DISASTERS IN CONFLICT

Understanding disaster governance, response, and risk reduction during high-intensity conflict in South Sudan, Afghanistan, and Yemen

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2020

This dissertation is part of the research programme ‘When disaster meets conflict: Disaster response of humanitarian aid and local state and non-state institutions in different conflict scenarios’ , funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) as VICI scheme project no. 453/14/013

ISBN
Layout and design:
Cover:

DISASTERS IN CONFLICT:

Understanding disaster governance, response, and risk reduction during high-intensity conflict in South Sudan, Afghanistan, and Yemen

RAMPEN IN CONFLICT:

Inzicht in bestuur, respons en risicovermindering bij rampen tijdens conflicten met hoge intensiteit in Zuid-Soedan, Afghanistan, en Jemen

Dissertation

to obtain the degree of Doctor from the

Erasmus University Rotterdam

by command of the Rector Magnificus

Prof. Rutger Engels

and in accordance with the decision of the Doctorate Board

The public defence shall be held on

25 November 2020 at 16:00 hrs

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Other Members

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ACRONYMS

ANDMA	Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (formerly DDP)
ANGO	Afghan non-governmental organisation (national and local)
AOG	armed opposition group
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DRM	disaster risk management
DRR	disaster risk reduction
EWS	early warning system
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Aid Office[1]
FGD	focus group discussion
HIC	high-intensity conflict
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IDP	internally displaced person
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
NGO	non-governmental organisation
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SFDRR	Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction
UN	United Nations
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
UN-HABITAT	UN Human Settlements Programme
UNHAS	UN Humanitarian Air Service
UNISDR	UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (former UNDRR)
USAID	US Agency for International Development
WASH	Water, sanitation and hygiene
YNGO	Yemeni non-governmental organisation (national and local)

[1] Actually named as Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I focus on the knowledge and practice of disaster risk reduction (DRR) and disaster response during periods of high-intensity conflict (HIC). HIC represent 'moments' of a protracted crisis with the presence of large-scale violent conflict, significant levels of state fragility and fractured governance systems. The occurrence of disasters is common in places under HIC. Disasters like droughts, floods or earthquakes are a social and political phenomenon based on the interaction between extreme natural events and people's vulnerability to harm and loss during these events. Conflict contributes to that vulnerability, thus explaining disasters and conflict co-occurrence.

Deciding to respond to or reduce the risk of disasters is challenging during HIC for humanitarian aid and societal actors due to insecurity or reduced access to the affected zones. In this study I seek to move beyond international frameworks promoting and guiding DRR and disaster response because they neither include nor problematise ways of addressing disasters in conflict-affected contexts. While contributing to addressing these gaps and challenges, I answer the following research question: How is disaster governance shaped and how are disaster response and disaster risk reduction promoted and implemented by aid and societal actors (state and non-state ones) in a context of high-intensity conflict? The dissertation is based on the cases of South Sudan (2017), Afghanistan (2018), and Yemen (2019).

In order to describe and analyse the socially-constructed processes of disaster response and risk reduction in HIC settings, I developed a theoretical framework using the concepts of disaster governance, aid-society actors, humanitarian arena, violent conflict, and everyday politics and power relationships.

Employing a qualitative, small-N case study methodology, the general strategy was to have a particular focus of study in each case to delve into different angles of the main research problematique and case-specific questions. Empirical data was collected over more than fifteen months of fieldwork research on the cases of South Sudan, Afghanistan, and Yemen, and a comprehensive literature review in the fields of disaster response, DRR, and humanitarian aid. The case of South Sudan focuses on decision-making processes in HIC scenarios. The case of Afghanistan delves into DRR dynamics. The case of Yemen studies the gap and transition from development and disaster risk reduction to relief.

I organised my dissertation into nine chapters. Chapter 1 presents the research problem, justification, and question. Chapter 2 presents an overview of the cases and information on the interaction between conflict and disaster. Chapters 3 presents the present the methodological design and Chapter 4 the theoretical framework and the literature review. Chapters 5 to 7, based on journal articles, present the results of each studied case. Chapter 8 presents a comparative analysis of the results to respond comprehensively to the research sub-questions. Chapter 9 closes with an answer to the main research question, a discussion of the studies and their results, and the implications and contribution of my dissertation to the fields of disasters and humanitarian aid.

In terms of findings, in the case of South Sudan I developed the notion of 'triage' of aid to study the continuous and political decision-making processes in HIC scenarios. I found that humanitarian action is largely locked into path-dependent areas of intervention, which contradicts its supposed flexibility to

respond to the most affected people and places. In the case of Afghanistan I found that DRR in HIC is possible and can play a relevant role in conflict dynamics (positive and negative). However, this requires that different levels of conflict be acknowledged, sufficient time and funding be available, and that disaster governance arrangements be in place. In the case of Yemen, I found a lack of knowledge and coordination in the transition from development and DRR to relief. However, this also reveals spaces and opportunities to advance towards a better integration of the two types of assistance.

My comparative analysis of the cases found that disaster governance, DRR, and response are possible and needed during HIC moments, but the scale and impact of those actions are likely to be limited. In addition, due to the lack of (capable) governance structures and significant levels of state fragility, DRR and disaster response promotion and implementation during HIC moments rely on top-down international agendas, which are adapted and politically negotiated by multiple aid and society actors at different levels.

This dissertation makes empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions. *Empirically*, I present real case evidence and knowledge based on fieldwork research, studying a broad range of actors and practices. I also contribute by providing novel information on disasters and disaster-related actions during high-intensity conflict in countries where this information is generally limited. *Theoretically*, I contribute to bridging humanitarian and disaster studies, thereby allowing for the study of disaster-related action in an interdisciplinary manner. I also reflect upon, deepen and sharpen the concepts of high-intensity conflict, triage of aid, and the development-humanitarian nexus. My dissertation also contributes to the debates and knowledge on the relationship between disaster and conflict, the path dependency of humanitarian action, the humanitarian arena, and to the study of real governance processes such as decision-making and agenda-setting in the disaster and humanitarian context. *Methodologically*, I contribute to the development of safer and more secure fieldwork procedures in high-intensity conflict situation; while operationalising ethical norms in research practices.

Through my dissertation I provide important *insights and recommendations for policy and practice*. First, attempting DRR in high intensity conflict is necessary because despite its often limited short-term feasibility, brings positive long-term benefits, which includes saving lives, facilitating education continuity, or creating more resilient livelihoods. Second, including conflict in disaster policies and agendas, especially global agreements like the Sendai Framework for action is necessary and would require the mobilisation of funds and the development of a long-term strategy. Third, DRR and disaster response in HIC requires better and more informed links with humanitarian and development aid agendas.

Keywords: disaster risk reduction, disaster response, high-intensity conflict, humanitarian aid, governance, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Yemen.

SAMENVATING

[ISS is translating the abstract into Dutch)

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1. INTRODUCTION

Imvepi is a large refugee reception centre in northern Uganda that hosts thousands of people escaping from South Sudan. It was February of 2017 when I met Akong[2] and her little boy there. After some time talking about the crisis in South Sudan and me sharing that I was studying disaster responses, she said she would like to confess something to me:

> '*I didn't leave South Sudan because of the war, I left because of the drought. It is impossible to grow anything now, there is no water, and even the animals are dying. But I can't say that here, not to anyone. We can't be refugees because of the drought, so I have to say that it was because of the war. The war is terrible and is affecting us, there are no markets now, but the attacks in my village are not happening now. Hunger is*'.

Akong's story allows me to unpack multiple key elements of this research project, including what disaster and conflict are, how they interconnect, how they affect people, the responses to and prevention of that affectation and the relevance and need to study all these dimensions in detail.

To start with, in Akong's story the drought-related disaster and the conflict are seen as two unrelated events. However, a closer look at what a disaster is allows us to see how, in reality, both phenomena are strongly related. Even though disasters are a natural phenomenon for many people, it has been established more than half a century ago that they are actually a social and political construct (see Ball 1975; Dynes and Quarantelli 1971; Quarantelli and Dynes 1977; Sorokin 1943; Stallings 1988; Wisner, Westgate, and O'Keefe 1976). Simply put, disasters arise from the relationship between (socially constructed) natural hazards with a human population that is vulnerable to that hazard (Kelman 2020; Wisner et al. 2004). Let us review an example to understand this better: earthquakes are by definition the shaking of the Earth's surface, but for that trembling to turn into a disaster, it needs to reach and affect a population that is vulnerable to it. While Chile is regularly affected by earthquakes, including several of around 7.0 on the moment magnitude scale, normally no one dies and only minor damage to older buildings are expected with tremors of that magnitude. Meanwhile, when Haiti was affected by an earthquake of moment magnitude 7.0 in 2010, its impact resulted in more than 150,000 casualties and significant destruction in the affected cities (Kolbe et al. 2010). The earthquake itself - defined as the movement of the surface of the earth - is not the disaster. It is just a natural phenomenon that can be hazardous for us, and that can turn into a disaster when it meets a vulnerable

[2] All names have been changed to protect the identity of my informants.

population like in Haiti or Nepal (Kelman 2010, 2020; Melis 2020). It is the social conditions like poverty, inequality, the quality of the buildings, the response capacity of health systems or the lack of political will and lack of investment in disaster risk reduction that explain how a possible natural hazard, such as drought, torrential rain, earthquakes, or floods, can turn into a disaster (Kelman 2020; Wisner et al. 2004). I say 'possible natural hazard', because not all drought, rain, or earthquakes needs to be considered a hazard, nor something that produces harm. Only those natural phenomenon with enough magnitude or recurrence to affect us *and* that we are inadequately prepared for can turn into a disaster (Kelman 2010).

