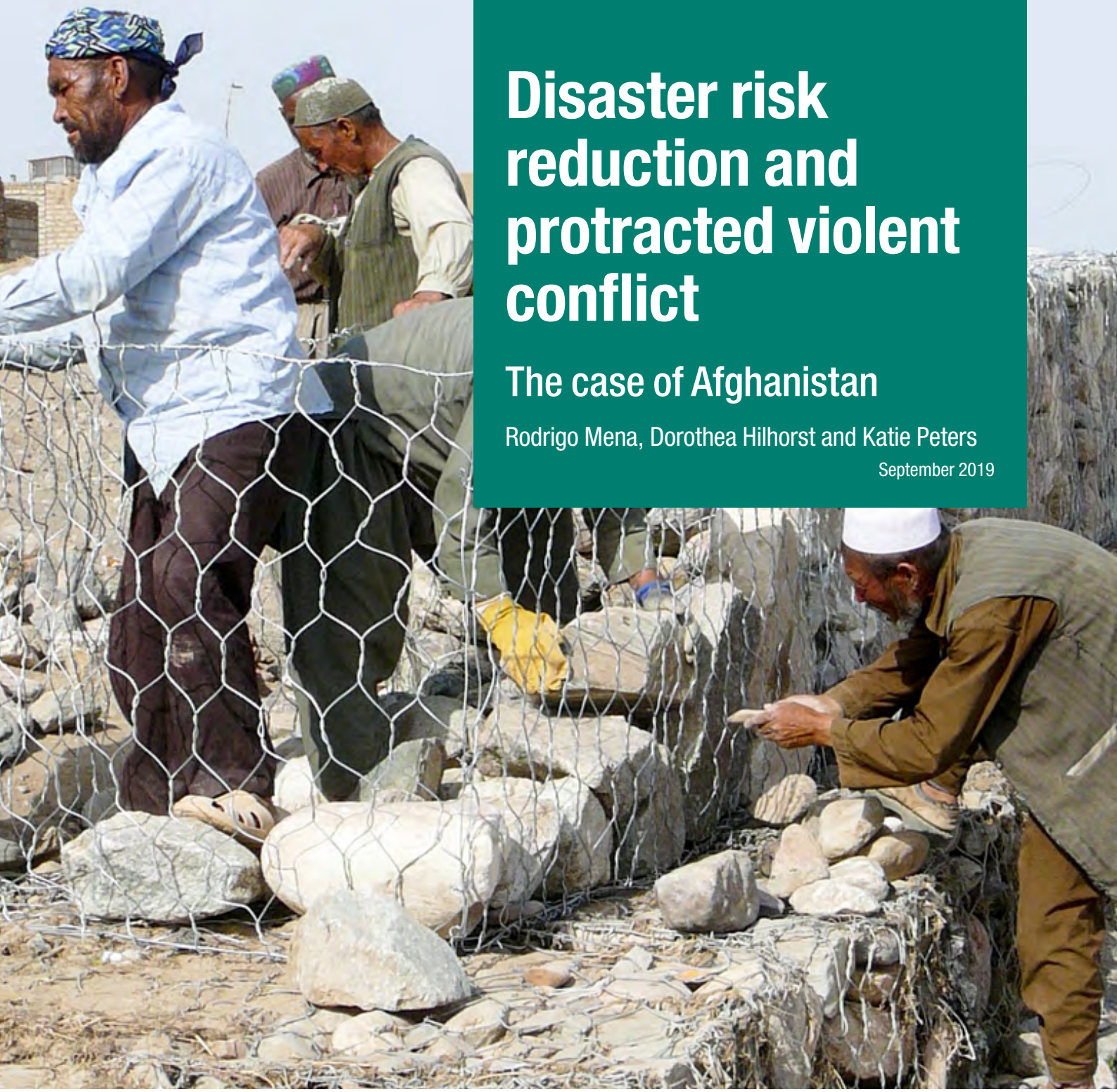

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Cover photo: Men from the village of Jabraeel on the banks of the Harirod River in Herat, Afghanistan build a retaining wall to limit flooding. © UNOPS

About this paper

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Available in this series

Peters, K. (2018) *Accelerating Sendai Framework implementation in Asia: disaster risk reduction in contexts of violence, conflict and fragility*. London: ODI (www.odi.org/publications/11153-accelerating-sendai-framework-implementation-asia-disaster-risk-reduction-contexts-violence-conflict)

Peters, K. and Peters, L.E.R. (2018) *Disaster risk reduction and violent conflict in Africa and Arab states: implications for Sendai Framework Priorities*. London: ODI (www.odi.org/publications/11208-disaster-risk-reduction-and-violent-conflict-africa-and-arab-states-implications-sendai-framework)

Peters, K., Holloway, K. and Peters, L.E.R. (2019) *Disaster risk reduction in conflict contexts: the state of the evidence*. London: ODI (www.odi.org/publications/11340-disaster-risk-reduction-conflict-contexts-state-evidence)

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Peters, K., Eltinay, N. and Holloway, K. (2019) *Disaster risk reduction, urban informality and a 'fragile peace': the case of Lebanon*. London: ODI (www.odi.org/publications/11412-disaster-risk-reduction-urban-informality-and-fragile-peace-case-lebanon)

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Siddiqi, A., Peters, K. and Zulver, J. (2019) *'Doble afectación': living with disasters and conflict in Colombia*. London: ODI (www.odi.org/publications/11414-doble-afectacion-living-disasters-and-conflict-colombia)

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)

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)
- Podcast series: *When disasters and conflict collide* (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

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Contents

List of boxes and figures

Boxes

Figures

Acronyms

ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development
AHRDO	Afghanistan Human Rights and Democracy Organization
ANDMA	Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (formerly DDP)
ANGO	Afghan non-governmental organisation (national and local)
ARC	Afghanistan Resilience Consortium
ASDRR	Afghanistan National Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction
CDC	Community Development Councils
COAR	Coordination of Afghan Relief
DDP	Department of Disaster Preparedness (now ANDMA)
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DRR	disaster risk reduction
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, GmbH
IDP	internally displaced person
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NDMC	National Disaster Management Commission
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SMDM	State Ministry for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Affairs
SNAP	Afghanistan Strategic National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction
UN-HABITAT	UN Human Settlements Programme
UNISDR	UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
USAID	US Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme

Executive summary

While technical experts and donors profess an ambition to adapt conventional disaster risk reduction (DRR) approaches to conflict contexts, they struggle to overcome the long-held perception that this is not a viable option. Conflict can undermine national disaster risk governance and the implementation of DRR strategies, and conflict contexts are often considered too difficult an environment in which to deliver DRR. In such conditions, disaster risk management is likely to be a low government priority, with action limited to protection and response. Afghanistan presents a contrasting picture, where a national strategy has been formulated and includes explicit consideration of the conflict environment, and where some local DRR interventions are linking with conflict prevention ambitions.

Afghanistan has been beset by numerous disasters in recent years, with a high toll of death and displacement. Thousands have been injured, killed or forced to flee their homes as a result of the country's longstanding conflict. DRR has become a major concern for international donors and the Afghan government over the past decade. This study explores how DRR initiatives and projects are being linked with conflict prevention, 'do no harm' principles and peacebuilding efforts to show that it is possible to mitigate against natural hazards while also seeking to reduce the risk of conflict. The study also strikes a note of caution that, while DRR is possible, it requires long-term, dedicated effort and continuous monitoring. Of particular concern is the scope of current DRR projects, as the tailored approaches required in remote disaster-prone communities do not easily allow for scaling up.

Learning from Afghanistan

Afghanistan is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, with nearly all of its 34 provinces affected by at least one natural disaster over the past 30 years. In 2018, the lives and livelihoods of more than 4 million Afghan people were threatened by floods, storms, droughts and landslides. This figure is almost three times higher than the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance on account of conflict. Meanwhile, after more than 30 years of armed struggle, the country has a low level of socioeconomic development, reduced governance and only basic capacity for disaster recovery and resilience-building. While some national policy documents articulate the importance of linking disasters with conflict, there is limited capacity to design and deliver relevant implementation strategies. Corruption, mistrust of the government and lack of transparent governance add a further layer of complication.

Afghanistan exemplifies many of the themes emerging from recent studies of DRR in contexts of conflict. Protracted conflict and state fragility have undermined disaster risk management and increased people's vulnerability to natural hazards. Furthermore, international attention has tended to focus on relatively accessible locations, largely neglecting what happens in areas where the state does not control territory. Another issue of concern is that different types of violence tend to be treated in the same way, which means that new opportunities or entry points for building disaster resilience may be overlooked.

The research highlights the need for approaches to DRR that consider the multiple and varied conflict dynamics in which they operate. State institutions and the international community tend to focus on the national level, whereas local-level manifestations of conflict can be much more important in terms of programme implementation. Failing to take account of local societal issues can mask the multiple causes of vulnerability, resulting in projects that may not adequately address the root causes of disasters. If not adapted to the local context, DRR interventions have the potential to cause or exacerbate social conflict.

Towards a more holistic approach

In addition to revealing the complexity of working with conflict dynamics in Afghanistan, the study also illustrates a new trend in approaches to DRR. While previously hazard-focused infrastructure projects and responses to rapid-onset disasters were the norm, there is now a move towards explicit consideration of local resilience, with interventions taking a more holistic approach to intersecting threats and risks. A number of aid agencies have adapted their approach to DRR through a process of conflict analysis, centring on a commitment to 'do no harm'. Although not specifically oriented towards conflict resolution or peacebuilding, these approaches nonetheless can help reduce the risk of conflict. This change of tack has come in response to lessons from the past and current donor trends linking DRR with topics such as climate change, development and education.

The research also revealed a lack of consideration of intersectionality, or the ways in which power systems affect the most marginalised in a society. Uniform approaches to 'community' are coming under increasing scrutiny, with calls for more attention to different forms of vulnerability and how to make DRR policies more inclusive. An intersectional approach offers a more nuanced perspective than is typical in DRR programmes by taking contextual realities into account, and recognising that people experiencing marginalisation have different identities, needs and priorities. The study also calls for attention to the relationship between disasters and gender, climate change and urbanisation.

Afghanistan has taken significant steps to advance its ability to access and utilise climate finance. Although not always explicit, many interventions are enhancing DRR, including the adoption of early warning systems, but there is still a need to build institutional capacity to bolster those links; to work with international funding mechanisms to enable climate funds to be channelled to high-intensity conflict contexts; and to link programmes including adaptation and conflict and DRR components more closely with national policies on sustainable development.

Recommendations

DRR in Afghanistan is taking more account of the relationships between hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities. DRR is now being pursued both to 'do no harm' *and* to minimise conflict risk. These insights lead to several key recommendations.

Build capacity and strengthen coordination

This includes strengthening local knowledge on the basic concepts of DRR, and deepening understanding of how disaster risks manifest and the interrelationships with conflict. It also involves developing remote monitoring technologies to overcome access issues. Encouraging donors to make conflict-sensitive processes compulsory in project design and delivery will facilitate the allocation of resources to training and building knowledge on conflict analysis. Inter-agency coordination and learning also needs to be improved.

Scale up action on DRR in a conflict-sensitive manner

Understanding of and action on climate and disaster risk should be guided by explicit emphasis on the links between natural hazards, conflict and peace. There is a need to develop conceptual and operational approaches that improve the integration of DRR with actions relating to minimising conflict, and to move beyond short-term timeframes. Conflict analysis at various scales can be used to inform the design and delivery of national and local DRR strategies and plans. Stronger collaborations between disaster, climate and peace actors could bolster knowledge and mature programme design.

Integrate learning from DRR and conflict into intersectional and climate change adaptation ambitions

Lessons from the DRR community should be better documented and shared to strengthen the evidence base and promote systematic inclusion of DRR and conflict in adaptation programmes. This could attract additional funding for DRR through climate finance and other sectors, helping governments to improve coherence between parallel strategies, each striving to support peaceful and sustainable development progress.

1 Introduction

Afghanistan bears witness to many of the themes emerging from the growing evidence base on the intersection of DRR and conflict (see Peters et al., 2019a). It shows how disaster impacts are already having a severe effect on conditions of vulnerability; how protracted and high-intensity conflict[1] undermines basic disaster risk governance, which in turn increases natural hazard vulnerabilities; and how international attention to conflict leads to broad-brush characterisations of a context where one dimension of risk – active armed conflict – overrides others, to the detriment of an understanding of what DRR actions might be viable in a high-intensity conflict.

Evidence presented in this report also reveals how, on closer inspection, ideas slowly emerging in disasters discourse, such as whether DRR can be a vehicle for conflict prevention (see Peters et al., 2019d), are being put into practice. This is explored through a number of projects which seek to link DRR with conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding approaches. We posit that what is happening in practice may be more advanced than the dominant disaster discourse suggests, and as such offers new lessons from which any active pursuit of DRR in conflict contexts might benefit. The findings also raise questions about how, when DRR is not anchored in existing institutional structures in high-intensity conflict, a lack of institutionalisation undermines the feasibility, results and sustainability of any changes stimulated through DRR projects. As yet, there is insufficient knowledge and understanding to devise alternative 'solutions' to secure disaster resilience for people vulnerable to disasters and conflict. Using the case of Afghanistan, this paper aims to contribute to a better understanding of the way in which DRR projects can be implemented in high-intensity conflict scenarios with a conflict-sensitive approach. In other words, it explores the ways in which DRR initiatives and projects link with conflict prevention, do no harm principles or peacebuilding efforts. It looks at:

- The policies and institutional landscape of DRR.
- The practice of DRR, and how DRR projects operate in, on and around conflict.
- The main operational challenges facing DRR in high-intensity conflict.

The remainder of this section presents foundational ideas that ground the work, including the role of conflict in the construction of disaster risk and how this manifests itself in Afghanistan. Section 2 describes the multi-hazard context in Afghanistan and the methodology employed in the study. Section 3 explores the DRR 'landscape' in Afghanistan: the institutional architecture, policies and financing and the main actors. Section 4 analyses how DRR works around, in and on conflict at different levels through three DRR interventions. Section 5 reviews cross-cutting operational challenges pertinent to DRR in conflict contexts, including issues that have not been mainstreamed or have been neglected. Finally, Section 7 provides a set of recommendations for advancing DRR in high-intensity conflict.

1 High-intensity conflicts represent specific moments in a protracted crisis, where violence occurs on a large scale. Relevant characteristics include that the national and local governments and authorities have no effective, or scattered or reduced, control over (part of) the national territory, and there are high levels of state fragility. The provision of goods and essential services is irregular, reduced or non-existent in some areas, and casualties usually exceed 1,000 per year. See Mena (2018a).