Another concept commonly used to explain disaster is exposure, as a population needs to be exposed to those possible natural hazards to be affected by them. However, it is also possible to argue that more or less exposure makes people more or less vulnerable and, therefore, exposure can be seen as an element of that vulnerability. Disasters and the risk of disasters are, consequently, the results of multiple variables as explained in more detail in Chapter 3, with social vulnerability (including exposure) being the main culprit.

Furthermore, thanks to this social conception of disasters, they can also be defined as a *historical process* (Bankoff et al. 2015) whose causes and impact can be traced and assessed beyond the negative impact of a single event (Schenk 2015). Knowles' (2013) book 'The disaster experts' is a good example of how disaster risk can be traced historically, including the history and development of public policies, insurance regulations, urbanisation processes, and even scientific knowledge to understand how a single disaster occurrence can be the result of more than a century's worth of decisions and events. Using the case of Mexico, García Acosta (2006) also shows how the risk of disasters, such as floods, can be traced historically to pre-Hispanic and colonial times, reinforcing the social constructions of disaster over its climatic conditions. Therefore, as presented by Ball already in 1975 (1975:369) '[a] disaster can be defined as a combination of factors of a political, social, economic and environmental nature which work to undermine the ability of a system to cope with new stresses'. For these reasons, the concept of 'natural disaster' is considered a misnomer (Chmutina and von Meding 2019; Kelman 2010). Consequently, in this research I only use the concept of natural hazard-related disaster or just disaster in short.

However, it is important to distinguish that although war or violent conflict can also be seen as a disaster, as far as a disaster is defined as 'a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society causing widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources' (UNISDR website 2017:2), in this research I will use the term disaster solely to refer to disasters related to (natural) hazards. For other situations I will always use specific terms that I will define accordingly, for example civil war, or technological failure-related disasters like the explosion in the Chernobyl nuclear power plant on April 26, 1986. In any case, the distinction between the types of disaster relates to a longer and relevant discussion of the real differences between disasters,

especially considering the social construction of the conditions explaining all of them. In Chapters 8 and 9 these reflections are presented in more details.

How does the drought as a disaster presented by Akong relate with conflict? Primarily, based on the above-mentioned definition, vulnerability is the main explanation of disasters. Violent conflict, such as the one happening in South Sudan in Akong's story, produces vulnerability, or at the very least influences the conditions that make people vulnerable (Bankoff, Frerks, and Hilhorst 2004; Mena, Hilhorst, and Peters 2019; Wisner 2012). Among the many ways in which violent conflict creates vulnerability to disasters, one such example is that violent conflict 'often destroys infrastructure, which may intensify natural hazards such as flooding, the effects of drought, or epidemic disease'. Another is that it 'diverts national and international financial and human resources that could be used for development and for mitigation of natural hazard risk' (Wisner 2012:68–69). Despite this composite and intertwined understanding of disaster and conflict, the story of Akong also reveals how disaster and conflict can be perceived as separated phenomena in the eyes of the humanitarian aid actors.

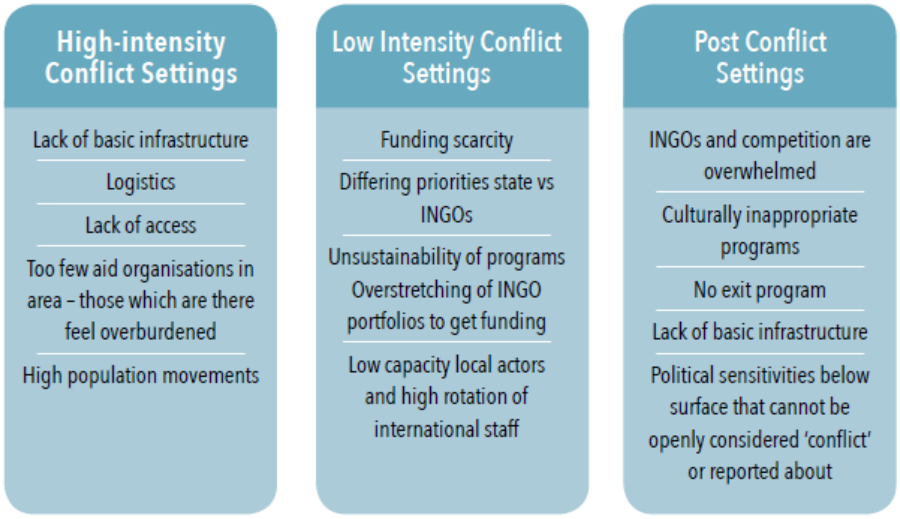
Not all conflict scenarios, however, relate with disasters and vulnerability similarly. Previous research shows how disaster-related actions largely depend on the type of conflict in which a disaster befalls (van Voorst and Hilhorst 2017). However, academic and political attention to disaster and conflict co-occurrence usually do not recognise the diversity between different types of conflict, but treats all conflicts as if they were the same (Hilhorst, Mena, et al. 2019; Hilhorst and Pereboom 2015; van Voorst and Hilhorst 2017). The analytical category of conflict scenarios, particularly *high-intensity conflicts, low-intensity conflicts* and *post-conflict scenarios*, allows researchers to study the relationship between disaster and conflict because it acknowledges the relevance of different types of conflict (Ibid. 2017). Moreover, a Delphi experts panel with 30 humanitarian actors with large experience in the field studied these three analytical categories in more detail (van Voorst and Hilhorst 2017). One of the results of this Delphi study was the usefulness of these categories for all participating experts, as they allow researchers to observe key challenges hampering humanitarian aid and disasters actions. Figure 1 presents a summary of the main challenges per conflict setting presented in the Delphi study.

Low-intensity conflict settings present lower numbers of casualties than HIC, but represents the 'largest share of conflict events and are globally on the rise' (Desportes, Mandefro, and Hilhorst 2019:35). In low-intensity scenarios, these conflicts relate with 'a disarticulation of state and society, whereby the institutional state is dominated by a single group or coalition perceived as unresponsive to the needs of other groups in society' (Desportes et al. 2019:35). As a result, these scenarios usually present high levels of volatility and tension between different religious, ethnic or political groups, resulting in violence against and marginalisation of some minority groups (Desportes 2019; Desportes et al. 2019). Post-conflict scenarios also present a socially

and politically volatile context, characterised by state building processes (Melis 2019; Melis and Hilhorst 2020). Post-conflict states regularly face challenges in providing basic services to all citizens, resulting in the presence of international aid and development agencies (Melis 2020; Melis and Hilhorst 2020).

While state-building processes and the politicisation of any disaster-related action are also fundamental characteristics of post- and low-intensity conflict scenarios (Desportes et al. 2019; Melis and Hilhorst 2020), high-intensity conflict scenarios, as moments of a protracted crisis, present as distinctive features the occurrence of violent conflict at a large scale and the presence of relevant humanitarian crises (Hilhorst, Mena, et al. 2019). Furthermore, high-intensity conflict (HIC) scenarios are also characterised by minimal or no effective control or influence over some places, or regions in the case of countries, by local authorities and governments, more than 1000 conflict-related casualties per year, and 'the provision of goods and basic services (being) irregular or fragmented, causing, together with violence, high rates of migration of people looking for safety from their localities, regions, or countries' (Mena 2018:31).

Figure 1 Main challenges per conflict setting



Source: van Voorst and Hilhorst (2017) **'**Humanitarian action in disaster and conflict settings'

The story of Akong also helps us recognise that her case, far from being an isolated one, is just one example from millions of people in the world who are affected not only by conflict but also by disasters at the same time. For example, in Afghanistan thousands of people have been forced to leave their homes over the last years, fleeing to other places in Afghanistan as well as to other countries (Marchand et al. 2014; The New Humanitarian 2019). The historical armed conflict has resulted in millions of people in need of humanitarian assistance, but over time I realised how severe the impact of disaster also was in the country: in 2018, three times more people were in need of acute humanitarian aid due to the drought and other disasters rather than the conflict (OCHA 2018a). This means that more than four million people were affected by disasters. This was not an exception or a one-time event.

These examples are just an illustration of a much larger reality. Disasters are not only frequent in places affected by violent conflict, but they also have a tremendous long-term impact on the population living in those places. As presented by Maxwell and Majid (2015), while drought has not been the main cause of famine in Somalia since the 1970s, its compound effect with conflict, deficient responses, lack of early actions, political factors and the collapse of the state has plunged the population of Somalia into more than 50 years of poverty, food insecurity and deteriorated livelihoods. De Waal (1997) has found similar results with regards to Africa in general, and in Ethiopia more particularly (De Waal 1991). However, Sen (1982) and De Waal (2018) clearly state that famine is ultimately always human-made, despite the fact that we always associate them with drought. Drought can play a role, but famines are a 'social, economic and political phenomenon as well as a nutritional one', a 'process of desperate impoverishment and social collapse that reaches a vortex of starvation and vastly heightened mortality' (De Waal 2018:17, 20). Haiti is also another example of a country experiencing long term effects in conflict and disasters, where hurricanes and earthquakes compounded with social and political instability have also submerged its population into poverty and fragile livelihoods (Hsu and Schuller 2019; Hyndman 2011; Kolbe et al. 2010), resulting in Haiti being colloquially referred to as the 'NGO nation' by humanitarian/development sectors for the large number of organisations present in the country (Kelman 2020; Kristoff and Panarelli 2010; Pierre-Louis 2011).