1.1 Disasters and DRR in Afghanistan

In 2018, the number of people affected by disasters in Afghanistan (slow- and sudden-onset) reached more than 4 million – almost three times higher than the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance on account of conflict (OCHA, 2018a: 4). Afghanistan is classified as 'fragile' within Asia, and is one of four 'fragile' countries which collectively accounted for 55% of all climate-related disaster deaths in Asia between 1997 and 2016. Despite some minor fluctuations, Afghanistan has consistently ranked high on international indices of 'fragile states', appearing in every OECD *Fragile states* report since 2008 (OECD, 2018: 26). In the 2018 edition, four of the 'top fragile cities' were in Afghanistan, a result of a complex mix of 'conflict-related violence and terrorism, above-average unemployment and low access to basic services' (OECD, 2018: 33).

Afghanistan suffers from a range of hazards, including floods, storms, droughts and landslides (see Section 2). These are increasingly gaining attention, nationally and internationally. In addition to government action on disaster policy, significant high-value infrastructural investments in disaster mitigation have been delivered, as have local-scale emergency preparedness and capacity-building initiatives. Heijmans (2012) and Mena (2018b) provide rare examples of robust empirical research explicitly on vulnerabilities and disaster impacts as they relate to conflict in Afghanistan. Their research focuses on the political risks of DRR in a country affected by conflict. Mena (2018b: 10) presents cases where the building of mitigation infrastructure generated divisions within communities over who would work for the project and receive a salary.

More often, dominant international discourses on Afghanistan 'lump all types of violence together' (Kurtz et al., 2018: 1), adopting a reductionist approach to the complexity, turbulence and scale-specific considerations of violence and conflict. One consequence is that opportunities for progressing DRR and supporting disaster resilience are often overlooked, be this through existing channels, new entry points or adapted programming approaches. The evidence and examples revealed through this research run counter to the norm and, as such, offer new insights for managing disaster risk in high-intensity conflict contexts, for example considering the micro-dynamics of conflict or conflict at the local and community level.

Conflict is both the context in which DRR operates and a driver of disaster vulnerability; but there is also a converse relationship. Disaster impacts can exacerbate conflict dynamics. Prolonged drought in Afghanistan between 2006–2007, for instance, has reportedly increased the vulnerability of young men to recruitment by militias that can pay them for their services (UNESCAP, 2018). The reciprocal relationship between interventions and their conflict context has long been considered in fields beyond DRR (see Barnett and Weiss, 2008; Hilhorst, 2013a; Kurtz et al., 2018), but within DRR practice this has remained relatively anecdotal or confined to organisational project management reports. Here we shed light on examples of operational approaches to DRR that consider the conflict dynamics in which they operate, be this working 'around' or 'in' conflict (see Section 4). Individual project examples operate under a broader national DRR policy architecture (see Section 3).

The links between disasters and conflict are made clear in many Afghan DRR policy documents, which articulate how conflict contributes to disaster vulnerability, destroys flood protection measures and undermines the country's ability to anticipate, prepare for and respond to shocks (Government of Afghanistan, 2003b; 2011; 2014): 'The distinction between man-made and natural disasters is no longer that clear when we consider the complex causes of droughts, landslides and floods' (ANDMA, 2011: 17). The changing nature of conflict is also recognised (ibid.).

Moreover, in high-profile regional ministerial gatherings on DRR, Afghanistan has been one of the few proponents of explicitly articulating the challenges that conflict presents to delivering effective disaster risk governance (Government of Afghanistan, 2018b; ANDMA, 2018b), and in turn its contribution to the global goals set out in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (UNISDR, 2015). Yet to date, practical

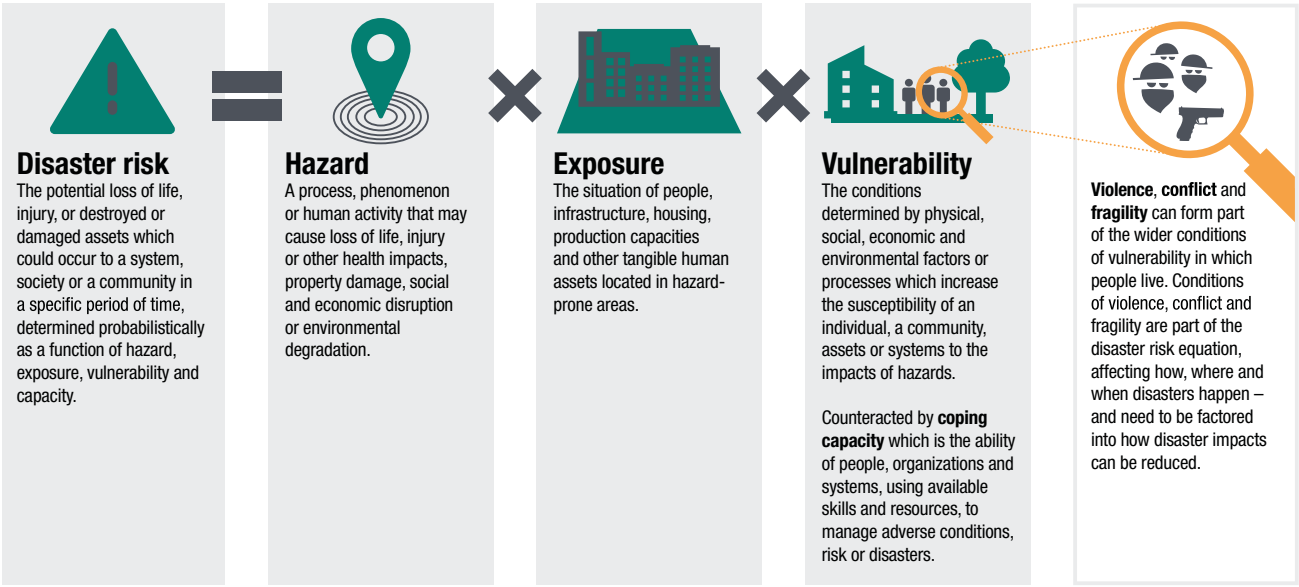
or policy advice on how to advance DRR in Afghanistan and other contexts of protracted and high-intensity conflict remains scant.

1.2 The role of conflict in the construction of disaster risk

Several recent studies have explored the relationship between and co-occurrence of conflicts and disasters (Maxwell and Majid, 2015; Peters and Budimir, 2016; Mena, 2018a; Siddiqi, 2018, Hilhorst et al., 2019; Peters et al., 2019a). Spiegel et al. (2007) evaluated more than a decade's worth of data, finding that several natural hazard-related disasters overlap with different types of conflict (including complex emergencies and epidemics). Other reports outline how disasters can intensify conflicts and, conversely, how conflicts affect the outcomes of disasters or responses to them (Bui, 2008; Hilhorst, 2013b; Omelicheva, 2011; Peters and Budimir, 2016; Wisner et al., 2003; Peters et al., 2019a).

A large number of disasters occur in fragile or conflict-affected areas (ECHO, 2013). Over the decade 2004 –14, 58% of disaster deaths occurred in the 30 countries topping the list of state fragility (Peters and Budimir, 2016). For the period 2005–10 Afghanistan ranked sixth on the Fragile States Index and seventh in terms of disaster occurrence, and was in the top 30 countries for disaster deaths and number of people affected (ranking 16th and 29th respectively). Afghanistan was also costly for the international community, as the sixth-highest recipient of humanitarian aid. This was not, however, reflected in volumes of DRR assistance, which did not appear in the top 30 (Peters and Budimir, 2016: 6–7). For every $100 spent on response, just $2.24 was spent on DRR (Peters, 2018: 24).[2] This mismatch is in part what prompted increased attention to the real and perceived barriers to channelling financial resources to DRR in fragile and conflict-affected contexts (see Peters, 2017).

Figure 1 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) accompanying the Sendai Framework (UNISDR, 2015).
Source: Peters (2018: 9).

2 Calculated using total spending (gross disbursements) on emergency response (Tag 720) and total spending (gross disbursements) on disaster prevention and preparedness (Tag 740) from the OECD (2018) 'Creditor Reporting System (CRS)' (electronic dataset, OECD. Stat, OECD) (https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=CRS1#), for the period 1997–2016; top 10 Asian countries on the 2018 Fragile States Index, by grouping (alert/warning); the Fund for Peace (2018) 'Fragile States Index 2018' (electronic dataset, Fund for Peace) (http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/excel/).

To understand the susceptibility of conflict-affected contexts to natural hazards, we need to understand the nature of disasters (Hilhorst, 2013b; Kelman, 2010; Wisner, 2012). Disasters are chiefly the result of social conditions rather than the presence of a natural phenomenon (UNISDR, 2017b; USAID, 2011; Wisner et al., 2012; Bankoff et al., 2004). It is for this reason that academics and international agencies have agreed that the term 'natural disaster' should not be used. Disaster risks are mediated by the level of vulnerability of the population exposed to their effects. Issues of violence, conflict and fragility are thus part of the construction of disaster risk (see Figure 1). In conflict-affected contexts, vulnerability is usually increased, whereas risk reduction and response capacities are eroded (Hilhorst, 2013b; Twigg, 2015; Wisner, 2012; Peters, 2017) – making these areas and populations especially prone to high-impact disasters.

1.3 DRR in conflict situations

The need for disaster management in places affected by conflict has increasingly been emphasised over the past decade (Peters, 2017). The difficulties and costs of responding to disasters (rather than taking steps to prevent them), particularly in areas affected by high-intensity conflict, have led to increased interest in DRR strategies in these settings (Mena, 2018a; Peters, 2017; Peters and Peters, 2018). There are many potential benefits stemming from the implementation of DRR: a reduction in mortality rates in hazard-prone areas, in the cost of post-disaster health treatment and in hunger and malnutrition, enhanced coordination and cooperation between multiple stakeholders, reduced deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions and improved or restored water and soil conservation efforts. DRR can address climate change causes and effects, and can facilitate climate change adaptation (FAO, 2017; Kenny, 2012; Twigg, 2015; UNISDR, 2015). At the same time, there has long been an anecdotal concern that implementing DRR projects in conflict areas is highly complicated – if not impossible.

DRR is not common in high-intensity conflict, complex emergencies or (civil) war situations (Peters, 2017; Twigg, 2015). The main reasons for this are the challenge of long-term planning and funding due to political fragility and instability, a lack of basic services, insecure and unsafe environments, complex logistics, high levels of displacement, corruption and high operational costs (Twigg, 2015; Mena, 2018a). A study of nine countries affected by disaster and conflict concluded that 'violent conflict (or the risk of it) or related political tensions can hinder disaster risk reduction (DRR) and recovery activities across all levels, and can divert political attention away from the importance of disaster issues' (UNDP, 2011: 8).

Areas affected by high-intensity conflict are often 'seen as having a low capacity for implementing large-scale DRR' (Feinstein International Center, 2013: 16). According to Wisner (2012: 71), violent conflict can hamper DRR in a range of ways. As a result, 'very little exists, conceptually or programmatically, on how to effectively pursue DRR in FCAC [fragile and conflict-affected contexts]; approaches and concepts are not tailored to the specific conditions affecting FCAC, and there is no community of practice to document and share learning from these contexts' (Peters, 2017: 10). Even less common is practical and operational knowledge of DRR in conflict-affected areas in relation to peacebuilding, conflict prevention, do no harm principles and conflict-sensitive approaches. As presented by Anderson, 'when international assistance is given in the context of a violent conflict, it becomes a part of that context and thus also of the conflict' (1999: 1). Similar concerns apply when delivery is channelled through local implementing agencies. When it comes to disaster management and DRR, the situation is no different. Therefore, how can we deliver DRR outcomes in ways that do no harm, and possibly even have a positive impact on dynamics of peace and conflict?

1.4 The politics of disasters

Disasters, everywhere, are highly politicised events. They are political because differentiated vulnerabilities produce different impacts; their effects are uneven and, hence, affect the social realities in which they occur. Besides the well-documented detrimental impacts of disaster events, there are examples where people with

the economic or political power to capitalise or benefit from disasters do so by deciding on or promoting action that will benefit them. In conflict situations, disaster-related decisions and actions can tilt the balance. A notorious example is the 1984 Ethiopian famine, where the government of Mengistu Haile Mariam multiplied the effects of drought and refused to allow relief into rebel-held parts of the country (de Waal, 1991).

DRR, including disaster response, is also political in that it includes values and choices, priorities and the allocation of resources. DRR is inherently political: it involves deciding on the risks to be addressed, the allocation of burdens brought about by particular risks, the intentions and interactions of different actors and the application of certain techniques over others, with implications on the generation and allocation of knowledge and resources (Hilhorst, 2013b). In cases of conflict, these decisions are more likely to be politicised because of heightened pre-existing tensions. The politics of the disaster response following the 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka, where parts of the country felt discriminated against, is generally thought to have rekindled the conflict there (Waizenegger and Hyndman, 2010). DRR is also affected by the wider political economy. Competition over leadership, factions, conflict, criminality, markets and policies in other domains may all influence the creation of disaster risks and DRR.

Others have extended this line of enquiry to stress the inherently political nature of the processes which result in disasters, to pursue a deeper understanding of the construction of vulnerabilities to hazards – particularly in conflict contexts (Siddiqi, 2018; Harris et al., 2013) – not just in the aftermath of a disaster, but also in daily life. Everyday politics are about the deliberate or implicit political dimensions of everyday living, involving people 'embracing, complying with, adjusting or contesting norms and rules regarding authority over, production of, or allocation of resources and doing so in quiet, mundane and subtle expressions and acts that are rarely organised and direct' (Kerkvliet, 2009: 232). To illustrate this, Box 1 provides excerpts of an analysis of everyday politics, water resource management and DRR.

Box 1 Everyday politics, water resource management and DRR

Ethnographic research from Heijmans (2012) presents the case of the Afghan locality Khulm, in Samangan Province, during 2008.[1] It shows how conflict related to water management between communities up- and downstream relates to a community-based DRR pilot project.

Conflict related to water access and use resulted from changes in water governance following the defeat of the Taliban in the area in 2001. Under the Taliban water was distributed in quantities relative to the size of land, providing a more objective solution that reduced tensions over the control of water (ibid.). After the fall of the Taliban, local governance, including water management, relied on a system in which decisions were made by military commanders in positions of power, who tended to favour people closely affiliated to them, mainly upstream communities.

A new irrigation system sought to provide more equitable access to water. However, the result was a riverbed higher than surrounding villages and fields, leaving communities prone to flash floods, as occurred in 2006. To avoid floods, upstream communities try to clean the ice accumulated in canals during the winter to allow water to flow, but may lack the tools and means to do this in a timely way. Heijmans explains how lack of support from the local government is not a result of a lack of resources, but might be because officials have land downstream and, for them, floods are positive and necessary. Drought can be a more serious problem than floods in Khulm, and in periods of water scarcity upstream communities can close canal gates and divert water for their own needs before it reaches communities on the lower sections of the river. All of these different strategies result in or exacerbate conflict.

1 Khulm, formerly part of Samangan Province, is now part of Balkh.

1.5 Categories of conflict

This report draws a distinction between macro, meso and micro conflict. This derives from interviewees' descriptions – explicitly and implicitly – of three levels of conflict, which in different ways shape DRR and disaster management policies, strategies and programmes. Respondents used these descriptions to denote different types of conflict, with varying scales, actors and impacts. These three levels can be characterised as follows:

- **National level (macro):** represents the national conflict involving armed opposition groups, in this case predominantly the Taliban. This conflict directly and indirectly affects the entire territory of the country, and attracts most international attention.
- **Provincial level (meso):** represents conflicts at the provincial level, involving warlords, opposition systems of governance, corruption and a lack of resources and functional institutions. Conflicts at this level are closely related to the macro-national conflict, while also having an impact on communities' livelihoods, since it is in this intermediate space where the power to decide politics and actions at the local level resides.
- **Local and community level (micro):** represents conflicts between local populations, and between local populations and external actors such as NGOs and government structures. Conflicts at this level can include disputes over the control and use of natural resources, rivalries based on religious or political differences, differences among community members related to decision-making processes or differences between communities over the use and control of territory.

This distinction, while useful shorthand, can imply a concrete separation between conflict dynamics and/or underplay the relationship between them. Despite this limitation, the promotion, implementation and management of DRR projects in Afghanistan are affected and shaped in different ways by each of these levels of conflict, and therefore they are useful analytical categories reflecting how local to international actors make sense of the complex and dynamic nature of conflict in the country.

Interviewees frequently used these categories (macro, meso, micro) to explain and explore how conflict could affect DRR projects implemented in contexts outside of those affected by armed groups. This led to a second categorisation, between working *in*, *on* and *around* conflict (Goodhand, 2001):

- **Working *around* conflict:** recognises conflict as an impediment to development projects, and projects are therefore implemented in areas where there is no active violent conflict. In Afghanistan, DRR projects are mainly organised in government-controlled areas.
- **Working *in* conflict:** recognises the links between an intervention and the conflict, and that each can mutually affect the other. Projects are developed in such a way that they do not exacerbate, create or are negatively affected by conflict. For example, DRR projects are implemented *in* areas affected by meso and micro conflict, but that does not mean they have an ambition to contribute to resolving those conflicts directly.
- **Working *on* conflict:** includes all those activities and strategies being implemented by the project to deliberately address the conflict and its causes, and seek to resolve or modify the dynamics around the conflict, for example cases where DRR projects explicitly decide to work *on* conflict, in its resolution or management.

The second category (working *in* conflict) has many similarities with the do no harm approach. In her book, Anderson (1999) calls on humanitarian and development actors to avoid doing harm by carefully analysing how aid can create or exacerbate conflict, and to design interventions in such a way that negative dynamics are avoided. With this distinction in mind, Harris et al. (2013: 28) state that projects addressing conflict and disaster risk simultaneously can be positioned on a continuum: 'At one end of the continuum DRR is

seen as a vehicle for enacting conflict prevention objectives; at the other end, agencies work "around" conflict dynamics, but often adopt "Do No Harm" principles'.

Given the multi-layered nature of conflict in Afghanistan, the distinctions of working around, in and on conflict can also be analysed at these different levels.

2 The case of Afghanistan

One of the main challenges in studying DRR in the midst of protracted and high-intensity conflict is the relatively scant attention paid to disasters in relation to conflicts (Mena, 2018a). At the same time, a violent or armed conflict is usually posited as being a higher priority for redress in comparison to natural hazard-related disaster risk, and its resolution is often seen as necessary before the latter can take precedence (Peters, 2017). The impact of disasters in conflict contexts, including Afghanistan, has reinforced arguments that DRR must take place in these contexts, though little is known about what kinds of actions are viable and appropriate. Despite the obvious challenges of achieving DRR outcomes in a context of high-intensity conflict, evidence collected for this report shows that, in the years after the 2011 peace agreement, when the conflict seemed to subside, spaces opened up for post-conflict recovery and DRR entered the agenda in Afghanistan. Over the last decade, multiple disaster risk management, development-related and natural resource management projects have been implemented, many of which paid attention to the need to adequately manage current and future disaster risk (ARC, 2016; UNEP, 2013; 2016).

Today, DRR projects are being promoted widely and there is an emerging body of DRR policies. However, as stated by the government of Afghanistan:

> The disaster policy in Afghanistan is also affected by the civil war in the country. [B]efore the war in the country we had some policy and management against the disaster mitigation management, unfortunately due to civil war we did not develop that policy … we [even] lost what we had in the past (ANDMA, 2018b: 8).

As a result, some DRR projects have explicitly included elements of conflict prevention, mitigation or resolution strategies (Clark-Ginsberg, 2014; Mena, 2018b). Despite the small number of implemented projects, there is a sufficient body of knowledge and practice to enable the study of DRR implementation in areas with multiple social conflicts.

2.1 The multi-hazard landscape of Afghanistan: conflicts and disasters

Afghanistan is a clear example of a multi-hazard landscape. As one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, 'over the last three decades nearly all of the country's 34 provinces have been affected by at least one natural disaster' (NEPA and UNEP, 2015: 34), including earthquakes, landslides, avalanches, droughts, storms and floods (ARC, 2016; NEPA and UNEP, 2015; World Bank and GFDRR, 2017). On average, disasters affect more than 200,000 people a year in Afghanistan (OCHA, 2018a), and since 1980 have resulted in more than 20,000 casualties, making it the country with the second highest fatality rate related to disasters worldwide (World Bank and GFDRR, 2017). In 2018, more than 4 million people were affected by disasters (slow- and sudden-onset) – almost three times the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance in response to conflict (OCHA, 2018a: 4). Of note is the severe drought affecting the north of the country in 2018, leading to the displacement of more than 275,000 people (OCHA, 2018b). In economic terms, damage from earthquakes, floods and droughts was projected to exceed $400 million in 2017 (ibid., 2017), but given the challenges of collating disaster loss data in high-intensity conflict contexts, this figure is widely regarded as an underestimate (Peters and Budimir,

Figure 2 Map of Afghanistan

2016). This was echoed during a DRR Working Group meeting in Afghanistan in November 2017, where NGO, INGO and government representatives highlighted the need for more reliable sources of information to inform the design and delivery of DRR projects.

One of the main factors contributing to vulnerability to and the impacts of disasters across the country is the protracted social conflict and crisis. More than 30 years of conflict and war have resulted in low levels of socioeconomic development, the destruction of coping mechanisms, reduced disaster risk management efforts, ineffective governance and reduced capacities to recover and build resilience (Donini, 2012; NEPA and UNEP, 2015; World Bank and GFDRR, 2017). The poverty rate is almost 40% and food insecurity is increasing as drought, floods and conflict undermine livelihoods (World Bank, 2018). Governance is fragile and corruption commonplace. The country is 168th out of 189 on the Human Development Index (UNDP, 2018), and 171st out of 178 on the Fragile States Index (Fund for Peace, 2018).

The geography and climate of the country is also relevant, with rugged mountains, an arid and semi-arid climate and high mountain ranges and fertile plateaus in the south-west, and cold, wet and snowy winters in the north, leading to landslides, avalanches and floods. Dry and hot summers produce drought conditions in large swathes of the country, and there are regular high-intensity earthquakes (Fraser, 2002; World Bank and GFDRR, 2017). Meanwhile, climate change is expected to lead to more frequent or severe climatic events (UNEP, 2016; WFP et al., 2016).

The macro-level (national) crisis in the country dates back to the Cold War and the Soviet invasion in 1979. The civil war that followed the Soviet withdrawal ten years later led to the emergence of the Taliban regime, which in turn was toppled following the US-led intervention in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. Today, between 40% and 70% of the country is under the control of armed, state-contesting parties, including the Taliban, ISIS and the Haqqani Group (Jackson, 2018; Qazi and Ritzen, 2017).

The arrival of US and allied forces during the 1990s and the post-9/11 US-led intervention brought with it an extensive international humanitarian response, involving most UN agencies, hundreds of international and Afghan NGOs and multiple development agencies and donors. Between 2004 and 2014 Afghanistan was one of the three largest recipients of humanitarian relief (Reuters, 2015; Thevathasan, 2015). It has also been one of the most insecure destinations for humanitarian workers, ranking the third most dangerous place globally in the 2018 *Aid worker security report* (Stoddard et al., 2018). Aid workers are at risk of murder, kidnapping, physical violence and harassment (ibid.). Hospitals, schools, refugee and returnee centres, mosques, embassies, government offices and markets are also targets of suicide attacks, rockets and gunfire (BBC, 2018a; 2018b), resulting in thousands of civilian casualties. The instrumentalisation and political use of humanitarian aid has been a common challenge throughout the country (Donini, 2012).

2.2 Methodology

Primary and secondary evidence collated and analysed for this report is largely qualitative. Secondary data collection included a review of DRR policies, frameworks, tools and regulations at the global, national and local levels. A wealth of technical and project documents was analysed (see Annex 2), covering DRR and disaster management,

as well as linked topics including peacebuilding, social conflict, climate change, migration, gender, securitisation, fragile states and governance, development, emergency and humanitarian aid, natural resource management and sustainability.

Fieldwork conducted in October–December 2017 and February–March 2018 (for ISS) and in December 2018 (for GIZ/ODI) enabled primary data collection. Semi-structured interviews were held with representatives of international organisations (INGOs), local/national Afghan organisations (ANGOs), government officials and officers, donors, UN agencies, beneficiaries of DRR projects and private sector actors and facilitators of DRR projects. Other methods included observation of coordination meetings on DRR between multiple stakeholders and direct observation of DRR projects. Annex 1 outlines a subset of the participants, events and documents that informed this report.

For the definitions of key terms, the research uses the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction terminology guide (UNISDR, 2017b), which guides the implementation of the Sendai Framework (UNISDR, 2015). Here, DRR is defined as '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, 2017b).

3 The landscape of DRR in Afghanistan

Delivering DRR projects is often considered too challenging or even impossible in fragile or conflict-affected contexts (Harris et al., 2013; Mena, 2018a; Peters, 2017), but the case of Afghanistan, at least for the areas of the country under government control, shows the contrary. This section outlines the social and political landscape of DRR in the country, from institutions to policies and financial arrangements. It introduces the actors delivering DRR projects, and the main strategies and practices related to their implementation.

3.1 The institutional and regulatory landscape for DRR

The main national institutional architecture for disaster management in Afghanistan comprises the National Disaster Management Commission (NDMC) and the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA). Established in October 2015, the Office of the State Ministry for Disaster Management and Humanitarian Affairs (SMDM) is responsible for providing leadership and policy direction on disaster management in the country. The SMDM Minister of State acts as ANDMA's director and has a mandate to coordinate all aspects of disaster management, from disaster mitigation to preparedness and response.

The ANDMA, as the NDMC's and SMDM's principal executing body, was restructured in 2015 (ANDMA, 2018a). Initially established in the 1970s as the Department of Disaster Preparedness (DDP), ANDMA includes a department for Mitigation, Prevention and DRR, responsible for the development of disaster law and outlining the role of other institutions in relation to DRR. ANDMA also acts as the focal point for the implementation of the Sendai Framework[3] (UNISDR, 2015), and through these efforts DRR information is collected and systematised.

Alongside the ANDMA's National Office, the authority has 34 provincial offices that coordinate with Provincial Disaster Management Committees (PDMCs) and District Disaster Management Committees (DDMCs). With the support of ANDMA, these committees serve as the subnational link to the NDMC and act as a space for disaster management coordination between multiple government and civil society organisations. At the community level, Community Development Councils (CDCs) work in coordination with *shuras*[4] and other relevant community committees (mosques, schools, elders or figures such as the *mullahs* (religious leaders) and *maliks* (village representatives)), and where relevant at the subnational level act as the main links to implementing organisations and donors.

3 The Sendai Framework, adopted at the third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai, Japan in 2015, is 'a 15-year, voluntary, non-binding agreement which recognizes that the State has the primary role to reduce disaster risk but that responsibility should be shared with other stakeholders including local government, the private sector and other stakeholders … The Sendai Framework is the successor instrument to the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005–2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters' (UNISDR, 2015: n/p).

4 *Shuras* are development councils at the village level. They play the role of local parliaments.

In practice, these institutional arrangements have largely failed to deliver DRR outcomes on the ground, and DRR is often deemed too difficult to implement by the Afghan government. As ANDMA reports (2018b: 9):

> in the country, [in] some provinces, we have the office for disaster mitigation with poor condition[;] the main problem is that the government has not enough budget for the disaster mitigation policy, for example we don't have the remote control system in the country[;] I can say the transportation system is one of the important parameter[s] in … disaster mitigation, the transportation condition is the worst in Afghanistan [in] some provinces like Badakhshan and Nooristan provinces we have no road system[;] there the people of the village [have to walk] more than 20 hours [before] they will reach [a] car[;] in these districts in the winter season for more than four months we cannot go there because of the heavy snow [in] these mountain areas.

A World Bank-funded assessment concluded that:

> [i]nterventions that aimed at prevention were almost non-existent, despite the apparent need for it in several of the provinces visited … As noted earlier, the dominance of response in ANDMA's activity profile was not only widely observed through government representatives and external stakeholders, but readily acknowledged by the agency's own staff in the provinces (Altai Consulting, 2017: 26).

In the absence of significant action through formal government structures, DRR interventions are largely carried out by local and international NGOs, UN agencies and other bodies, such as GIZ. Exchange of information and coordination is aided by two working groups: a UN Working Group on DRR (UN-DRR), managed by the World Food Programme (WFP), which includes representatives of the ANDMA and NGOs (via the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief and Development (ACBAR)); and an NGO DRR Working Group, co-chaired by the ANDMA and Save the Children. Several interviewees expressed disappointment at what they perceived as a lack of leadership from ANDMA in mobilising action to deliver against the Sendai Framework. In interviews and observations for this research, the ANDMA's main achievements appear to have been sharing information and the organisation of training sessions on concepts related to DRR and the Hyogo and Sendai Frameworks (UNISDR, 2015).