However, despite the growing numbers of conflicts and disasters in places with armed conflicts, the academic and political attention given to the nexus between conflict and disaster is still low in cases of HIC or otherwise violent conflict contexts (GFDRR 2015; Peters and Budimir 2016; Wisner 2012). A relevant part of the body of research on conflict and disaster (presented in details in section 3.4) focused on places with stable systems of governance, even if they have fragile states (e.g. Brancati 2007; Drury and Olson 1998; Dynes and Quarantelli 1971; Homer-Dixon 1994; Mach et al. 2019; Nel and Righarts 2008; Stallings 1988), on macro quantitative studies (e.g. Billon and Waizenegger 2007; Drury and Olson 1998; Eastin 2016; Mach et al. 2019; Nel and Righarts 2008; Omelicheva 2011; Schleussner et al. 2016), or since early 2000s (see Kelman and Koukis 2000) on cases of disaster diplomacy (e.g. Gaillard, Clavé, and Kelman 2008; Ganapati, Kelman, and Koukis 2010; Kelman 2012), and at times includes violent conflict (see in Kelman 2016; Nel and Righarts 2008; Peters and Kelman 2020).

1.1. Why study disasters in a context of high-intensity conflict?

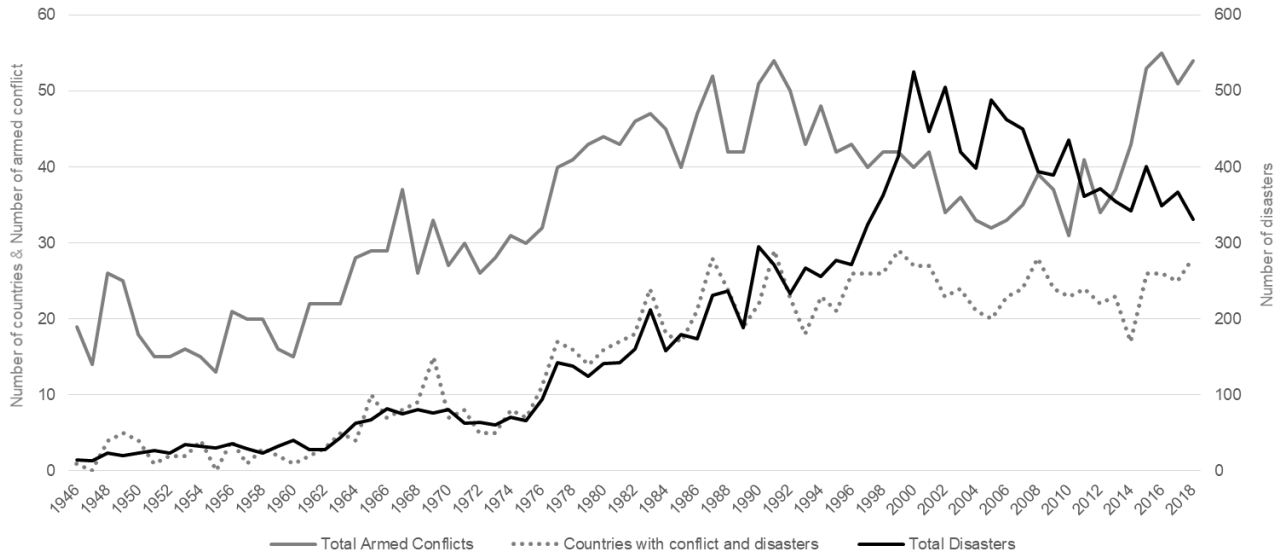
The number of armed conflicts in the world has persistently grown for the last seven decades, as presented by the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP 2019). Between 1948 and 2018 almost 300 hundred unique conflicts have happened or are still active, with an average duration of 13 years each (UCDP 2019). These conflicts are usually part of a protracted crisis, in which the level of intensity of the conflict varies over time.

Particularly unsettling are the periods of high-intensity conflict, where the conflict is characterised by high-intensity levels of violence, resulting in multiple conflict-related casualties and relevant crises (Hilhorst, Mena, et al. 2019; Mena 2019; Mena and Hilhorst 2020).

Disaster also has a significant impact on people's lives. More than 1,943 million people were affected by disasters in 2009-2019 alone, including 520,577 deaths (EM-DAT 2020). Most of the disasters behind these numbers are climate-related ones (Ibid. 2020). This is relevant as there is some evidence on how droughts, storms and rainfall patterns' intensity or frequency can increase with climate change (IPCC 2012; Pachauri, Mayer, and Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 2015; UNISDR 2015). This does not imply that climate change by itself creates or exacerbates disasters directly; it just means that a modification to average weather conditions - as possible hazards - can turn into a disaster due to, or in interaction with, other variables like vulnerability and violent conflict (IPCC 2012; Kelman 2015; Kelman, Gaillard, and Mercer 2015; Kelman and West 2009; Mach et al. 2020).

In contexts of high-intensity conflict, as is the case with Akong, people are affected by both: conflict and natural hazards turned into disasters. Furthermore, this reality is not only recurrent but has been increasing for more than half a century in HIC settings. As Caso (2019) reported, between 1960 and 2018, a yearly average of 67% of countries affected by armed conflict also faced a disaster (see Figure 2). The year 2007 presents a peak of 97% of co-occurrence of disasters and conflict (Ibid. 2019). In that year, 2007, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP 2019) reported 35 armed conflict (events) distributed in 25 countries; in 24 of those 25 countries the Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT 2020) reported the occurrence of a disaster the same year 2007.

Figure 2 Co-occurrence of conflicts and disasters



Source: Adapted from Caso (2019)

More recently, from 2009 to 2018, the average yearly co-occurrence of conflicts and disasters rose to 78% (Caso 2019). In other words, in this time period, the populations of almost four out of five countries affected by conflict in a given year also have to cope with at least one disaster in the same year. Moreover, during the decade from 1995-2004, 87% of the largest complex emergency sites were also affected by disasters (Spiegel et al. 2007a).

The impact of disaster and conflict co-occurrence should not be taken lightly. Most deaths caused by disasters occur in conflict-affected areas with fragile states (Peters 2017), and the impact of a disaster on people's livelihoods is greater in conflict-affected and fragile contexts (Hilhorst 2013b; Wisner 2012). The two main processes that prevent disaster occurrence or impact reduction are disaster risk reduction (DRR), and disaster response. DRR, as the main disaster prevention strategy, is defined by the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR 2017:online) as

> the concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyse and reduce the causal factors of disasters. Reducing exposure to hazards, lessening the vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improving preparedness and early warning for adverse events are all examples of disaster risk reduction.

If natural hazard-related disasters still occur despite all efforts to prevent them, the second process is disaster response, focusing on 'the provision of assistance or intervention during or immediately after a disaster to meet the life preservation and basic subsistence needs of those people affected. It can be of an immediate, short-term, or protracted duration' (UNISDR website 2017:6). In order to coordinate all these efforts the concept of disaster governance has emerged, which supersedes the idea of disaster management, as it has a broader focus on not only promoting and informing the responsibilities and management of DRR, disaster response, and disaster knowledge production, but also on organising and promoting related policies and normative frameworks, as future chapters will show in detail (Field and Kelman 2018; Hilhorst, Mena, et al. 2019; Tierney 2012; UNISDR 2015; UNISDR website 2017). Moreover, with an actor-oriented perspective and with a humanitarian arena approach, disaster governance is understood in this research as emerging from the interplay of different actors (Hilhorst, Desportes, and Milliano 2019).

Despite the impact and recurrence of disaster in HIC contexts, and the existence of processes like DRR, disaster response, and disaster governance, there is still reduced political and academic attention to the link between conflict and disasters, particularly in HIC. For instance, the Sendai Framework[3], the most recent

[3] This framework refers to the international document the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030)* adopted by the UN state members. It seeks to achieve the following outcome in fifteen years: 'The substantial reduction of disaster risk and

active and long-term international agreement on disaster risk reduction, does not mention the concept of conflict or crisis (Siddiqi 2018). This persists despite how the African Union has advocated to include conflict considerations in the Sendai framework, highlighting the relevance of these consideration for disaster management (African Union Commission 2016). The Sendai Framework also has potential to tackle socio-economic, political and environmental factors common to conflicts and disasters (Stein and Walch 2017). Likewise, disaster risk reduction and governance approaches have been developed for non-conflict contexts (Siddiqi 2018) and do not consider how disaster-related actions can be implemented in places with reduced governance capacity, deficient institutional capacities or places with access restrictions, insecurity, and other challenges related to HIC scenarios. This lack of recognition of conflict has occurred despite the call of the Sendai Framework to pay attention to governance at different global, regional and national levels (Kelman 2015; UNISDR 2015). In places affected by violent conflict, moreover, political attention is usually on the conflict, which in a context with reduced resources means less disposition of resources and (political) will to address disasters (Wisner 2012; Wisner et al. 2004).