3.2 DRR frameworks and plans

The main legal documents concerning disaster management are the Disaster Management Framework (2003), the Afghanistan Disaster Management Plan (2003) and the National Disaster Management Plan (2010). In 2011, the Afghanistan Strategic National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction (SNAP) was developed (ANDMA, 2011). The SNAP allocated DRR-related roles and responsibilities to several ministries, including the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), the Ministry of Energy and Water, the National Environmental Protection Authority, the Ministry of Urban Development, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock. The plan also envisaged a 'roadmap' up to 2020 linking national ambitions to the Hyogo Framework for Action, taking 2010 as a baseline year for tracking progress. A lack of resources and human and institutional capacity for DRR limited implementation of the SNAP and other DRR strategies in Afghanistan (Altai Consulting, 2017; ANDMA, 2018a; interview ANDMA), including the Disaster Management Strategy (2014–17) developed by the MRRD (2014) and building guidelines for earthquake-resistant construction and retrofitting (ANDMA, 2018b).

Subsequent to the SNAP, and as part of Afghanistan's endorsement of the Sendai Framework, the country developed the Strategic Framework 2018–2028 (ANDMA, 2018c) and the Afghanistan Disaster Risk Reduction National Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction

(SMDM and ANDMA, 2018). These have since become the main policy documents guiding DRR efforts. The aim of the Afghanistan National Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (ASDRR) is to 'guide multi-hazard reduction and management of disaster risk in development processes at all levels as well as within and across all sectors in Afghanistan, in line with the Sendai Framework' (ibid.: 20). At the provincial level, DRR plans include the Badakhshan Provincial Disaster Management Plan and the Badakhshan Gender Standard for Disaster Risk Management (ANDMA, 2013).

While well intentioned, the country has limited capacity to design and deliver implementation strategies in line with the legislative and policy frameworks for DRR (Altai Consulting, 2017). The challenges were noted by government representatives throughout interviews for this study, and are recognised in the policy documents themselves – such as the Natural Disaster Mitigation Policy of Afghanistan (ANDMA, 2018b). Although there is noteworthy ambition to address the complex linked vulnerabilities associated with disaster and conflict risk in integrated ways, the lack of clarity on how this can be achieved and the accountability for progress is scant (Peters et al., 2019c).

3.3 The limits of state coordination of DRR

While the government formally leads on DRR, it is widely accepted that its role in financing and implementation is limited, instead choosing to prioritise peacebuilding (ANDMA, 2018b; 2018c; interview, government official). In addition, there are other conflict-related reasons why state-led DRR is problematic in Afghanistan. Large areas of the country are outside of government control – and even in those regions controlled by the central authorities, interviewees from national and international NGOs conveyed that they avoided being seen as aligned with the government as this might compromise their neutrality. The lines between territories controlled by armed opposition groups and those administered by the central government change constantly (Jackson, 2018).

This challenging operating environment contrasts with the state-centric approach to DRR portrayed in the Sendai Framework (UNISDR, 2015), which envisages multiple stakeholders working under the coordination of formal government disaster risk governance structures. While all those interviewed recognised the central role and legitimacy of the Afghan government, several participants felt that the lack of implementation or enforcement of plans and policies leaves them operating in a regulatory vacuum.

The challenge of service delivery in non-state-controlled areas is not unique to DRR, but it is one that the disaster, development and humanitarian communities at large are yet to adequately grapple with: 'That the Taliban set the rules in vast swathes of the country is a reality with which few in the international community are willing to engage' (Jackson, 2018: 5).

3.4 The financing landscape for DRR

There is no fixed national budget allocation for DRR. In interviews, ANDMA representatives mentioned that the authority has a budget of 1.5 billion Afghanis (approximately $19.8 million) for emergency response and DRR, but no fixed amount is assigned for DRR. The ANDMA indicated that '[t]he imbalance of ANDMA's ability in fulfilling its functions is rooted in the budget, where relief is prioritized over Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)' (Altai Consulting, 2017: 35). In its progress report for the implementation of the Hyogo Framework, ANDMA (2015) estimated that 20% of the budget allocated for disaster management went to risk reduction or prevention. Although it was not possible to obtain exact figures, it can be estimated that about $4 million might be designated for DRR activities as part of the national budget. According to government officials, most of this was spent on maintaining basic institutional functioning at the national and provincial level, with little or no money reserved for activities in communities affected or at risk. ANDMA has no operational or decentralised funds for DRR, and there is thus no government funding for DRR at the subnational level.

One reason for the modest DRR budget, according to Afghanistan's Hyogo Framework progress report, was that 'most of the national and sub national budget was allocated in the area of peace and reintegration, therefore, there was limited budget allocated for risk reduction, relief and reconstruction and recovery' (ANDMA, 2015: 7). This points to the challenge that conflict-related interventions restrict the available space for DRR, and with limited resources priority is given to securing peace and stability.

In summary, financing for DRR is squeezed between reactive disaster response on the one hand, and peace and reintegration on the other.

No systematic funding mechanisms exist to operationalise DRR policies in the country, and tracking the financial and budgetary landscape presents several challenges. First, DRR projects are often embedded in, or form part of, other projects, so extracting precise figures would require in-depth knowledge and line-by-line analysis of project budgets. Second, funding bodies and donors do not always use the terminology of 'DRR' to label activities or investments. Third, identifying and obtaining the financial records of DRR initiatives not funded via emergency or humanitarian funding can be extremely challenging.

While a precise breakdown of the humanitarian funds allocated for DRR does not exist, basic analysis of available data points to two trends. First, natural hazard-related disaster funds are small when compared with other humanitarian and emergency activities. Second, disaster-related funds are mostly earmarked for disaster response, making funds intended for ex-ante DRR interventions even more difficult to trace, and where this is possible funds appear to be negligible. For example, analysis of the 2018 response shows that, of a budget of $565.3 million (paid and committed funds, individual flows), only 2.6% went to disaster-related activities[5] (FTS, 2018). These funds have typically been used for reactive strategies. For example, those that were earmarked for the 2018 drought and related displacement were meant for response, including aspects of longer-term risk reduction, but it is not clear what proportion was actually used for risk reduction. It was only possible to trace a financial scheme comprising $6.9 million, representing just 1.2% of the total humanitarian funding earmarked for the country in 2018.

There are other sources of funding for DRR in the country beyond those originating as a proportion of response, for example funding through resilience-building projects or from development funds as part of larger projects (like climate change initiatives), making it difficult to see the whole DRR financial landscape in the absence of further investigation.

3.5 The main international actors

DRR initiatives are mainly being implemented or funded by actors such as the UK Department for International Development (DFID), Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), GIZ and European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO). In interviews with donor representatives, many agencies reported a willingness to fund DRR initiatives, but there remained a widespread concern that needs far outstripped the resources available.

Projects explicitly labelled as DRR tend to focus on mitigation infrastructure and preparedness, using schools and community organisations for implementation and focusing on earthquakes and floods. Evidence was also found of DRR ambitions being embedded or funded in the context of projects with other priority areas, such as climate change and community-level development – specifically, in education projects (DON2, 3). There is a reciprocal relationship, wherein DRR projects include aspects of the aforementioned topics.

The links between climate variability, climate change and the occurrence of extreme weather

5 Analysis of Individual Flows Database and the selection of all financial lines with the following terms in the 'description' column: disasters, DRR, Eco-DRR, recovery (disaster-related recovery), risk reduction (disaster-related risk reduction), early warning systems (disaster-related early warning systems), preparedness (disaster-related preparedness), prevention (disaster-related prevention), mitigation (disaster-related mitigation), training (disaster-related training), first aid (disaster-related first aid), walls (disaster-related walls), drought, earthquake, flood, storm, avalanche, natural (disaster-related natural events), hazards (disaster-related hazards).

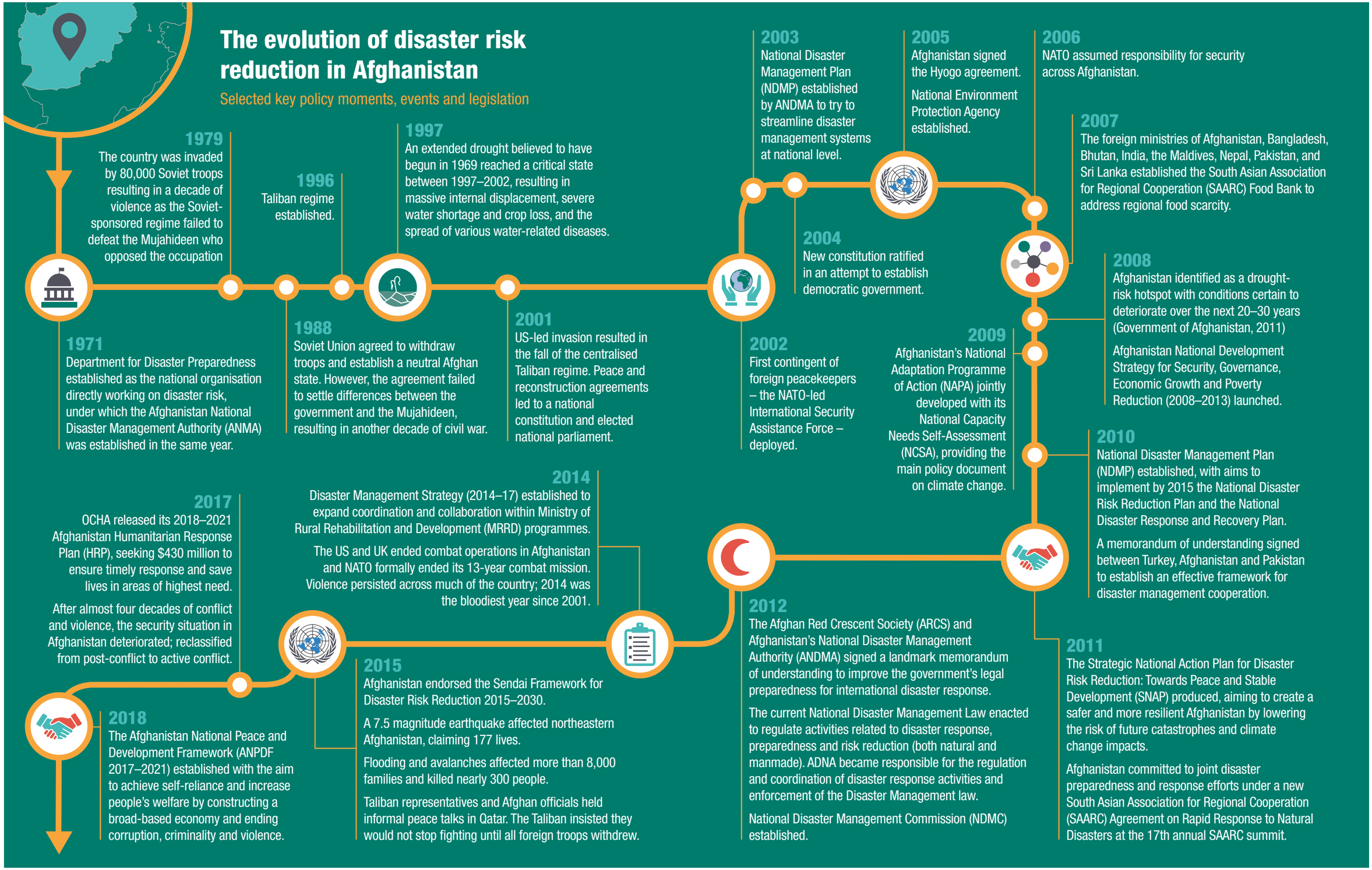
events were often cited as resulting in disasters (see NEPA and UNEP, 2015; UNEP, 2016), making it relatively easy to justify programmes with DRR ambitions under the banner of climate change. For example, three projects branded as Eco-DRR[6] initiatives refer to DRR as part of climate change response or adaptation, with the donors funding those projects also viewing them as part of their climate change portfolio.

It was noted in interviews that participants often associate DRR with reducing the risk of rapid-onset disasters, and that drought and other slow-onset disasters are not considered part of DRR programming. Only two NGOs mentioned that they were planning to include drought in their DRR projects, albeit embedded in broader project designs. When asked about the possibility of having a specialised and focused drought risk reduction programme, respondents mentioned the difficulties related to obtaining funds for this under the banner of DRR: 'for emergencies [on the other hand] it is easy, because you see the amount of people being displaced and affected. Everyone wants to do something about that'.

Most donors welcomed the inclusion of conflict risk reduction activities in DRR projects being developed and implemented, but did not actively promote or require this. Donors also spoke of the challenges conflict presents to the sustainability of project outputs and outcomes. For this reason, many put greater emphasis on deliverables which can be achieved within a short timeframe, and prefer to focus on directly visible results, such as mitigation walls or training, even if they are financing multi-year programmes. This is often justified in terms of monitoring and evaluation processes, namely that it is easier to report on or demonstrate that two mitigation walls were built or that 150 people participated in a training programme. Concerns were raised that projects involving activities which would only deliver visible results after long periods of time were more likely to fail because their longer duration increased the risk that they would be disrupted by conflict.

6 Eco-DRR is defined as 'the sustainable management, conservation and restoration of ecosystems to reduce disaster risk, with the aim to achieve sustainable and resilient development' (Estrella and Saalismaa, 2013: 30).

Figure 3 The evolution of DRR in Afghanistan



4 DRR interventions: in and around conflict

This section looks at how DRR and conflict in Afghanistan affect one another, and explores three projects that explicitly aim to address conflict, mainly with a do no harm approach. We close by considering the inverse – whether conflict-related interventions take disaster risks into account.

4.1 The relationship between DRR and scales of conflict

According to a study by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP, 2013: 4), micro- and meso-level conflict in Afghanistan, especially disputes over natural resources, affects people more than macro-level conflict: 'Disputes over water and land were the two most commonly reported reasons for violent conflict, accounting for 55 per cent of all cases in a 2008 survey. Another element to consider is the high presence of natural hazards that the country presents'.

Understanding of the ways in which DRR projects interact with and affect social conflict is divided. On the one hand, respondents from NGOs, UN agencies and the government recognised that DRR projects could help prevent small-scale social conflict at the micro level. On the other, some – chiefly academics and interviewees from INGOs – were unsure of the long-term contribution of DRR projects in reducing macro- and meso-level social conflict.

4.1.1 National-level (macro) conflict and DRR

DRR projects predominantly work *around* the macro conflict – at least in the physical sense in terms of location – as they take place in government-held areas. This is not, however, a clear distinction, because the conflict 'border' is constantly moving, and government-held provincial capitals are often surrounded by rural areas controlled by armed opposition groups. The macro-level (national) conflict affects DRR in a number of fundamental ways. Disaster risk is often a secondary concern to addressing conflict risk, with attention and resources prioritised for conflict, peace and security. Government authorities, UN actors and INGO representatives working at national or regional level also pointed to the many bureaucratic and security impediments to delivering DRR interventions.

4.1.2 Provincial-level (meso) conflict and DRR

Conflict manifesting at the meso level significantly affects the space and opportunities to pursue DRR, for example by constraining funding and limiting political attention and will. Bureaucratic impediments play a significant role at the provincial level; if the authorities at the provincial or city level do not approve or facilitate projects, implementation is largely unviable.

One major complication at the provincial level, mentioned by most interviewees, is that agencies often have to negotiate with different authority figures. Whether the figure of authority comes from the government, armed opposition groups, former or current warlords or commanders or even religious authorities, their blessing is required to establish offices, obtain authorisation to implement the project and secure access to project locations.

Although these are general problems felt in all domains of service provision, the challenges in the case of DRR may be aggravated because most authorities are unfamiliar with DRR activities and need more explaining and convincing. DRR is also considered a concern of lesser importance compared to, for example, education, where the scope of programmes warrants higher-level

political attention. It is at this meso level that problems of corruption and embezzlement were reported most frequently by actors from local and international organisations.

Finally, it is also at the meso level where the largest number of private sector actors are involved in DRR projects, playing a key role in providing goods and services. These actors and their role during DRR implementation are also subject to the primary and secondary effects of conflict, including corruption, inflation, insecurity and issues around access.

Agencies delivering DRR projects frequently said that they tried to work as much as possible *around* conflict dynamics at the macro level, while working *in* micro and meso conflict in affected areas. Agencies would, to the extent possible, take into account micro and meso conflict dynamics, but without aiming to influence them. For example, the NGO Coordination of Afghan Relief (COAR) (see Box 3) recognised that it can be difficult to obtain permits or deal with corruption. Without tools to analyse and address these problems, project staff told the study that they usually overcome such challenges with patience, thoroughly explaining the programmes and the benefits for communities to the authorities and being transparent about the limited resources available. There was one notable exception of a project that included 'addressing provincial-level tensions' in its design – see Box 4.

4.1.3 Local and community-level (micro) conflict and DRR

At the local level, most communities, recipients of aid and local aid workers (from Afghan and international NGOs) said that, while significant, the effects of macro-level (national) conflict were mostly indirect. Projects were all working in government-controlled areas and, unless the macro conflict become central and led to the cessation of the project, at this level the macro conflict, chiefly between Taliban factions and the central government, was a lesser concern. Once aid actors have access to communities and are considered legitimate in the eyes of the group controlling the area (either an armed opposition group or the government), the macro conflict moves into the background and ceases to be a major challenge.

That said, every actor interviewed for this study believed that DRR projects need to consider micro conflict at the community level. This echoes findings from a survey of DRR projects and conflict in Afghanistan that show that 'staff members clearly perceive the existence of social conflict in places where projects are implemented' (Mena, 2018b: 3). The survey and research found evidence of multiple instances where DRR projects had to be postponed or cancelled because of localised social conflict. This included conflict related to the project (the allocation of jobs or choice of implementation areas), while others related to problems within and between communities (resource management, power struggles or historical differences). Every interviewee believed that DRR projects and programmes are not just affected by conflict at the community level, but can also create or exacerbate it.

Operational staff delivering DRR projects all mentioned during interviews that, in the preparation and pre-implementation phases of any project, care needs to be taken to assess whether the project would give rise to tensions within the community or between different communities, for instance around competition for the benefits project deliverables would bring. These can be long-term benefits that arise from the construction, use and management of infrastructure, or short-term benefits arising from cash-for-work projects or the employment of community members during implementation.

DRR projects can alter the landscape and natural resource base of communities, which can exacerbate tensions. A common example given was the construction of mitigation walls for flash floods which, by changing a river's flow, affect users living at different points along the river. DRR in these cases may increase inequalities between communities (Heijmans, 2012 – see Box 1).

From interviews, it appears that most DRR projects have no explicit policy on working *in* conflict, and on paper appear to work *around* it. In practice, however, micro-level conflicts between and within communities are a major factor in the delivery of DRR programmes during their implementation. While there is often a stated ambition that a DRR project addresses these micro-level conflicts as they manifest, and

aims to do no harm by avoiding, exacerbating or creating conflicts, this is not always done systematically. There are, however, a number of projects that explicitly aim to address conflict as part of DRR.

4.2 DRR projects that explicitly consider social conflict

It is not the norm for DRR projects to explicitly consider conflict, in terms of being sensitive to a conflict context, or to actively address or prevent conflict. Given the dynamic conditions of conflict in Afghanistan, DRR approaches have had to be adapted. The three examples outlined below (Box 2, Box 3 and Box 4) shed light on how DRR approaches can adopt elements of conflict-sensitive approaches.

The first case (Box 2) draws on a pre-existing example of a consortium which worked together to develop a tool to analyse conflict, which was subsequently integrated into project design and implementation (see Mena and ARC, 2018). The consortium comprised four INGOs (Afghanaid, ActionAid, Concern Worldwide and Save the Children) and a UN agency (UNEP). Together, the consortium tested the conflict analysis tool and is now integrating it into the continuation phase of its project.

The second case (Box 3) presents the experience of a national NGO. Operating for almost three decades in the country, the organisation realised the need to integrate the risk of conflict in project planning and, based on that risk analysis, decide whether the project is feasible, or how it can be adapted to prevent conflict.

While the first two cases focus on working *in* conflict and doing no harm, the third case (Box 4) is of a project aiming to work *on* conflict. The 'Forest restoration in Afghanistan' project is commissioned by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by GIZ. The project aims to address forest degradation, and in doing so to work *on* conflict dynamics by establishing committees and procedures that directly focus on the management or resolution of conflict.

The three cases presented here highlight the relevance and impact of micro and meso conflict dynamics on the design and development of DRR projects, and the need to be actively aware of their existence and address them as appropriate. Although the terminology sometimes differs, interviewees and interventions largely infer a do no harm approach, using various different conflict analysis tools or assessments that allow project staff to design or adjust project design in a way that is conflict-sensitive. Each case takes a slightly different approach. The first case, ARC, presents arguably a more comprehensive set of tools to assess conflict and adapt project implementation, while the third, of GIZ, seeks not only to prevent but also to address conflict directly via the development of committees to engage in issues of land rights, access and use.

Tools and strategies which encourage greater awareness of conflict dynamics within DRR project design and delivery are intended to encourage more conflict-sensitive approaches to reducing disaster risk. Greater attention is paid not only to the broader societal context in which projects are being delivered, but also to the social conflict dynamics present within any society. Such ambitions and approaches are relatively new and undocumented within the DRR community of practice, and the organisations trialling them. Over time, it will be necessary to review how feasible they were to implement, how useful the information gathered was and the extent to which that information informed and altered project ambitions and delivery approaches. Doing so will help deepen a collective understanding of what specific modifications may need to be made to these tools so that they can be used by other projects and organisations.

Box 2 Afghanistan Resilience Consortium: including conflict analysis tools in DRR projects

The Afghanistan Resilience Consortium (ARC) was set up by Afghanaid, Actionaid, Save the Children, Concern and UNEP in 2014. In 2015, with support from DFID, the ARC began its first project, entitled 'Strengthening the resilience of Afghanistan's vulnerable communities against natural disasters' (SRACAD).

The consortium implemented DRR and climate change adaptation interventions across the country, reaching 705 local communities in 29 districts. DRR activities focused on building community-based DRR infrastructure, including floodwater retention and protection walls. Another component is community- and school-based disaster preparedness, including the provision of emergency kits and training. The project also provided institutional capacity strengthening for disaster planning, supporting ANDMA, NDMC, the Ministry of Education and other institutions with DRR responsibilities. Finally, the project aimed to develop research and advocacy on DRR at the national and subnational levels.

Analysing and understanding conflict

The ARC, together with Oxfam Novib, decided to conduct a DRR research project seeking to 'understand the ways in which the implementation of community-based DRR projects can prevent, mitigate and manage social conflict' (Mena, 2018b: 2). The rationale behind the research was that, since they have been able to implement DRR projects amid conflict, staff are likely to have developed good practice which could be documented, analysed and shared.

The findings highlighted that projects can be a source of social conflict, but there was no toolbox or established method to assist project teams in identifying potential conflicts related to interventions, and certainly none specific to DRR or to Afghanistan. The research also found cases where projects had been suspended or moved to nearby locations or neighbouring districts because of an escalation of tensions over resources, leadership or others factors that could not be resolved.

ARC and Oxfam set out to develop conflict analysis tools with a specific focus on DRR in Afghanistan, to assess the risk of conflict and adapt interventions accordingly. The *Manual on conflict analysis tools: preventing, mitigating and reducing the risk of social conflict in civil DRR projects* (Mena and ARC, 2018) combines multiple conflict analysis tools (including Mapping Stakeholder Relationships, the Conflict Tree and Connectors and Dividers) and adapts them to the Afghan context. Prior to its publication, the tool was tested in multiple provinces.

Since 2018, the manual has been used to train staff members and some government officials to increase their awareness of conflict-sensitive approaches. ARC has also made it mandatory to apply the tools in the development of its projects.

Addressing conflict

During an interview, the ARC manager stated that 'we have a commitment to do no harm'. The approach is explicitly not oriented towards conflict resolution or peacebuilding, but rather '[t]he objective of these tools is to produce information regarding people's perceptions and contexts that can help in adjusting ARC programmes to reduce the risk of social conflict'.

The manual also addresses the question of what happens when social conflict occurs nonetheless. Traditional ARC DRR projects address conflict via 'the involvement of both formal and traditional authorities – chiefly CDC leaders and managers, provincial authorities, imams and elders. The role and relevance of traditional authorities, such as elders and imams, is highlighted for conflict management because 'respect for the local culture, customs and beliefs was deemed very important' to prevent conflict by ARC DRR staff members (Mena, 2018b: 15).

Box 2 Afghanistan Resilience Consortium: including conflict analysis tools in DRR projects (cont'd)

Second phase

A continuation of the project started on November 2018, funded by SIDA. The project, 'Community based eco disaster risk reduction (CBDR)', was developed based on learning from the SRACAD project. With a duration of 30 months, the project explicitly includes conflict assessment and the use of the tools developed in the previous phase. For example, the project log frame explicitly includes the use of conflict assessment tools and adapting the project based on the results. The project also has specific indicators for measuring conflict-sensitive interventions at the community level. These include the level of knowledge of conflict analysis among field staff, enhanced through training; the number of government officials trained; and the number of communities for which conflict assessments have been completed.

The project aims to work *in* conflict – do no harm – while also working *on* conflict in cases where conflicts occur.

Box 3 COAR: DRR projects adopting do no harm principles

The Afghan NGO COAR was established in 1989. The organisation is active in development and humanitarian programmes in every region of the country. Its DRR profile (PreventionWeb, 2018) indicates that it is active in the DRR Working Group, has implemented several DRR projects, including the establishment of a Disaster Management department at Sharq University,[1] and is involved in risk assessment and early warning.

COAR has been implementing DRR projects since 2003, beginning with Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM), with financial support from Christian Aid and technical support from the Sustainable Environment and Ecological Development Society of India (SEEDS India). As noted by engineer Abdul Halim Halim, Managing Director of COAR, when it was established the project was innovative: 'The word of DRR was very new in Afghanistan. After the Taliban collapse and the new government, with support [from the] international community, there were huge levels of financial assistance for Afghanistan. The concepts of rehabilitation and reconstruction were most common among the international players, but the word of DRR was not. This was something new for ANGOs, INGOs and UN agencies. That was wonderful and really meaningful for us to start working on that'.

In 2017 and 2018, COAR implemented a DRR project with financial support from WFP. The project, entitled 'Integrated community based disaster risk reduction for rural livelihood and agriculture development', focused on Bamyan and Kabul provinces and targeted 14,847 individuals, including people with disabilities and marginalised groups. The project focused on strengthening community-based institutions, enhancing livelihoods and building community resilience. It combined 'hard' and 'soft' components:

1. Hard component: building protection walls, wash culverts, small water-diversion dams; road construction.
2. Soft component: development of disaster management 'clusters' and providing short-term training on DRR; providing education and general awareness to communities about disasters, their effects, mitigation strategies and preparedness.

1 www.sharq.edu.af

Box 3 COAR: DRR projects adopting do no harm principles (cont'd)

Analysing conflict

As presented in the project documents and stated during interviews, COAR has followed a do no harm principle in all stages of these projects:

> Considering the social conflict and the way to deal with it is critical in every project, whereas it differs almost from place to place. We need to use specific methods to deal with project implementation in terms of conflict prevention and social disorders while considering do no harm
> (Managing Director, COAR).

To achieve this do no harm goal, the organisation has for over a decade used participatory approaches to ensure community participation in decision-making, in both the planning and implementation of projects. As presented by a COAR programme manager:

> Our community-level participatory approach provides [for] wider participation of community members [in] the decision-making process at the community level, [the] majority of intervention plan[s are] implemented based on project plan[s] with … massive participation of community members to ensure community satisfaction [is] obtained, that help[s] COAR to avoid creat[ing] or exacerbate[ing] conflict within communities.

As part of the WFP project, COAR decided to formalise its risk assessments of social conflict, using a Risk Analysis and Response Plan (RARP) tool and survey. Based on a defined set of questions, and following discussions with multiple community members, COAR identified the main social and environmental risks associated with the development of the project, and assessed the level of each risk as high, medium or low.

If risks are considered high, there are four strategies to choose from:

- Avoid – eliminate the threat by eliminating the cause.
- Mitigate – identify ways to reduce the probability or impact of the risk.
- Accept – nothing will be done.
- Transfer – make another party responsible for the risk (buy insurance, outsourcing, etc.).

In the case of Bamyan, the analysis revealed two main risks:

1. Delays in the transportation of food items as a result of roadblocks.
2. The risk of conflict resulting from the choice of individuals to hire for the project.

Based on the RARP analysis, the first problem was discussed and addressed in collaboration with WFP. The second was addressed by the community *shura*, which allocated the work to the poorest and most vulnerable.

Addressing conflict

COAR does not work directly on conflict resolution or peacebuilding. Its RARP tool, following a do no harm approach, focuses on prevention and on being conflict-sensitive. Like ARC (Box 2), it addresses conflicts directly arising from the project – usually via elders, *shuras* and CDCs. The COAR country manager stated in an interview that it was usually possible to avoid conflict or adapt the project, based on three decades of experience working with Afghan communities:

Box 3 COAR: DRR projects adopting do no harm principles (cont'd)

> In implementing every project, do no harm has always been our priority action but what we have learnt so far is that [with] our experienced employees and our volunteers (who comprise between 40% to 50% of the project teams) and the help of influential individuals we successfully meet DRR objectives and prevention from conflict (Interview, COAR country manager).

On occasions conflict could not be prevented or addressed positively, and projects had to be suspended or implementation delayed. One of the main challenges lies in designing and implementing projects in areas where the organisation has no history of working in those locations.