Academic attention to the relationship between conflict and disaster is also relatively scarce and there is a lack of knowledge about the process of responding and reducing the risk of disasters in HIC scenarios (Siddiqi 2018). One of the reasons behind this reduced attention and knowledge relates to the methodological challenges of researching and conducting fieldwork in places affected by HIC. Researchers are confronted with the same well-known problems of access and unsafeness experienced by any other person in the same place (Hilhorst et al. 2016; Nordstrom and Robben 1995; Stallings 2002). The safety and security of the researchers are rarely addressed systematically by the organisations where they work. It is also generally costly and requires long periods of preparation. On top of that, places affected by conflict usually do not have an adequate system to gather, process, and keep data such as demographic or historical information, which is further complicated when large portions of the population are displaced inside or outside of the country. The information has sometimes been destroyed during the conflict or by disasters. As a result, the complexity of doing research in these scenarios usually inhibits many universities and researchers from pursuing this task, resulting in reduced knowledge on what happens in these scenarios.

Without much information on the disaster and conflict nexus in HIC, particularly on practical information (in term of actors, actions, governance structures, everyday and formal politics) and practices (in terms of disaster governance and risk reduction) it is difficult to plan and design intervention programs, projects, policies, and any other type of action. Responding to or reducing the risk or the impact of disasters and conflict-related humanitarian crises (separately or combined) in these in HIC encounters many challenges.

losses in lives, livelihoods and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries' (United Nations 2015b: 12).

Some of them are more technical, like the logistics associated with the provision of food by airdrops, but other problems are broader and deal with the complex socially constructed nature of disasters, its politics, and its governance (Healy and Tiller 2014; Hilhorst and Pereboom 2016; Keen 2008a). This research focuses on the latter.

1.2. Studying disasters in high-intensity conflict scenarios

In order to study disaster governance, disaster response, disaster risk reduction, and humanitarian aid actions (to respond to the conflict, the disaster, or both - separately or combined), this research included stages of *desk research* and phases of *fieldwork* on three country cases of HIC which were also affected by disasters. Having a small-N case study research strategy enabled me to study in more depth the different disaster dynamics in HIC scenarios contemplating the specific social, political, historical and environmental contexts of each case. For example, I could study how different contexts of HIC affect and differently inform disasters and how disasters are created by a particular context that produces, reinforces, or exacerbates vulnerabilities, like HIC scenarios.

At the same time, having more than one case permits me to contrast results, find commonalities, and engage in different ways with relevant aspects of disaster governance, disaster response, and disaster risk reduction in HIC scenarios. Having more than one case also allows me to have different research foci in each of those cases, which in turn permits me to engage with different literatures and to delve into different questions.

The cases selected for this research were: South Sudan and its drought and conflict during 2017; Afghanistan and the drought and floods affecting the country in parallel to multiple social conflicts during 2018; and the case of Yemen, where I studied how disasters such as drought were prevented and responded to before and during times of civil war in 2019. Chapter 2 presents an introduction to each case, their conflict scenarios and disaster contexts. Chapter 3. Methodology then describes in greater detail how the cases were chosen, allowing me to study different aspects of disasters in HIC scenarios: South Sudan delves into decision-making processes and the process of responding to disasters; Afghanistan focuses on DRR and agenda-setting dynamics; and Yemen on the dynamics of linking development and prevention to relief and humanitarian aid.

It is important to note that while each case contributes field data based on their individual focus points, core research questions were addressed in all of them. Additionally, as the research process progressed, each case also studied relevant results from previous cases, allowing me to develop a set of knowledge to address the main research questions and to address the relevant particular characteristics of disasters in HIC.

Theoretical approach

Theoretically, in order to understand the complex, socially-constructed nature of the response in HIC settings, it is necessary not only to know how aid agencies and all society (state and non-state) actors address disasters, but also to know how their actions are affecting - and affected by - their interactions. The theoretical concepts of aid-society, humanitarian arena, legitimacy, governance, everyday politics and power relationships are, therefore, a relevant theoretical framework of this research, presented in detail in Chapter 4.

The notions of *aid-society* relationships and *humanitarian arena* offer appropriate analytical frameworks for observing the complex fabric of processes and actors presented by each specific context. The aid-society approach recognises that disaster and humanitarian action not only includes actors that see humanitarian actions as their main role (although disaster response often falls to humanitarian actors as do conflict responses), but also includes people that are part of the society in which aid unfolds, including disaster- or conflict-affected ones. With this actor-oriented approach, the basic premise of the research is that disaster governance, response, and risk reduction are essentially socially constructed and embedded in a context of wider *social (power) relationships* and scenarios. The humanitarian arena lens allows me to study these relationships, as this lens seeks to observe how these relations are 'the outcome of the messy interaction of social actors struggling, negotiating and trying to further their interests' (Bakewell, 2000, p. 108–9 in Hilhorst and Jansen 2010:1120).

Even under a state of emergency such as HIC in which the option of coercive power is more available, the *legitimacy of aid* is crucial as the access, distribution and allocation of aid, and the protection of all people involved depends on many actors (sometimes with conflicting interests) on the ground. Therefore, in this arena, disaster-related action can be beneficial when the responses are legitimate in the eyes of the affected population and other stakeholders. At the same time, aid resources can also offer legitimacy to actors that seek power, including governments or contesting parties.

A focus on legitimacy thus shifts attention to the *everyday politics* of aid delivery in which actors invest their meaning and seek to enhance their strategic interests by engaging, altering or disengaging from the terms of aid. For instance, aid actors respond under the premise of being legitimated to do so, and society actors seek to be seen as legitimate to receive, provide or manage aid. Consequently, I will also review aspects of the legitimacy, negotiation, empowerment and institutional change associated with disaster response in HIC settings.

Governance is another relevant aspect of this research. HIC scenarios present complex governance arrangements, including multiple governance systems in each country (internationally recognised

governments and groups in opposition plus humanitarian and aid governance structures), governance unfolding at different moments and levels: micro-community[4], meso-provincial/regional, and macro-national levels (Mena and Hilhorst 2020). Macro-national conflict (and to a lesser extent meso and micro ones), can also be related to or be explained by international (geo-political) conflicts, which in turn might also relate to international agendas driving humanitarian aid and the international assistance provided to respond to the effects of the conflict and disaster, as will be reviewed in future chapters. In this sense, governance is composite and seen as a collective of aims, powers, and strategies to achieve objectives. Governance is not only a state domain, although a state can play a role in coordinating and regulating practices (Colebatch 2009; Rhodes 1996). These regulations, policies and coordination from aid and society actors are translated and interpreted through 'people's practices, including all social-political strategies and negotiations, formal and informal actions, and everyday practices occurring in, and for the delivery of, aid' (Mena 2018:38), shaping what Herdt and Olivier de Sardan (2015) termed 'real governance'. This 'real governance', especially considering the level of state fragility, allows me to recognise and observe that governance does not concern only 'to state institutions but to the whole spectrum of formal and informal actors in the "field of power" around state institutions' (Titeca and de Herdt 2011:216). Therefore, this research travels through governance, everyday politics, and official politics unfolding in HIC scenarios and the humanitarian arena to govern, prevent and respond to disasters.

Methodological approach

Methodologically, this research used a qualitative small-N and cross-sectional *multiple case study* research design, with moments of desk and fieldwork research. In terms of data collection, this study used participant and direct observation, interviews, focus groups, and documentation and archival records collection. The analysis of the collected information varied slightly between the different cases (see Chapter 5, 6, and 7), but in general terms all of them used a thematic content analysis.

The research strategy included an in-depth literature review about disaster governance, response, and risk reduction in relation to places affected by high intensity conflict. With the results of this initial literature review a theoretical framework was developed to refine the research questions, to develop research instruments, to guide fieldwork moments, and for analysing the collected information. Three fieldwork moments followed in each of the selected cases. The analysis of all the collected information was done in three steps (presented in detail in Chapter 3). First, each case was analysed in order to answer each individual cases' aims and research questions. These results led to reports, journal articles, and other outputs. Second,

[4] In this research the concept of community is used critically. Section 4.3 presents in detail the reason and problems with the term community.

a comparative analysis between the information from the cases and the literature review was used to answer the research sub-questions. This process was done by contrasting the results of each case in light of the other two (comparative resonance analysis; see Chapter 8), and then a thematic oriented analysis (in which each theme corresponds to one research sub-question) was conducted to find cross-cutting findings that would inform comprehensive answers to each research sub-question. Third, a systemic analysis of the previous findings was conducted to answer the main research question.

Fieldwork research in areas of high-intensity conflict that are also affected by disasters can be challenging. These scenarios present a number of associated risks and threats such as social and political instability, violent locations, and reduced access to water, food, electricity, transport and communication. Despite this, conducting fieldwork research was made possible by: thoroughly assessing risks and threats; selecting and making use of the proper methodologies; and implementing a proper risk management and fieldwork plan. A comprehensive research design which included all the elements mentioned above was one of the most important aspects of this investigation, laying the foundation on which the whole study was built. This research design is presented in Chapter 3.

The main outputs of this research are presented in the form of three peer-reviewed journal articles and one book chapter. This monograph is based on those independent publications, presenting some of them in the chapters centred around the three main case studies (chapter 5 on South Sudan, 6 about Afghanistan, and 7 on the case of Yemen). The study of disasters in HIC, however, was not limited to these cases. Multiple other activities and outputs also informed this research project. During the research process, parallel research projects and consultancies were undertaken. Some of them investigated countries different from the main cases, like Sierra Leone and Bangladesh, in associated topics like refugee crises. Dissemination of results also included reports, blog articles or research briefs. A sub-section of this introduction will present them in detail. Consequently, this research also has a component of action-research and active societal relevance, where the knowledge produced here seeks to directly inform transformative and collaborative change.