Box 4 GIZ: including conflict analysis tools in forest restoration

The project 'Wiederherstellung von Waldlandschaften in Afghanistan' (Forest landscape restoration in Afghanistan) brings together DRR and climate change adaptation strategies and ecosystem conservation. The main focus is addressing the degradation of forests in Afghanistan through a community-based forest management approach in five provinces. The regeneration of forested areas is intended to protect livelihoods, and is accompanied by work to build local, regional and national structures to resolve conflicts connected to land use and ownership.

The project is based on experience gained from previous projects, including the diversification of agriculture in Baghlan province (2010), which used 'Peace and Conflict Analysis' to identify potential conflicts. Starting in February 2019, the project will conduct an 'on-the-ground' analysis in villages chosen as project sites.

The project's contribution to reducing disaster risk includes planting trees on hillsides prone to landslides. By securing existing areas of agricultural land and creating livelihood opportunities, it also aims to reduce vulnerability. Project staff have committed to liaising closely with the 'Disaster Prevention Badakhshan' project, funded by GIZ/BMZ, to strengthen the capacity of government institutions responsible for disaster prevention in Badakhshan by using risk maps for analysing endangered areas, training relevant actors and undertaking small-scale infrastructure work to secure villages, property and basic infrastructure.

Analysing conflict

The project is designed to address social conflict, acknowledging that land rights and rights to land use (as well as water management) are difficult to address because of overlapping (and contradicting) claims. The process of clarifying land use rights rekindles underlying conflicts between individuals and communities. To identify and address these, the project proposes participatory processes, including involving local civil society representatives in decision-making. Land use plans are created through a participatory process, and in close cooperation with traditional groups such as *shuras*, *jirgas* and *mirabs*.[1]

Addressing conflict

The project aims to address the potential for conflict in two ways: first, by focusing on the development of concepts and strategies for conflict resolution related to the management of pastoral areas, reforestation and water management – for example, through rotation of pastoral grounds

1 *Jirga* is a traditional assembly of leaders (usually elders) that makes decisions by consensus. *Mirab* can be an individual or group in charge of water management at the community level. The *mirab* is also called 'water master'.

Box 4 GIZ: including conflict analysis tools in forest restoration (cont'd)

or better water distribution. The development of these methodologies is seen as supporting the sustainable regeneration of designated forested areas. Second, the project aims to establish multi-stakeholder committees that can function as access points for mediating potential conflicts.

Ambitions for the first phase, running until the end of 2019, include the establishment of Natural Resource Management Committees in 20 villages, originating from CDCs. Traditional *shuras* and *jirgas* may also be included in this process. These platforms are designed to allow stakeholders to network, participate in decision-making processes and encourage ownership, which – it is hoped – will reduce the potential for conflict. In addition to measures and mechanisms that may prevent conflicts from arising, the project intends to explore ways to resolve conflicts that do occur.

At the provincial level, the Provincial Departments of the Afghan Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock will be supported by the establishment of multi-stakeholder working groups, similar to those at national level. These structures are geared towards reducing conflict at the local level and giving marginalised members of the community (women, ethnic minorities, etc.) the opportunity to express their views.

4.3 Consideration of disaster risk within peacebuilding strategies

Section 4 explores how DRR projects seek to understand conflict dynamics within a project site, and how to deliver projects in ways that avoid doing harm. This can also be reversed: are peacebuilding and conflict resolution or management strategies taking into account natural hazard-related disaster risk?

A detailed review of peacebuilding, conflict management and resolution strategies was beyond the scope of this research, but it is worth noting that the relevance of linking disaster risk, natural resource management and conflict is well articulated. Take the example of water management (UNEP, 2013: 22):

> The first challenge [is] to manage increased demand for water; the second is to cope with the water-related disasters (floods and droughts) that are predicted to become more frequent and intense as a result of climate change; and the third is to build – or perhaps rebuild – water-related infrastructure for agriculture, water storage, and hydroelectric energy production in ways that do not increase local and cross-border tensions.

The practitioners, donors and policy-makers interviewed felt that peacebuilding and conflict resolution and management strategies and programmes rarely take DRR into account. This perspective was reinforced by a review of multiple project plans, strategies, documents and official statements, which revealed scant attention to disaster risk or the relationship between disaster and conflict risks.[7] It should be noted, however, that most peacebuilding projects in Afghanistan work on macro-level conflict dynamics. The other two levels that are identified as most relevant to DRR – namely the meso and micro levels – receive far less attention in peacebuilding and conflict management and resolution programmes.

A notable exception are interventions that work on conflict and peacebuilding at the micro level through school programmes and natural resource management – such as the forest restoration project described above (Box 4).

7 These include Rabbani (2018), UN-Habitat (2016), Quie (2012), Uesugi (2009), Suhrke (2002) and multiple news and articles from the Afghanistan Analyst Network website, the Norwegian Refugee Council website, the Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organization website, the *Diplomat* newspaper and the *New York Times*.

5 Operational considerations for delivering DRR projects in conflict contexts

Bringing together the experiences, lessons and ideas from the three project examples (Section 4) and the interviews for this study, this section highlights a number of themes related to the operational delivery of DRR projects in contexts of conflict. These themes are far from exhaustive and many are not solely a challenge for DRR, but affect development and service delivery more broadly. Nonetheless, they are presented here with a view to indicating where further consideration is required on the part of the DRR community of practice operating in conflict situations.

5.1 The legacy of hazard-centred approaches

The three project examples (Section 4) can be interpreted as representing a new trend in approaches to DRR in Afghanistan. Previous projects were characterised by hazard-focused infrastructural approaches to rapid-onset disasters. Compared with these previous interpretations of DRR, the examples presented in this study differ because of the explicit consideration of conflict dynamics in their design; many interventions take a holistic approach, considering all key aspects of the construction of disaster risk – hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities; many aim to strengthen the operational capacity of local authorities; and many seek to address the root causes of hazards such as deforestation and land degradation.

The new trend derives from lessons on what works and what doesn't in delivering DRR results in conflict contexts. It also results from responses to donor trends. There has been increased interest in promoting an integrated approach to risks, whereby DRR can be linked to other topics including climate change, development and education. For agencies in Afghanistan, there is an incentive to adopt broad approaches as this facilitates the continuation of operations. Several participants from the UN and INGOs, as well as one donor, mentioned how this fits with their need for programmes to keep working and to retain offices and staff.

Previous approaches to DRR were more technical in nature and focused on infrastructure improvements, and were historically oriented towards sudden-onset disasters like earthquakes and floods. It has been suggested in other contexts that a technocratic approach to disasters can be tactical, in order to avoid being seen as political (Peters, 2017). In Afghanistan, actors denied this when asked, and pointed out that conflict is so omnipresent that addressing it openly is acceptable and expected. The hazard-centred approach, in their view, was related more to a lack of knowledge on DRR – specifically how vulnerabilities and capacities fit into the construction of disaster risk (see Figure 1). An infrastructural approach resonated with the routine projects of many agencies, and had the advantage of producing visible and measurable

results (especially important in the years when field monitoring was not possible and, hence, visuals of project outcomes were required – see the next section). Most projects had to learn DRR 'on the job'. While it is tempting to explain the challenges of delivering DRR projects in conflict areas solely in relation to the operational difficulties that conflict presents, it is also important to recognise that DRR is itself a technical approach that requires capacity-building and training. In many locations this foundational knowledge is lacking.

Although there is an emergent trend towards new approaches, previous more technocratic methods still dominate in practice, including among DRR specialists or practitioners. Most people working on DRR in Afghanistan 'learnt by doing' while implementing projects. While some individuals received formal training from external consultants, this too can be oriented specifically towards project implementation, and may reinforce a narrow interpretation of DRR. For example, most interviewees, reports and policies continue to refer to 'natural disasters' despite the fact that this is widely regarded as problematic among the DRR community of practice.

A technocratic approach also colours perceptions of DRR in the wider aid community. Conversations with development and humanitarian specialists not working on disaster-related topics revealed their perception of DRR as a technical and mechanical process with no relevance to political and social factors. One DRR specialist said that 'DRR groups are really small and we know of each other's activities, but outsiders don't know about us'. The lack of knowledge of disasters in the wider development community may be a factor in why programmes addressing conflict rarely take natural hazards into account, as observed in section 4.3.

5.2 Corruption and accountability

Problems of corruption or lack of accountability were regularly mentioned in the interviews and stated in some policy documents. Afghanistan ranks 172nd out of 180 countries on the Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International, 2018). Participants frequently referred to corruption not in direct relation to DRR, but as part of the wider political economy in which aid operates. As presented by one INGO staff member in a focus group discussion in Badakhshan Province:

> [t]here is much corruption and also money that disappears. When something happens, money and relief items are sent from Kabul, but here all that is taken by someone. Some things are used for the people, others used by them, but you can also see that food and other items are sold in the market or they appear later as hand-outs from authorities that want to show they are doing good.

Funds and items to be used in disaster management and risk reduction may be embezzled or used for non-humanitarian or non-disaster-related purposes. Donors stress that they maintain a zero-tolerance policy in these situations (they will cancel funding in cases where corruption or misappropriation of resources is identified), but they can only assess what the implementing organisation reports to them. Insecurity was frequently mentioned as the main factor preventing donors from conducting monitoring field visits.

Although corruption is undeniably a challenge, information on corruption frequently involved second-hand testimonies, rumours and distortions. When respondents were asked, the majority indicated that the examples they gave were based on information from others. This does not negate the realities presented by Transparency International (2018), but it does contribute to an atmosphere of mistrust, hindering efforts to advance DRR in the country. As stated by a UN agency manager interviewed:

> [t]hey [government authorities] do not have the mechanism and capacity to monitor what is happening on the field level, therefore all their reports are based on assumptions. We use them but we always need to reasses and double check the information. [At] the end of the day, we depend on our own reports and we just have to trust that what they

> said they did is true, although many times is not. You know, there is much corruption and lack of transparency.

Specifically for DRR, the issue was raised that infrastructure (like bridges, walls, buildings) that is not checked may give a false sense of security and protection. Who certifies the flood protection/containment walls and other mitigation structures is a recurring concern. Every organisation implementing projects works with engineers and trusts their professional capabilities. However, three engineering inspectors interviewed for this project all mentioned a lack of clear building codes, regulations and specifications to inspect against. In practice, there have been cases where lack of access to proper materials or to implementation sites has resulted in structures that were not built according to initial specifications, but which were labelled as 'properly constructed [as long as] they did not look likely to fall down' (interview with an INGO).

5.3 Problems of access

Limited access to parts of the country due to insecurity was repeatedly cited as a significant obstacle to effectively delivering DRR projects. Accessing areas where DRR projects are being implemented, especially remote areas, is problematic as routes are often blocked or dangerous owing to conflict, insecurity and, in some seasons, hazards such as flooding. Armed opposition groups might control parts of a route or the area around project sites or attack project staff and property, and checkpoints may be installed which can be unsafe to cross. Insecurity is not solely down to armed groups, but can also be due to bandits and groups related to the drug industry, who control certain routes and territories. Finally, as mentioned by one DRR project manager, 'the government can also be difficult. They close the route saying that [it] is dangerous or not good to go and we lose our access. You know, even if we have talk with the Taliban and they allow us to go, the government say that we can't'. During field visits to remote areas where DRR projects were being implemented, one Afghan NGO manager affirmed that 'access sometimes is out of our control, like when [it] snows, but usually is more about power'. According to this interviewee, groups (which may be affiliated with the government, the armed opposition or others) may block access for NGOs to prevent aid from being delivered to some territories in order to demonstrate power and weaken opponents. Although this type of manipulation is not limited to DRR projects, the fact that DRR is primarily implemented by NGOs and UN actors frequently resulted in it being framed as an aid concern subject to the problems and constraints that the aid sector faces in Afghanistan; without the direct involvement of the government in interventions, DRR is rarely considered a government concern or part of a broader set of public services.

Respondents also felt that their area of work was less attractive as local authority figures would find it easier to accept the need for medicine than for longer-term risk reduction. Negotiating access for DRR projects also takes longer than for projects that are better-known (like education, water provision or health), because explanations have to be provided repeatedly, to a variety of actors.

Access issues also affect monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring of projects by managers is often impossible because in the vast majority of cases these staff are foreigners – and thus one of the main targets for kidnapping (OCHA, 2018a). This also poses challenges for donors. One donor funding DRR projects in Afghanistan mentioned that expertise was in practice less important when assessing whether to fund a project than having an implementing partner they knew and trusted:

> Because I can't go to see if they are doing what they say they have done, it need to trust, but you cannot trust in [an] organisation or people that you do not know. When we start working with [an] organisation that we have never [worked with] before, we spend a lot of time [getting to know] each other and building this trust.

As DRR projects are implemented in areas of high disaster risk, it is also important to note the role played by the weather and road conditions.

Many disaster-prone areas are not accessible for long stretches due to snow, landslides or fog, and according to many interviewees weather conditions account for most project delays. Poor road conditions also affect access, meaning that trips that are relatively short in terms of distance can take an extremely long time. Poorly maintained roads and transport links are compounded by the impact of conflict and governance limitations, a challenge mentioned repeatedly by interviewees.

5.4 Prolonged duration and the need for flexibility

In view of the complex logistics, bureaucratic hurdles, challenging weather conditions and changeable security situation, respondents strongly felt that the planning and initial implementation of projects take much more time than would be required in more stable contexts. As mentioned by an INGO manager implementing DRR projects, 'you need to be prepared to take time, because here [it] will take [a long time] to get all the papers, permits and reach the communities and start working'. These challenges were recognised by all actors, including donors. Moreover, many respondents with multi-country experience felt that DRR projects in Afghanistan take longer to be implemented than in other settings they knew of, owing in part to the time required to complete administrative and bureaucratic permissions to undertake a project and gain access to the community, the time required to gain the trust and acceptance of communities and other stakeholders and the time it takes to reach agreement on the specifics of project interventions. Similar findings have been documented with regard to humanitarian and disaster-response projects in other conflict contexts (Mena, 2018a).

The need for lengthy preparation and implementation time is more pronounced in programmes that explicitly aim to work *in* (do no harm) or *on* (addressing) conflict. Assessing and understanding the tensions that may exist in a community takes time and care. As one INGO programme manager put it: 'there are too many things to see: the differences that they have, the problems the projects can create, and also the problems that exist between different communities'. The case of the ARC (Box 2) demonstrates the steps involved in preparation and training, all of which takes time. The proper use of tools for conflict assessment requires the collection of information from different groups of people at different times. All these steps require preparation and resources, and confront the same challenges of access and insecurity that a project as a whole faces. Properly assessing and including conflict-sensitivity measures in DRR programmes takes time and effort. However, as stated by a social worker implementing these tools and DRR projects, taking shortcuts in these preparations is likely to result in delays due to increased tension. A lack of preparation could even, in some cases, lead to the cancellation of a project.[8] In a similar vein, participants argued that gaining access, understanding the local context and obtaining government authorisations and other administrative tasks not only take longer in Afghanistan, but also require flexibility and patience on the part of implementing organisations.

The complex interaction of micro, meso and macro conflict dynamics, coupled with the country's geography and weather variability, create an environment where, according to one project manager, 'things never happened as planned'. Yet the ability to be flexible in how projects are delivered and their expected outcomes is often limited by the timebound project duration, expectations of various stakeholders to deliver pre-agreed project outcomes, and financial constraints, including pre-approval of any budgetary changes by the donor. Many interviewees felt that these discussions can be complicated by the environment of corruption and lack of transparency, where changes to costings can be viewed with scepticism. Local and national NGOs, especially, found this aspect of their work very challenging.

8 This point was made by an INGO staff member, but the meeting was not recorded at the request of the interviewee, for security reasons.

In view of these issues of duration and flexibility, participants pointed to the need to extend planning and funding cycles beyond one year. Donors also raised this as a challenge, and some discussed providing multi-year funding and programming. One way of dealing with the challenges of planning for multiple years in a constantly changing environment is to divide a project into phases, with continuation contingent on achievements in the previous phase.

5.5 Intersectionality, disabilities and human mobility

'One-size-fits all' approaches are increasingly being called into question. More attention is needed to assess the differentiated nature of vulnerability, and to create a more nuanced picture which recognises that, although social groups are often brought together under the umbrella terms of 'vulnerable' or 'marginalised', this risks overlooking the specific barriers facing individuals (Chaplin et al., 2019). Moreover, individuals often have multiple disadvantages, which may compound and complicate their experience of vulnerability (ibid.). Recognising these complexities provides one way of introducing social heterogeneity into considerations of how vulnerabilities to disaster risk are constructed. Such ambitions can seek to unravel the explicit and implicit assumptions about pre-defined social categories, and to enable policies and programmes to be more inclusive and ensure 'no one is left behind' as championed by Agenda 2030 and echoed in the Sendai Framework (Chaplin et al., 2019).

In Afghanistan, gendered impacts on vulnerability have been recognised in DRR and other policy documents, and projects such as those by the ARC and COAR (discussed above) show an awareness of women's heightened vulnerability to violence and political marginalisation. The concept of an intersectional approach does not seek to reduce the relevance or importance of gender considerations, but emphasises that gender is not a single analytical category – for men or women (Carson et al., 2013). A narrowly framed gender analysis of vulnerability – as often employed in project proposals in Afghanistan – is considered less effective than taking a broader approach encompassing a wide range of social and cultural identities (Djoudi, 2016). For example, women should not be seen as a homogenous group on account of intersectionality with class, caste, religion and age, among other factors which will affect their access to DRR-related resources, rights and adaptation capabilities. Reductionist framings of patriarchy in conflict situations are similarly challenged by considerations of men's differentiated class, religious and educational status. More critical consideration is needed of the use of the distinct social categories often employed in developmental policy and the dynamic interrelated qualities that constitute identities, and for their inclusion in discussions of disaster and conflict vulnerability, adaptation and resilience in Afghanistan.

An intersectional approach thus offers more nuance than traditionally employed in DRR programmes by taking contextual realities into account, and recognises that people experiencing marginalisation have different identities, needs and priorities. Multiple factors interact to shape an individual's social position, and their experience of vulnerability (Osborne, 2015). In the context of disasters and conflict, this could include different experiences of violence and conflict – from interpersonal violence through to living under an armed opposition group, and related differentiated psychosocial needs.

Intersectionality will also shape the experience of vulnerability felt by people with disabilities. As Twigg et al. (2018: 3) state:

> Disasters have a disproportionate impact on people with disabilities, who are at higher risk of death, injury and loss of property … People with disabilities (physical, psychological and cognitive) are also more likely to be poor or unemployed, socially marginalised, excluded from decision-making processes and living in hazardous locations in poor housing and with inadequate infrastructure and limited access to basic services. Disasters can be a significant cause of permanent injuries and impairments, and can exacerbate pre-existing conditions through the loss of equipment or medication.

No indication of these interrelated identities was found in DRR (or other) policies and frameworks. This is a major oversight given the compounding factors of identity, which produce multiple and varied forms of vulnerability. This is especially relevant in Afghanistan, where landmines, suicide attacks and battlefield injuries result in many disabilities, as well as 'environmental factors including epidemics; accidents; natural disasters; and pollutions by poisoning and toxic waste all lead to causing impairments' (Government of Afghanistan, 2003a).

Finally, evidence collated for this report, together with a review of literature on DRR in conflict-affected areas (Peters et al., 2019a), brings out a number of issues relevant to DRR and conflict in Afghanistan, not all of which have received systematic attention in DRR programming. These include the need to advance the application of DRR approaches to the disaster–conflict–urban nexus, including but not limited to human mobility and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

In Afghanistan, displacement due to conflict, disaster and poverty has resulted in people moving to urban areas, with the consequent expansion of informal settlements without sufficient planning, adherence to building codes or provision of adequate services. The lack or reduced application of building codes and the informality of settlements increase the exposure and vulnerability of the inhabitants and the likelihood that disasters will occur, as well as increasing the risks of social conflict. Current DRR programmes are, however, geared mainly to rural areas. There are also concerns that these programmes fail to take adequate account of issues related to refugees, IDPs and returnees. This is a significant problem in Afghanistan, where in 2018 alone drought resulted in the displacement of more than 275,000 people (OCHA, 2018b).

5.6 Climate change and climate variability

Climate change and climate variability were repeatedly cited as a critical cross-cutting topic that should be taken into consideration in the preparation of and justification for DRR projects. In the three projects reviewed in detail (Section 3), each makes reference to the links between natural hazards and climate changes, and the links between DRR and climate change adaptation. This seems to be a trend repeated across interventions in the country, and reflects growing evidence on current and future impacts. Government, UN agency and World Bank reports have all shown how climate change might affect Afghanistan, with the main concern the risk of more severe or recurrent droughts and floods due to changes in rainfall and temperature patterns (NEPA and UNEP, 2015; WFP et al., 2016; World Bank and GFDRR, 2017). This is echoed in a report from UNEP (2013: 4), which warns that 'disputes over water and land were the two most commonly reported reasons for violent conflict', and that climate-related disasters such as droughts and floods require more urgent attention.

These reports are frequently cited in DRR project proposals and evaluations. In an interview, one donor also mentioned the country 'disaster risk profile' (World Bank and GFDRR, 2017) when explaining the relevance of climate change and the inclusion of DRR as part of the climate change agenda. Climate change is also cited as an important risk factor in national policy documents, including the Strategic Framework 2018–2028 (ANDMA, 2018c) or the previous SNAP (ANDMA, 2011): 'Due to climate change, flood and drought risks are likely to increase in the future' (ANDMA, 2018c: 13).

While the government and aid organisations are recognising the importance of climate change in policy documents and project proposals, there is limited evidence of substantial action. Two of the projects studied here (Box 1 and Box 3) have a climate change focus in their proposals. These projects, and a former project by UNEP (see UNEP, 2016), are among the few where genuine action has been taken to link DRR and climate change beyond simply acknowledging or mentioning climate change as contextual information. One UNEP representative interviewed felt that more research and knowledge on the links between DRR and climate change in Afghanistan is needed, as well as stronger strategic coordination between government departments and agencies. Beyond the current and future impacts of climate

changes, links to the climate change agenda also offer financing opportunities, discussed below.

5.6.1 Climate finance opportunities for advancing DRR

Afghanistan is positioning itself as a country determined to fight climate change and adapt to its impacts. In 2015 it submitted its Intended National Determined Contribution[9] (INDC) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Supporting DRR approaches appears in this document as the first priority of climate change adaptation targets, outlining that, between 2020 and 2030, $10.8 billion will be needed in adaptation finance.[10]

Adaptation finance therefore represents an important opportunity to advance DRR ambitions in Afghanistan. Climate Funds Update (CFU) data[11] shows that the Least Developed Country Fund[12] has been particularly active in Afghanistan, with four approved adaptation projects, for a total amount of $27 million, between 2004 and 2015, most of which aim to improve the country's preparedness to climate-induced disaster risks.

In 2016 Afghanistan submitted two concept notes to the Green Climate Fund[13] (GCF), though at the time of writing neither had been approved. One focuses on developing climate services and early warning systems in the Hindu Kush-Himalayan region,[14] and the other includes a component on climate-resilient agriculture.[15] Other recent initiatives include the approval in 2017 of $71 million of investment to prepare rural communities for climate change, with a particular focus on women and marginalised groups. Activities include establishing community-based early warning systems and working with subnational institutions to integrate climate change into planning. This is financed with a $5.6 million grant from the LDCF and co-financing from the Afghan government ($5 million), the Asian Development Bank ($57 million), the World Bank ($2.5 million) and UNDP ($1 million).[16] The World Bank is undertaking a comprehensive multi-hazard risk assessment at the national level, including in-depth assessments for selected geographic areas, with funding from the Global Facility for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Japanese government, in close cooperation with the ANDMA.[17]

Numerous activities have been promoted to help enhance DRR in Afghanistan, in particular around early warning systems and risk assessments. However, funding is not commensurate to needs. Beyond financing, other factors to consider in a fragile and conflict-affected

9 In anticipation of the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP21) in Paris in December 2015, countries publicly outlined what post-2020 climate actions they intended to take under the new international agreement. These are known as INDCs (see www.wri.org/indc-definition).

10 www4.unfccc.int/sites/submissions/INDC/Published%20Documents/Afghanistan/1/INDC_AFG_Paper_En_20150927_.docx%20FINAL.pdf.

11 https://climatefundsupdate.org/.

12 The Least Developed Country Fund was established in 2002 under the UNFCCC (see www.thegef.org/about/funding).

13 The GCF, established under the UNFCCC at the end of 2011, aims to contribute to attaining the international community's mitigation and adaptation goals. It is expected to become the main multilateral financing mechanism to support climate action in developing countries (see https://climatefundsupdate.org/the-funds/green-climate-fund/).

14 www.greenclimate.fund/documents/20182/893456/15790_-_Enhancing_Climate_Resilience_in_the_Third_Pole.pdf/8e89f249-619d-4678-aad2-910582c2104d.

15 www.greenclimate.fund/documents/20182/893456/14940_-_Solar_Plus_Diversified_Low-Carbon_Systems_to_Improve_Energy_Supply_and_Climate_Resilience.pdf/ce65ab10-c8bb-44e6-aa20-b3a875bafe66.

16 www.adaptation-undp.org/afghanistan-launches-us71-million-initiative-prepare-rural-communities-climate-change.

17 The amount in US dollars is not reported (see www.worldbank.org/en/programs/afghanistan-disaster-risk-management-and-resilience-program#1).

context such as Afghanistan include the need to build institutional capacity, simplify multilateral climate funds' procedures to obtain accreditation and link project proposals to national policies on climate change and development.[18]

Over the past 18 months Afghanistan has made major strides in climate budgeting. The Ministry of Finance has worked with international partners to determine the degree to which the budgets of the three major ministries concerned are contributing to adaptation, with a view to increasing spending on adaptation and mainstreaming this within existing government programmes. Similarly, Afghanistan has made progress in establishing an institutional architecture for soliciting international funds for adaptation through a dedicated Climate Finance Unit at the National Environmental Protection Agency. A grant has been secured from the GCF for readiness activities, commencing in January 2019. Many believe that, over time, this institutional strengthening could support DRR financing in the country.

18 www.acclimatise.uk.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/ACT-Brief-11_hi-res-spread.pdf.

6 Conclusion and recommendations

There is increasing recognition of the importance of DRR in Afghanistan, prompted in part by repeated disasters in the country's recent history. Disaster casualties, disaster-related displacement and affected populations in many parts of the country outnumber deaths and displacement related to conflict (OCHA, 2018a: 4). DRR is therefore not a marginal concern, and certainly not one that can wait until sustainable peace is attained.

The government has an important role to play in setting the policy agenda on DRR – aligned with international policy and standards such as the Sendai Framework (UNISDR, 2015) – and delivering tangible disaster resilience outcomes (reduced loss of life and livelihoods) for its citizens. However, state-centric approaches are only feasible in government-held territories, and even there capacity is generally lacking. This is not to suggest that DRR is not happening. In many instances, the UN, INGOs and ANGOs are picking up the slack, implementing community-level DRR activities despite significant operational barriers.

In general, DRR programming in Afghanistan by government and non-governmental actors has been hazard-oriented, infrastructure-focused and of relatively short duration. This reflects the political economy of the funding environment and perceptions of the nature of disasters and DRR. There have been a number of cases recently where DRR ambitions have matured – taking greater account of the relationship between hazards, vulnerabilities and capacities. Previously, DRR activities were rarely explicit about the ways in which they interacted with or addressed conflict conditions. The examples in this report show that this is starting to change, and that DRR can be pursued in contexts of conflict, from do no harm through to actively seeking to affect societal relations that result in conflict as part of project design.

Different types of DRR actions may or may not be viable depending on the nature of conflict at different levels. In Afghanistan, as in most conflict contexts, central state institutions and the international community tend to focus on macro-level conflict, whereas local-level manifestations of conflict can be much more important for programme implementation. Framing conflicts in Afghanistan only by their macro dimension hides the multiple causes of vulnerability and displacement (poverty, reduced access to public services and local conflicts), resulting in projects that may not adequately address the root causes of disasters.

The kind of social problems and conflicts associated with DRR projects – such as interfering in power politics, hierarchies and inequalities – are arguably common to DRR in every context. Thus, a conflict 'lens' has value beyond contexts explicitly labelled as 'conflict-affected' or experiencing high-intensity conflict, and needs to be accounted for in the design of any intervention. Where DRR projects in high-intensity conflict contexts fail to take adequate consideration of conflict dynamics, it is highly likely that those projects will have been poorly designed and implementation may risk exacerbating or igniting social conflict. This in turn might aggravate the effects of disaster impacts or increase people's vulnerability by creating a false sense of security.

There are important distinctions between working *around*, *in* and *on* conflict. At the national level, DRR programming is mainly seen to work *around* areas not under the control of the government (macro conflict). Similarly, we

found that DRR programmes often position themselves as working *around* conflict at the provincial level. One notable exception is the GIZ project (Box 4), one component of which aims to strengthen conflict resolution mechanisms at provincial level – and, hence, seeks to work *on* conflict at that level.

At the community level, DRR programmes rarely take a systematic approach to integrating conflict dynamics. But there are exceptions, three of which are explored in this report. The NGO consortium ARC (Box 2) developed conflict-sensitivity tools and trained staff on how to prevent conflicts and address social conflicts when they occur in the everyday politics of project implementation. The second example (Box 3) concerns a national NGO that introduced (conflict) risk analysis approaches into its programmes. Finally, GIZ's forest restoration programme integrates DRR and sets up conflict-resolution mechanisms at local and provincial levels (Box 4).