Research justification

In summary, the reasons for studying disaster in high-intensity conflict scenarios are four-fold:

First, the co-occurrence of conflict and disaster happens especially in places with widespread violent conflict or in places which are facing complex emergencies. Moreover, multiple studies demonstrate that the occurrence of disasters may affect social conflict (Nel and Righarts 2008; Nelson 2010; Omelicheva 2011) and, vice versa, social conflict affects the response to and the occurrence of disasters (Harris, Keen, and Mitchell 2013; Hilhorst, Mena, et al. 2019; Spiegel et al. 2007a; Wisner 2012). However, little political and

academic attention has been given to the unique challenges of disaster response and risk reduction in HIC scenarios.

Second, disaster response models and international agreements normally do not discuss scenarios where disasters occur in situations of conflict (Siddiqi 2018; Stein and Walch 2017; Walch 2018). Therefore, these frameworks are ill-equipped to guide disaster risk reduction and responses in these scenarios and there is still little research and knowledge that can sufficiently address this imbalance.

Third, various studies give an account of the common social and political base that disasters and conflicts share, stressing the need to deal with them in a coordinated manner and paying attention on the legitimacy aspect of the actions (Bankoff et al. 2004; Hilhorst 2013b; Wisner 2012). However, a lack of knowledge, policy frameworks and models prevent a better integration of efforts towards reducing the risk of conflict and disaster or a better integrated response to both.

Fourth, the methodological complexity associated with carrying out research in places with HIC and disasters means that these places are under-studied or addressed in an overly simplistic manner. However, despite the complexity of collecting and accessing information, this is also an opportunity.

This research was therefore undertaken as an opportunity to study disasters in HIC scenarios, both in terms of mapping ground level knowledge about their mutual relationship as well as developing methodology on conducting research in this context. Furthermore, it has been an opportunity to contribute with policies, practices and the governance of disaster and humanitarian aid in a context of high-intensity conflict based on the cases of South Sudan, Yemen, and Afghanistan as scenarios of HIC that are affected by disasters.

Finally, this study was conducted as part of the project 'When disasters meet conflict', a five-year research program funded by the Netherlands Research Council (NWO), under the VICI scheme. This project was carried out by a 5-person team, including Prof. Dr. Dorothea Hilhorst, Dr. Roanne van Voorst, and Isabelle Desportes and Samantha Melis conducting PhD research parallel to this dissertation, but focusing on low-intensity and post-conflict scenarios, respectively[5].

1.3. Research questions

Inspired by the information presented, the question that guided the research was:

How is disaster governance shaped and how are disaster response and disaster risk reduction promoted and implemented by aid and societal actors (state and non-state ones) in a context of high-intensity conflict, based on the cases of South Sudan (2017), Afghanistan (2018) and Yemen (2019)?

[5] More detailed information about the research project can be found in the following link: http://www.iss.nl/research/when_disaster_meets_conflict

A set of research sub-questions were followed to answer the main research question. Table 1 presents these sub-questions and the level of learning that was expected to be obtained.

Table 1 Research sub-questions and level of learning

	Research sub-questions	Level of learning
1.	How do disasters and conflict interact with one another in HIC scenarios? Which are the impacts, implications and challenges of conflict for disasters?	*Knowledge & Synthesis*: these questions seek to obtain descriptive knowledge and information
2.	What are the roles and relationships of different aid and society actors and which are the governance arrangements in disaster response and risk reduction?	
3.	How are decision-making and agenda-setting processes designed, promoted and implemented for disaster-related actions HIC scenarios?	*Knowledge & Analysis:* these objectives seek to obtain and analyse knowledge and information to develop or inform conclusions
4.	How can disaster response and risk reduction be implemented in conflict-affected scenarios?	
5.	How do disaster governance, response and risk reduction relate to humanitarian aid and development in HIC scenarios?	

1.4. Contributions

The proposed research is expected to contribute to five main areas:

i. On a theoretical level, this study will contribute to the fields of disaster and humanitarian aid studies:
   a. Particularly, helping bridge knowledge between both disciplines by presenting relevant commonalities and complementarities in theories and policies between both fields.
   b. Providing knowledge about disaster response, risk reduction and governance, and the interaction between different actors in high-intensity conflict scenarios.
   c. Reviewing and studying how relevant policies, frameworks (e.g. Sendai Framework for Action) and actions of disaster response, risk reduction and humanitarian aid unfold in context of high-intensity conflict.

ii. The results also contribute to reducing gaps in practice between actions implemented and promoted by development, humanitarian aid, disaster response, disaster risk reduction, and conflict. For instance, the project developed a manual on conflict analysis for disaster risk reduction projects.

iii. On a methodological level, this study generates knowledge on how to research and conduct fieldwork in disaster-affected zones and in high-intensity conflict scenarios:

a. This includes the development of the 'Security guidelines for field research in complex, remote and hazardous places' (Hilhorst et al. 2016), the coordination of the translation of them into Arabic, Spanish and French, and the coordination and delivery of an academic course and training on Safety and Security for master's students, PhD researchers and academics.
b. The development and implementation of a thorough ethical approach aims to better inform more ethical research practices in places affected by disasters and conflict.

iv. On an academic level, by the publication of several reports, journal articles, and other research outputs like blog posts and research briefs, this project contributes not only to the body of knowledge of the topics addressed, but also to the ways in which scientific knowledge is divulged.

v. On a social and humanitarian level, it is expected that with the results and its application, this research contributes to better responses to disaster in conflict scenarios. For instance, this research is part of a larger project. It also developed educational material for practitioners and engaged in a wide range of knowledge-sharing strategies, making its results available for a wide range audience. By using the above, the study is expected to contribute to a reduction in the following: human fatalities, people affected, people's vulnerability, environmental impact, and economic cost associated with disasters in HIC. In addition, the resilience of society, people's preparedness, sustainable development, and disaster risk reduction are expected to be strengthened, which in turn might contribute to peace and stability in the long-term.

Section 9.6 presents a critical analysis of these contributions, how they were met, and the desired versus anticipated impact of these contributions and research project.

As part of the contribution and impact of this research project, the results and analysis of this study are also informed by my participation in visiting scholar programs, consultancies, and other research projects conducted during the time that this PhD research was developed. The previous activities resulted in several outputs summarized in Table 2 (and presented in detail in Chapter 0), including presentations in conferences or as speaker in seminar and webinars, and the training delivery, all of which diversified the ways in which knowledge and results are shared and discussed.

Table 2 Summary of outputs and activities

Type of output	Number	Type of activity	Number
Reports	5	Conference presentations	10
Journal Articles	4	Other official presentations	6
Book chapter	2	Delivery of training and capacitation	4
Manuals	2	MOOC (Massive online course) participation	1
Research briefs	3	Guest lectures (sessions)	7
Blog posts	8	-	-

In summary, the research seeks to contribute on a methodological level (strengthening or developing new methodologies), on an academic and theoretical level (bridging fields, reducing gaps in knowledge, and generating new knowledge and practice) and on an environmental-social level to reduce the impacts of disaster in our societies, especially in fragile and conflict-affected situations.

1.5. Outline of this dissertation

This dissertation is divided in nine chapters (see Figure 3). This first **Chapter 1** presents a general introduction to the topic and lays down the research problem. Later on presents the main theoretical and methodological approaches to the research problem, setting a framework for the development of a research question and sub-questions to address the problematique described. It also present which are the expected contributions that this research expect to achieve by answering its main research question.

Figure 3 Structure of the dissertation

Research problem, justification, and question	Chapter 1
Cases overview Methodological and theoretical frameworks	Chapter 2 Chapter 3 and 4
Case studies, results, and analysis	Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8
Discussion and conclusion	Chapter 9

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 presents the main methodological and theoretical frameworks of this research. **Chapter 2** presents an overview to the main three cases (South Sudan, Afghanistan and Yemen), which seeks to inform better the reading of the methodology selected and provide contextualise information for the literature review. They also expand on information regarding the conflict and disaster dynamic of each case not presents in the main chapters of each case. **Chapter 3** then informs about the research design, how the cases were selected, and the main methods used for data collection and analysis. It also delve into fieldwork planning and the ethical consideration that guided this research project. **Chapter 4** sets the main theoretical framework of this research project. It is based on an extensive literature review on, mainly, disaster, humanitarian aid, development, and conflict studies. It also draws on interviews and the review of grey literature. This chapter is an amended and extended version of a published peer-reviewed book chapter.

Chapters 5 to 8 comprise the main analyse and results. From **Chapter 5 to 7** are presented the cases of South Sudan, Afghanistan, and Yemen, correspondingly. These chapters are based on journal articles already published or presented to the journal. **Chapter 8** presents first a comparative analysis between the cases,

informing how the results of each of them inform, contribute, validate and provide perspective to the result of the other two cases. A second section in this chapter answer to each research sub-question via crosscutting findings across the cases.

Chapter 9 finally present an answer to the main research question and the sections where that answer and the main research conclusion are discussed critically. This critical section the implications in policy and practice of the results obtained. This chapter also present the main limitations encountered during this research process and discuss my position as a researcher. It also details the main theoretical and methodological contribution of this research project. It finally offers a review of cross-cutting topics present in this research, many of which are now possible research topics for future studies on the relationship of disaster and violent conflict.

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2. OVERVIEW OF THE CASES

The main results of this research are based on the cases of South Sudan, Afghanistan and Yemen. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 present information in more detail in addition to the main results from the cases. The aim of this brief chapter is to present an introduction to the countries, heir conflict and disaster histories, and how these phenomena interact. This information also seeks to better inform the reasons for their selection as cases (which is presented in further detail in Section 3.2).