Based on these examples, there is appetite for moving towards more integrated approaches to DRR, specifically in terms of applying and adapting tools and training on conflict sensitivity. Future research could explore whether there is a reverse trend: i.e. whether peace- and conflict-related interventions take natural hazards or DRR into account. Anecdotal evidence together with interviews and a review of relevant documents suggests that this is not yet happening; disasters are a neglected topic in conflict, peace and stability policies, plans and approaches.

This paper sheds light on a number of challenges in contexts marked by constrained governance systems, insecurity and underdevelopment. These are not unique to conflict contexts but are all in some way exacerbated by conflict conditions, making the delivery of DRR interventions even more difficult in practice:

- DRR is limited by hazard-centred approaches, which lack deeper consideration of the construction of disaster risk (Figure 1) and the role of violence and conflict within this. The predominance of infrastructural protection and mitigation measures for floods and earthquakes reflects this, as does a funding environment which favours short-term projects and visible deliverables. Although it may be unappealing for donors, there is still a need for basic training on the foundational concepts of DRR, helping to build skills, knowledge and capacity for a deeper understanding of the way disaster risks manifest.
- DRR is hampered by problems of access. These are partly security-related, but will continue to play a role in view of the country's difficult geography and often adverse weather conditions. Issues of corruption can lead to the diversion of funds or sub-standard project delivery, creating a false sense of security without actually reducing disaster risks. Greater effort is needed to develop better remote monitoring, utilising technologies to bridge the gap between donors and recipients and allow for demonstrable 'results' that are not (solely) centred on physical deliverables.
- DRR in Afghanistan requires long project durations and a flexible programming approach. Preparation time – and, hence, project overheads – are increased when a conflict-sensitive approach is explicitly adopted, because this may require additional staff training and on-site risk assessments. That said, interviews with project staff suggest that such measures can reduce the likelihood of delays or cancellations. Donors should make conflict-sensitive processes compulsory in project design and delivery, and allow budgets to be allocated to training and conflict analysis as required.

The research identified a number of intersecting issues that need to be addressed as part of comprehensive DRR programming. The relationship between DRR and climate change is an obvious intersection and has received increased attention in Afghanistan from practitioners and donors. The effects of climate change, in particular water availability, are seen as causing local-level conflict, as well as increasing disaster risk. The integration of climate change adaptation and DRR is receiving attention, but has not yet evolved sufficiently in policy or practice. Nor does the climate

change community fare much better in terms of systematically integrating considerations of conflict into project design and delivery. Lessons from the DRR community should be more systematically documented and shared to strengthen the evidence base for what conflict-sensitive climate change adaptation programmes could entail. The political attention and financial opportunities afforded by the issue of climate change could offer means to leverage greater institutional capabilities for action on climate-related disasters.

Finally, implementing DRR projects with a conflict-sensitive approach is deemed positive and necessary by all actors. With an awareness of working *in* conflict situations, the current focus of DRR actors is do no harm. In practice, however, this often requires working *on* conflicts – namely, conflicts that may emerge (directly or indirectly) from the everyday politics of DRR projects in interaction with the wider political economy.

Do no harm has historically been approached in an intuitive way, but there is an evolving range of tools, approaches and experiences pointing to the need for a more systematic approach to the consideration of conflict dynamics in DRR project design, delivery and monitoring. Having tools to assess conflict is not enough, and there was wide agreement among interviewees that conflict-sensitive DRR requires more sustained training and capacity development at different levels of disaster risk governance, with special attention to the local and provincial levels.

6.1 Recommendations

There is a clear call to accelerate action on DRR in Afghanistan, as revealed through interviews with affected communities, practitioners, policy-makers and donors alike. What is less clear are the parameters, approaches, entry points and adaptations required to conventional approaches to DRR to ensure that efforts are viable and appropriate, timely, sustainable and ultimately do no harm. Moreover, the barriers associated with implementing DRR programmes in high-intensity conflict – real and perceived – are yet to be removed.

The project-based experiences highlighted in this research reveal that DRR in high-intensity conflict requires a substantial investment of time, and is more expensive compared to similar projects in other countries or contexts. These trade-offs are arguably counteracted by the benefits of actively including conflict sensitivity and prevention measures in operational approaches to adapt DRR interventions to the specific circumstances of the contexts at hand.

Contrary to expectations, the macro-level conflict was not routinely cited as a significant barrier to the pursuit of DRR on the ground. While the national conflict and geopolitical implications undoubtedly presented challenges, such as access to funding, insufficient and ineffective disaster risk governance, these are worked around by agencies and operations. What is a cause for concern – in the cases investigated here – are the micro- and meso-level conditions of conflict, prompting adaptations to conventional DRR approaches that are better suited to the overarching context of high-intensity conflict.

Action on DRR needs to be significantly scaled up in order to protect citizens from current and future disaster risk, and in a way that responds to the specific conditions of high-intensity conflict. This means a number of different things: from including the dynamics of conflict in vulnerability assessments to adapting operational approaches to protect staff working in insecure areas. The following recommendations point to opportunities for advancing DRR in Afghanistan in ways that are conflict-sensitive.

- **Use a vulnerability lens to advance the development of tools and methods** that allow effective assessment of risks present at micro and meso levels, with explicit emphasis on the intersection between natural hazard and conflict vulnerabilities. Such tools could be developed through action research with existing DRR working groups, to build on their experiences of DRR in meso- and micro-level conflict contexts. In time, it may be feasible to develop recommendations to take greater consideration of high-intensity conflict in local- to national-level DRR strategies and plans of action.
- There is a need to further **develop conceptual and operational approaches** which improve

the integration of DRR with actions designed to reduce the risk of, or avoid exacerbating, conflict. The manual developed by the ARC (Mena and ARC, 2018) as part of its DRR project (see Box 2) shows the relevance of adapting existing tools to the national and local context. It also shows the importance of funding and promoting research into such initiatives, as the current evidence base remains limited.

- Current and future DRR programmes, especially those supported by international donors, should **move beyond short-term timeframes to allow projects to build on ideas of adaptive programming** (Valters et al., 2016) to enable lessons to be internalised and used to shape and adjust project design. Through the financing of medium- and long-term projects, it may also be possible to develop monitoring systems which, with suitable donor flexibility, can provide room for adapting project aims and ambitions to flex in response to changing external (conflict) conditions. Creating multi-year funding specifically for DRR is a necessary first step, as is scoping the feasibility of a multi-donor trust fund to strengthen government action on DRR at scale.
- The examples presented here reveal the relevance and added value of pursuing DRR approaches in the context of a high-intensity conflict, and that it is possible to develop approaches that explicitly seek to reduce the risk of conflict. Developing these ideas and practices further could help nuance and **deepen our collective understanding of what types of disaster and peace outcomes can be aligned and what practices can be integrated**, under what circumstances and to what benefit, and specifically what ambitions for conflict prevention or peacebuilding are viable and compatible with ambitions for DRR.
- **Increased capacity for DRR is required at the provincial and local level through subnational government institutions**, including specifically designated DRR officers charged with delivering on current DRR policies and plans. While a shift is required from a focus on disaster impact mitigation and community-based preparedness to risk reduction and prevention, there is also a need to avoid technocratic approaches to risk reduction. Effort will need to be made to inform and build on subnational experiences of adapting DRR strategies and operations to changing conflict dynamics, with support (financial and technical) from the international community.
- For the sustainable pursuit of DRR across the country, the government – with support from external funders – needs to **develop strategies to systematically increase budget allocations for DRR initiatives**. This could include building on a narrative of the 'resilience dividend' or harnessing political interest in the post-disaster space to drive change towards longer-term financing mechanisms for risk reduction. In the near term, it will be politically strategic for champions of DRR to support stronger disaster risk governance capacities.
- The basic institutional mechanisms required for collaboration require strengthening – including the **promotion of inter-agency coordination and learning mechanisms**. Specifically, the current DRR working groups require additional support. Until systematic and sustained financing mechanisms are in operation through the national budget, external donors will need to back-fill the funding required to kick-start these initiatives.
- Finally, conducting and **integrating conflict analysis assessments** and using them to inform the design and delivery of national to subnational DRR strategies and plans could help ground the ideas currently being articulated in DRR policies, test their viability and help adapt implementation plans to increase the likelihood of tangible and lasting results. Success in this area could help make the case for more comprehensive multi-risk assessments across the country, to inform policy and programme design.

Broadly speaking, DRR is rarely anchored in existing institutional structures in high-intensity conflict contexts. This lack of institutionalisation undermines the feasibility, results and sustainability of any changes stimulated through DRR projects. This in part explains why the international community barely finances DRR

focused on prevention and/or mitigation in high-intensity conflict contexts. But it may be feasible to initiate change and accelerate action on disaster and conflict risk concurrently.

- What would it take to initiate operational approaches which improve the integration of DRR with actions designed to reduce the risk of, or avoid exacerbating, conflict? An amendment in the law; prominent champions? As a starting point, could donors commit to enforce do no harm principles across their DRR investments?
- How can investment in capacity-building be sustained? Learning materials can be translated into multiple languages to reach the local level; is there a role for Kabul University or government training institutes as partners for capacity-building?
- What will it take to move beyond short-term financing? Should the Afghan government consider establishing multi-donor trust funds that would permit this? Other countries (such as Bangladesh) have attempted this, to varying degrees of success.
- Are there examples from other high-intensity conflict countries of increased budgetary allocation for DRR by successfully mainstreaming DRR across sectoral budgets? If so, what messaging was used and how can this be adapted to the Afghan context? What opportunities exist through new climate change funds? Could Afghanistan's Climate Finance Unit provide a precedent?

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Annex 1 Number of participants and events

Method	Participant/event/documents	Code	Total
Semi-structured interviews	Government (ANDMA authorities and staff members at national and provincial level)	GOV	4
	UN (OCHA at national and provincial level, IOM, UNEP, HABITAT, UNDP)	UN	6
	NGOs (COAR, AHRDO, YHDO)	NGO	5
	INGOs (ARC, Save the Children, Concern, Afghanaid, Aga Khan Habitat)	INGO	5
	Beneficiaries (group interviews)[1]*	BEN	3
	Donors/government entities (SIDA, DFID, World Bank, ECHO, GIZ)	DON	5
	Private sector and facilitators	PRIV	3
Direct observation	Multiple stakeholder meetings (e.g. INGO, ANGO, government, UN)	OBS-Meetings	4
Ethnographic observations of DRR projects	Three mitigation walls, one first aid and earthquake preparedness project, one community emergency team project	OBS-Projects	5
Documents	Country policies, strategies, plans and reports on DRR and DRM in Afghanistan	DOC	44

* Based on local customs, interviews with one person can bring conflict. All interviews were carried with the group of leaders of the community. Mostly, they included an elder, one *shura* representative (development councils at the village level), and one representative of the CDC. In terms of the method for data collection, these group interviews were treated as focus groups. One of them was conducted with female representatives and carried out by a female research assistant.

Annex 2 Documents reviewed

1. *Afghanistan Law on Combating Disasters in the Republic of Afghanistan* (Afghanistan, 1991)
2. *The Afghanistan National Disaster Plan* (Afghanistan, 2003)
3. *The Afghanistan Disaster Management Strategy 2014–2017* (MMRD, 2014)
4. *Badakhshan Provincial Disaster Management Plan* (ANDMA, 2013)
5. *Badakhshan Gender Standard for Disaster Risk Management* (ANDMA, 2013)
6. *The Afghanistan Strategic National Action Plan (SNAP) for Disaster Risk Reduction: towards peace and stable development* (ANDMA, 2011)
7. *Support to strategic framework and capacity development design for the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority* (Altai Consulting, 2017)
8. *Afghanistan: national progress report on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action (2013–2015)* (ANDMA, 2015)
9. *Sendai Framework data readiness review – report: Afghanistan* (ANDMA, 2017)
10. 'About ANDMA' (ANDMA, 2018)
11. *Natural Disaster Mitigation Policy in Afghanistan* (ANDMA, 2018)
12. *Strategic Framework 2018–2028* (ANDMA. 2018)
13. 'ANDMA Provincial Offices' (ANDMA, USAID, and IMMAP, 2011)
14. *Building Afghanistan's resilience: natural hazards, climate change, and humanitarian needs* (ARC, 2016)
15. *Concern's approach to disaster risk reduction: Afghanistan* (Clark-Ginsberg, 2014)
16. *Proposed strategy for institutional strengthening in disaster risk management in Afghanistan* (DDP, Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2004)
17. *Strategy for Disaster Preparedness* (DDP, 2007)
18. *Disaster risk reduction: a development concern* (DFID, 2004)
19. *ECO Regional Framework for disaster risk reduction (ECORFDRR) and regional priorities for action* (Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), 2017)
20. *Flash floods damage assessment report and response plan*. (FAO, 2014)
21. *Afghanistan 2018: humanitarian response plan* (FTS, 2018)
22. *Law on Combating Disasters in the Republic of Afghanistan* (Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 1991)
23. 'Name of ANDMA' (Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2015)
24. *National Disaster Management Plan, 2010 Afghanistan* (Gupta, Manu and ANDMA, 2010)
25. *DREF final report Afghanistan: earthquake* (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRCC), 2016)
26. *IOM – Humanitarian Assistance Programme (including DRR components)* (IOM and USAID, 2017)
27. *Understanding and preventing social conflict while implementing community-based disaster risk reduction in Afghanistan* (Rodrigo, 2018)
28. *Manual on conflict analysis tools: preventing, mitigating and reducing the risk of social conflict in civil DRR projects*. (Rodrigo and ARC, 2018)

29. *Disaster Management Strategy* (MMRD, 2014)
30. *Climate change and governance in Afghanistan* (NEPA and UNEP, 2015)
31. *Afghanistan: 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan* (OCHA, 2016)
32. 'Afghanistan weekly field report: 3–9 September 2018' (OCHA, 2018)
33. *Humanitarian needs overview 2019: Afghanistan* (OCHA, 2018)
34. 'Afghanistan: overview of natural disasters in 2016' (OCHA and IOM, 2016)
35. 'Coordination of Afghan Relief (CoAR): DRR profile.' (Prevention Web, 2018)
36. *Afghanistan Disaster Risk Reduction National Strategy (ASDRR)* (SMDM and ANDMA, 2018)
37. *Disaster risk profile: Afghanistan* (World Bank and GFDRR, 2017)
38. *Reducing disaster risk: a challenge for development. A global report* (UNDP, 2004)
39. *Mountain partners: applying Ecosystem-Based Disaster Risk Reduction (Eco-DRR) for sustainable and resilient development planning* (UNEP, 2016)

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