The justification for this chapter is twofold. First, the chapters informing the cases are based on journal articles written in a limited number of words (usually no more than eight thousand), which narrows the ability to give a proper account of the cases. Second, there is relevant information about the cases to know but is not presented in the articles for not having been part of the main foci of the articles. For example, in the case of South Sudan there is extremely reduced information accounting for the country's hazards and disaster risk profile. Therefore, this chapter will take the opportunity to systematise all the information collected and present relevant and novel information about disasters in South Sudan.

2.1. South Sudan: Disaster and conflict history

South Sudan is the youngest country in the world, formed after its independence from Sudan on July 9, 2011. It is located in east Africa and is bordered by Uganda and Kenya to the south, Ethiopia and the Central African Republic to the east, Sudan to the north and to the south-west by the Democratic Republic of the Congo (see Map 1). Their independence came after more than 40 years of conflict between the south and north of what was then Sudan. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed in January 2005 provided the south of the country with a six-year period of autonomy before a regional referendum. In 2011 the referendum resulted in South Sudan's independence and self-governance. However, conflict between factions of the government and an acute economic crisis led to an internal crisis and civil war in 2013. As a result of the civil war and violent conflict, the country encountered a severe humanitarian crisis.

Administratively, since October 2015, the country has been divided into 28 states by Presidential decree, replacing its historical ten states. In January 2017 a new decree subdivides some of the new states, creating a new 32-state administrative system. Notwithstanding the previous decrees, today there are still no official maps with the new states. Therefore, most international and national organisations still operate with the previously established states. In this research I use the regions and maps - with 28 states - provided and used by United Nations (see Map 1) because this facilitates the analysis and reading of the information collected, which is in large accounts from aid actors.

Map 1 South Sudan territory and location

Map Sources: UNCS, SIM, Natural Earth.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined. Final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined. Map created in Jan 2012.

Source: OCHA (2012)

South Sudan is also a country prone to multiple hazards in different regions. After several interviews and visits to libraries, universities and research centres in South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya and Ethiopia, it was possible to note how challenging it is to find information about the possible hazards and disasters affecting the country. Therefore, using information from the interviews, documents collected, and other activities (see Table 3) I attempted to develop an account on the country's hazards and disasters profile, and the coping mechanisms developed by the people affected by them.

The following paragraphs systemise information on the droughts, earthquakes and floods in the country.

Drought: Drought is present in almost every region of the country: Eastern Equatoria, Northern and West Bhar el Ghazal, Warrap, Unity, Lakes, Jonglei and Central Equatoria states. Historically, the most recent studies presented by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the World Food Program (WFP) (ICPAC 2017; ICPAC and WFP 2017) showed some degree of severity of the seasonal droughts in the country since 2012. During the periods of September-December 2016 and March-May 2016, the areas mentioned above present severe to extreme drought conditions. The previous statements are consistent with what some interviews revealed. Local people from affected areas identified that the drought has been present for three to four years already. Local people from greater Bahr el Ghazal even timed it as occurring for six years already, which again, is consistent with the previous IGAD-WFP report. In terms of its ecological foundations, droughts in South Sudan are characterized by: a) extended dry (lean) season, b) reduced

waterfall rates, and c) increased evapotranspiration due to higher average temperatures and reduced vegetation coverage of soil and other surfaces.

Table 3 Total number of research participants and data collection activities[6]

	Data collection activities and tools		
Actors	Interviews	Meetings participation	Field visits
United Nations	8	4	3
International NGOs	7	4	10
National NGOs	2	2	2
National Government	2	4	2
Local Government / Authority	2	2	5
Donors	3	0	2
Private Sector and Local Institutions	2	1	3
People affected by disasters	6	1	8
Academic	2	2	0
Total 1 (sum of activities based on actors present)*	33	20	19
Total 2 (number of activities)*	29	12	11

* Total 1 represent the sum of actors reached by each activity; therefore, in one activity two or more actor were reached. Total 2 represent the net number of activates formally carried out,

Traditional coping, adaptation and response mechanisms by drought-affected people include: selling surplus from previous seasons, buying non-produced/non-harvested products and in emergency cases, eating seeds, leaves and roots that normally are not part of their diet. Displacement is the last way in which affected people respond to drought. Further, this displacement is usually affected by conflict that reduces access and transportation. Drought and the response to it present multiple social foundations. Extended lean season and seasonal droughts are always recurrent in the county. However, local people have historically relied on their traditional coping and adapting mechanisms to respond and thrive during this event. The on-going conflict in the country has affected the capacity of local, national and international actors to prepare and respond to droughts in several ways:

- Reduced displacement between regions and closed borders have shrunk the markets. Local people cannot rely on buying the products that they traditionally have acquired in the market (like sugar, oil and salt) or that they are unable to produce due to the drought.
- Without access to non-local food, people resort to actions like eating the seeds collected from the previous season. This results in a lack of seeds for the next season and acute reduction in food cultivation.

[6] Most of these interviews, meetings and field visits and meetings also informed and were analysed for Chapter 5. The Case of South Sudan.

- The conflict has included the looting and stealing of: a) food that people are saving for the rainy/cultivation season, b) stocks of food, materials and seeds from I/NGOs and UN agencies aiming to aid people during the lean season, and c) people's cars, motorcycles, batteries, and multiple farming and trading supplies.
- The economic crisis, including the inflation facing the country, implies that the prices of the products available and available on the market are extremely high (up to 400% higher than usual in some cases[7]), reducing people's purchasing power.
- Similarly, the prices of the products that local people try to sell are reduced. For example, a goat could be sold for 40% of the price for which it could have been sold during the previous season.
- The conflict has diverted funds and projects aiming to reduce the impact of lean seasons:
    - The drilling and maintenance of boreholes have been reduced to actions provided by NGOs and UN agencies mostly under emergency programs These programs, however, are often confined to areas directly affected by violent conflict and places where displaced people are being sheltered (Protection of Civilians camp sites, host communities, and other temporary locations for displaced populations).
    - Although some organisations are working to maintain boreholes under more long-term and developmental programs, all informants declared a reduction in funds available for these activities and the difficulties of implementing them in the country, mainly due to security constraints.

Floods. Floods are also recurrent in South Sudan, mainly in the states of Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Warrap, Unity, Lakes, Jonglei and Central Equatoria. Flooding in large areas of the country is a seasonal and regular phenomenon, and as such people have learned to live with it. Historically, people living in flooding areas have modified their villages and surroundings in three main ways to be able to cope with them. The *tukuls* (traditional grass-roof huts) are buildings raised from the ground level. Small constructions for storing food, grains, seeds and animals can take the same shape as the tukuls. In some areas of Unity, whole villages settle on small 'hills' that become small islands during rainy seasons. In Northern Bahr el Ghazal, due to the flooding associated with the overflow of rivers, people have built dykes all along the riverside, thus raising the height of the riverbed. Some people also mentioned that during the rainy season they move to other areas in the regions, and come back to their previous settlements after the season. In northern Bahr el Ghazal, there are two main roads with some sections built one meter above ground level. Local authorities mentioned the relevance of these in allowing local access and driving. Although these roads have some drainage pipes crossing from one side of the road to the other, local people mentioned that in some areas the roads acted like dykes, with these dykes producing floods in areas and villages that would otherwise see the water wash away. The social foundations of floods in South Sudan are highly related with the conflict. During conflict, in the mobilisation of armed groups and as battle strategies, multiples dykes end up being destroyed. Conflict,

[7] Information obtained during field visit to six different markets and multiple small shops in three regions of the country: Jubek (Juba), Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Unity. Later on, the information was also mentioned by one NGO staff member and one UN official.

as mentioned in the case of floods, also reduces people's capacities to displace. Finally, the reduction of vegetation due to the compound effect of drought and conflict facilitates the running and flowing of waters and with them come floods and flash floods. The economic crisis, including the inflation facing the country, implies that the prices of the products available in the markets are extremely high (up to 400% higher than usual), reducing people's purchasing power. This turns regular droughts into a disaster when people are incapacitated not only in their ability to harvest foods but also to buy it.

Earthquakes. South Susan is also prone to earthquakes in the states of Central Equatoria and Eastern Equatoria. Historically, the last major earthquakes (registered) in the country occurred in May 1990. The first happened on the 19th of May (7.5 on the Richter Scale[8]), and another occurred on the 24th of the same month (7.1 on the Richter Scale). Both events hit the Jubek area with epicentres 100 and 75 kilometres northeast of Juba, the state capital and major urban centre of the country, respectively. As presented in the report on the events provided by the former United Nations Disaster Relief Organization (UNDRO) (1990), these two earthquakes generated substantial damage to private and public edifications, but no loss of life or serious injuries were reported. Interviews and informal conversations with local people in and around Juba presented dissimilar opinions. Some informants acknowledge the relevance and impact of the events, but others indicated that although it was scary, there was no major damage. Some informants reported that the reduced level of urbanisation of the area those days (few and low buildings) had a positive effect in reducing the impact of the earthquakes. Due to the reduced level of information regarding earthquakes in the country, it was not possible to find technical information on the geological foundations of earthquakes specifically for South Sudan. Via interviews and studies of the phenomenon in neighbouring countries (Uganda and Kenya), it is possible to see that earthquakes in the South Sudan are related with Rif Valleys seismic events. Regarding traditional coping, adaptation and response mechanisms, only a few were identified in the country. In some interviews, private builders and architects mentioned having constructed seismic-resistant buildings; however, it was not possible to collect data proving the previous and many other interviewees do not believe it to be true. Important to note is that, with exception of people in the Ministry of Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Response, research participants are highly unaware of the risks of an earthquake. Some local people in Juba remember past events but they do not see it as a risk. Only two informants mentioned being worried that the two quakes in 2016 and indicate that bigger ones may come. This lack of historical memory of disaster is important, because a way to reduce the risk of disasters or prepare people better to them is to have a good memory of their occurrence (Knowles 2013; Schenk 2015). The main social foundations that a geological quake became a disaster in South Sudan are:

- No building regulations are informing seismic-resistant constructions in areas prone to earthquakes

[8] There is no official study informing the earthquake size in moment magnitude scale

- There is no popular education in the prone areas with regards to how to prepare for and respond to an earthquake
- There is a low level of awareness of the risk of an earthquake in the region
- In case of a major earthquake, there are no national or local institutions, procedures or people who would be prepared to respond

On top of the disasters mentioned above, the country also faces regular bushfires and cholera and malaria outbreaks. Regarding the latter, cholera and malaria, large humanitarian campaigns have responded to them. For malaria multiple humanitarian actors provide people with mosquito nets for prevention and provide prophylaxis medicine for those who have been infected. In the case of cholera there has been educational campaigns aiming to teach people on how to prevent and recognise the symptoms of the disease. Treatment centres and emergency response teams are deployed in several areas of the country to treat the infection of the bacteria and to control the outbreaks.

In both cases of malaria and cholera, medical personnel interviewed mentioned that having large groups of populations living together with reduced hygiene practices is the main vector explaining the outbreaks. The conflict in the country has produced a large amount of people who have been displaced and who live in protection of civilians sites (POC) or formal and informal camps for internally displaced people. Similarly, in the case of cholera, reduced hygiene practises, such as washing hands before eating, is one of the main reasons for the spread of the infection, in combination with displacement. Culturally, people eat with their hand from common plates, which is a second factor contributing to the outbreaks, as mentioned in some interviews. Finally, in most settlements in the country the practice of open defecation is normal (defecation outside of latrines or toilets), which contributes to the above.

Regarding the conflict and disasters relationships, conflict turns natural phenomena and hazards into disasters, as explained before. Moreover, the floods and droughts have mixed impacts on the conflict and the response. For instance, floods reduce the level of violent conflict in South Sudan, as there are access constraints for all parties.[9] Floods and rainy seasons also come together with cholera and malaria season, inhibiting soldiers' and armed parties' ability to fight. At the same time, floods restrict humanitarian actors' access to affected areas by increasing the cost of responding, chiefly due to the needs to reach places using flight services such as helicopters.

Droughts, however, intensify the conflict due to the use of hunger as a military strategy in South Sudan (similar results for South Sudan and other countries presented in De Waal 1991, 1997; Gaffey 2017; Maxwell and Majid 2015). Extended drought degraded people's livelihoods, creating the base for future conflicts.

[9] The case of Afghanistan presented in Chapter 6, also shows similar results regarding floods and macro-national conflict. See Mena et al. (2019) as well.

Moreover, as seen above, the current conflict already diminished peoples' coping mechanism and affected their regular livelihoods.

2.2. Afghanistan: Disaster and conflict history[10]

Conflict is not new for Afghanistan. The internationally known conflict between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban can be traced to 1996 when the Taliban took control of the country. They seized control in the intervention led by the United States in 2001 in response to the 9/11 attacks. After this intervention, widespread international humanitarian aid, including from most UN agencies and international NGOs arrived into Afghanistan, starting long-term humanitarian and development operations (Mena et al. 2019). Today the country is still affected by conflict between the Government of Afghanistan, the Taliban and other armed groups. As presented by Jackson (2018), up to 70% of Afghanistan is under the influence of state-contesting armed groups, including the Taliban, ISIS and the Haqqani Group. Due to this conflictive scenario, Afghanistan is usually ranked with high indices of state fragility (OECD, 2018: 26). Afghanistan is located at the intersection of Central and South Asia. It is bordered by Iran to the west, China to the northeast, Pakistan to the east and south and by Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan to the north (see Map 2).

In terms of disasters, Afghanistan is commonly seen 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). The country disaster profile includes droughts, earthquakes, landslides, storms, floods and avalanches (ARC, 2016; NEPA and UNEP, 2015; World Bank and GFDRR, 2017). The number of people affected by these disasters can vary from 200,000 people some years up to a surprising number of more than 4 million in 2018 (OCHA 2018a:4). The number of people affected in 2018 is related to a severe drought in the north of the country, which also led to the displacement of more than 275,000 people (OCHA 2018b). What is more, disaster are accountable for over 20,000 casualties since 1980 and 2017 (World Bank and GFDRR, 2017).

[10] This section systematises information from two main documents (different than the article presented in Chapter 6) previously published by me about disasters in Afghanistan:

- Mena R, Hilhorst D and Peters K (2019) *Disaster risk reduction and protracted violent conflict: The case of Afghanistan*. September. Overseas Development Institute (ODI) - International Institute of Social Sciences (ISS). Available at: https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12882.pdf.
- Mena R (2019) Disaster Risk Reduction in a high-conflict setting: The case of Afghanistan. 6, Research Brief, March. The Hague, The Netherlands: International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), EUR. Available at: https://www.iss.nl/en/research/research-projects/when-disaster-meets-conflict/societal-engagement.

Disaster and conflict mutually affect each other in Afghanistan. The conflict has been acknowledged to affect the disaster occurrence in the country. For example, multiple official documents from the Government of Afghanistan account for how the conflict has affected disaster prevention infrastructure or reduced the capacities of the country to respond to disasters (Government of Afghanistan, 2003b; 2011; 2014).

Map 2 Afghanistan territory and location

Map Sources: UNCS, ESRI, The Times Atlas of the World.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. Map created in Sep 2013.

Source: OCHA (2013)

Disaster impacts can also exacerbate conflict dynamics. For instance, drought has been reported to increase peoples' vulnerability and poverty, inducing young men to join militia groups for the payment they can receive (UNESCAP, 2018). Previous research has also shown how multiple DRR projects can also lead to conflict among communities in Afghanistan, for example, creating disputes over who would benefit the most from the projects (Heijmans 2012; Mena et al. 2019). Recognising this dynamic conflict-disaster relationship, the government of Afghanistan indicated that '[t]he 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).

2.3. Yemen: Disaster and conflict history

The Republic of Yemen is located in the Arabian Peninsula in western Asia. It is bordered by the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea to the south, Saudi Arabia to the north, the Red Sea to the west, and Oman to the east (see Map 3). After the unification of the former North Yemen and South Yemen territories, the Republic of

Yemen was formed in 1990. After multiple internal crises and following the Arab Spring protest, numerous manifestations and revolutionary movements were raised in the country in 2011, resulting in violent clashes and unfolding and intensifying tumults for the following two years (Edwards 2019). Since the second half of 2014, civil war has broken out between the Houthi Islamic political movement, and Yemen's internationally recognised (IR) government and the head of its state, President Abdrabbuh Mansur Hadi.

Since 2015 multiple clashes have submerged the country in a civil war that resulted in governance vacuums in many territories, which led to other groups taking control over specific regions, like Al Qaeda in northeast Yemen. With borders and controlled areas changing constantly as the war develops, the most prevalent controlled areas and governance systems are the Houthi Government controlling most of the south of Yemen, and the IR government controlling the north. Map 3 presents in more detail the state of territory control in March 2019.

Five years of conflict have resulted in a socio-economic crisis (OCHA 2018e). In 2018 Yemen ranked as the third country in the world with the highest levels of state fragility, and one of the lowest in terms of human development (The Fund for Peace 2018; UNDP 2018). The country is not only the poorest in the region but one of the poorest in the world. Food insecurity in the country has also reached acute levels, as 'nearly a quarter of a million people were estimated to be experiencing catastrophic food consumption gaps (Phase5) without Humanitarian Food Assistance' (IPC 2019:1).

Map 3 Yemen territory and location

Map Sources: UNCS, ESRI.
The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Map created in Sep 2013.

Source: OCHA (2013)

Economically, after almost fifteen years of constant increases in its GDP reaching over US$43 billion, since 2015 and the ensuing acute crisis the country's GDP has declined by more than 40%, reaching no more than 26.9 billion in 2018 (The World Bank 2019). As presented by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP 2019:52), 'conflict has already set back Yemen's human development by 21 years'. The level of people's displacement is also an important negative outcome of the conflict, the country's socio-economic crisis, and other disasters. While 0.3 million people were displaced internally in the country in 2013, by 2018 that number had risen to 3.4 million internally displaced people (IDPs), including migrants and refugees affected by conflict and disasters (IMDC 2019; OCHA 2018e; UNHCR 2019). As a result of the above, Yemen has been described as experiencing the largest humanitarian crisis in the world at the moment (Al Jazeera 2017; UN News 2018).

In terms of disasters, the country has been affected by recurring cyclones, earthquakes, droughts, and floods. Related to this, a World Bank report accounts that between 1980 and 2010, 81% of disasters in the Middle East and North Africa region concentrate in just six countries[11], with Yemen being one of them (The World Bank 2014). On the one hand, Yemen suffers from '"absolute" water scarcity, with an internal renewable water resources rate of less than 100 m3 per inhabitant per year" (FAO 2018:8). On the other hand, floods and flash floods have become recurrent, affecting more than 70,000 people in over 10 out of 20 governorates in 2019 (OCHA 2019c). Heavy rains and flash floods have also affected humanitarian aid and relief provision as it 'damaged shelters, clinics, child friendly spaces and classrooms, and spoiled stocks of food rations and hygiene kits, and flooded WASH facilities' (OCHA 2019c).

Nowadays, droughts and floods, compounded with the conflict, have resulted in a severe water crisis that incudes decreased access to drinkable water, abridged or failed crop production, and land degradation, thus increasing the country's levels of food insecurity (FAO 2018; OCHA 2018e). The conflict, moreover, has deteriorated people's coping mechanisms (Edwards 2019; World Bank 2017).

2.4. Conclusion

This brief chapter together with presenting novel and contextual information on the intersection of conflict and disaster in South Sudan, Afghanistan, and Yemen, also everywhere manifest how the conflict aggravates the impact of the disaster and how disasters and conflict are historically and culturally interrelated. It also highlights the relevance in disaster analysis to consider the history and sociology of the conflict dynamics for each country or specific context.

[11] The other countries mentioned are: Algeria, Djibouti, the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, and Morocco

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

This research project used a qualitative, small-N and cross-sectional *multiple case study* research methodology. It draws on quantitative measurements at times to better inform the cases and analyses some aspects of the information collected.

Understanding disciplines as 'branches of expert knowledge each with their own paradigms involving methods of addressing issues' (Harding, Hendriks, and Faruqi 2009:149), this research was carried out drawing on and building upon insights from different disciplines (Harding et al. 2009; Khagram et al. 2010; Klein, Wilson, and Eberly 2009). On the one hand, studying disasters involves knowing about social vulnerability and for that, a broad range of social disciplines are involved, including sociology, anthropology, and economics. Disasters also comprise environmental and ecological knowledge. Studying violent social conflicts, on the other hand, covers several fields of knowledge too, from legal matters, historical and cultural factors, to economic and humanitarian theories.

Although the research draws on different disciplines, this was not done eclectically or randomly, but tied together adopting a constructivist paradigm, understanding a paradigm 'as a set of basic beliefs […] that represents a worldview that defines, for its holder, the nature of the "world", the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts' (Guba and Lincoln 1994:107). A constructivist paradigm is used here by considering that both disasters and conflict are ontologically relative and constructed on specific realities. From an epistemological point of view, findings are created and not objectively obtained from the field. Similarly, disasters and conflicts are not objectively presented in any particular environment or context. They unfold from framing processes, history, politics, power relationships, and from multiple different agendas clashing, negotiating and modelling what disasters can be. Not recognising this composite and changing nature of disaster will always limit the possibilities of studying them. Consequently, to study them requires deconstructing their realities.

Regarding the reasoning used to answer the main research question, this is *analytical explanatory research,* which seeks to describe the characteristics of a situation and to determine relationships between variables and actors (Brown and Suter 2012; Thyer 2001). Based on the novelty of the research question, it also shows exploratory characteristics, but it does not remain at this level. Rather, it seeks to describe and analyse further the reality that is studied (Babbie 2000; Jupp 2006). Regarding the reasoning used to answer the main

research question, an inductive approach is used: from the particular analysis of the data collected, a broader idea and knowledge was obtained to inform the research sub-questions.

Based on the above, the research does not seek to contribute at the macro-level of theorisation; instead, based on its ontological and epistemological position, it seeks to contribute at meso or mid-range level theory by comprehensively reviewing the main frameworks and concepts of disaster and humanitarian aid studies, and revises them in light of learnings obtained the cases of South Sudan, Afghanistan and Yemen.

On a temporal scale consideration, this was designed as cross-sectional research, with data collected on a specific period of time for each case, in contrast to longitudinal studies where the research involves a sample measured repeatedly over a period of time (Hernández, Fernández, and Baptista 1994; Lavrakas 2008).

Case study research methodology was selected for its potential to produce strong conceptual validity, so that causal mechanisms from complex context, as those sought here, can be explored (George and Bennett 2005; Lewis-Beck, Bryman, and Liao 2004). A case, as presented by Gerring (2007:18), is 'a spatially delimited phenomenon (a unit) observed at a single point in time or over some period of time'. Multiple case study research, hence, refers to the intensive study of more than one single case, but not too many as each of them must be studied in-depth (Gerring 2017). However, as the same author mentions, 'the fewer the cases, the more intensively they are studied' (2007:20). Therefore, the research focused on *small-N analytical units*, allowing me to include and analyse contextual information of each case together with more general transcendent knowledge (Abbott 2004:58).

Having a small-N strategy also allowed me to have different foci in each case (Gerring 2017): South Sudan focused on decision-making processes associated with the provision of humanitarian aid (including disaster response and risk reduction), Afghanistan on DRR, and Yemen on linking development and prevention to relief. By having these multiple points of focus I was able to engage with different literature and debates in each case, understand different angles of the research problematique and develop research outputs with a clearer focus, allowing for better engagement with specific stakeholders. For example, this multiple foci strategy allowed me to write academic articles for each case study, develop research briefs and engage in multiple meetings and other knowledge-sharing activities, as described in Section 1.4 on outputs and activities. Along these different foci, in each case I also delved into the core research questions. This process allowed me to build a robust set of knowledge about the main interrogatives of this study and to refine, ratify and find nuances and blind spots in my results by contrasting the findings of each different case. In Chapter 9 'Discussion and conclusion', the results of analysing this core set of findings is used to inform answers for each research sub-question and to draw main conclusions.

3.2. Case selection

The selection of the cases used a rationale aiming to find the best cases places affected by high-intensity conflict and a disaster. To do so, several preconditions were defined for each case: (1) be identified as affected by high intensity conflict according to the definition provided in the Introduction; and (2) be or have been affected by a disaster related to natural hazards, significant enough to require international humanitarian aid response. Based on these preconditions and the need to facilitate the definition and analysis of the cases, I decided to define countries as cases. This allowed me to have clear boundaries of the cases to study its history, specific policies, frameworks and interventions, actors across local, national and international spheres, and to study in a more informed way the HIC scenario that each case represented.

Selection of the specific cases was done in two phases. First, all the countries that comply with preconditions regarding their levels of conflict and states of disaster were pre-selected. Second, among those pre-selected countries, the particular cases were selected using specific case selection strategies while also considering the research objective and the results that would be obtained. The intent of this second phase was to give the research project enough flexibility to find the best cases that would inform the research question and research sub-questions. Due to multiple factors, it was impossible to predict at the beginning of the research what all possible country cases would be; for example, there were unknowns surrounding security and access constraints, how conflicts will evolve, or even if new possible cases would appear. Therefore, only one case was selected at the beginning of the project, but the second case was selected based on the results obtained in the first case and the specific information that was needed to keep answering the research questions. Finally, the third case was selected considering the results and knowledge gathered during the first two cases. This strategy proved to be very useful for investigating disasters in HIC in depth, considering how dynamics these scenarios are.

Based on the previous, for the first phase, the pre-selection of country cases, a diverse set of indices, measurements and studies from different sources were used. Table 4 lists all the countries meeting the mentioned preconditions in 2016 (the year when the first case selection was made).

Among these pre-selected cases and based on Gerring's (2007, 2017) techniques, for the second phase of selection a two-level case selection strategy was used: (1) all cases that are *typical cases* in terms of the intensity of the conflict: high; and (2) the *most diverse* between them in terms of: the type of disaster and attention from the international community to the disaster; attention from the international community to the conflict; presence and functionality of central government; amount of funding for the response; the political conditions that determine the amount of attention given to the conflict or the disaster; the approach of aid agencies and the way they operate or if they have the capacity to do so; the way local society responds;

and the attention from the international community over the disaster and the conflict (Apthorpe 1997; Davey, Borton, and Foley 2013; Hilhorst and Jansen 2010; Maxwell and Majid 2015; Wood, Apthorpe, and Borton 2001a). Table 5 shows the differences between suitable cases in terms of the first criteria (being a typical case of a HIC scenario). However, knowing which of them are more diverse regarding the second criteria was more difficult. The reason is that the amount and quality of the information available on these countries was either low or non-existent, due to difficulties in obtaining it and the extent to which it had (or had not) been produced. In some cases, as with South Sudan and Somalia, there were qualitative assessments and numerous news pieces accounting for the severity of the drought (e.g. AFP 2016; OCHA 2016b), but it was not possible to find sufficient large-N quantitative assessments on the same variables. For instance, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report, from the Famine Early Warning System (FEWS), has established that South Sudan was certainly under Phase 4 (food security emergency) in some regions, but could not rule out that some territories were already in Phase 5 (catastrophe-famine), due to difficulties in collecting reliable data on the real situation (Action Against Hunger, 2016; Hopkins, 2016; Parker, 2016).

Having the information presented in Table 4, and following the preconditions and research strategy presented above (which considers a small-N with cases with specific research foci) South Sudan was selected as the first case. Firstly, it was (and it is) a country with humanitarian response deployed (it has been ranked third and second globally for countries with largest humanitarian actions by amount of funding in 2015 and 2016, correspondingly). Secondly, it is highly affected by drought and floods (AFP 2016; IPC 2015) and also by high intensity levels of conflict. This also means that it is not advised to visit the country, travel in it is perceived as highly risky, the overall level of peace is minimal based on Global Peace Index, and state fragility[12] is very high, as presented in Table 4.

South Sudan was also a case of a country where humanitarian needs structurally surpass response capacities, allowing me to delve into questions like how aid actors decide where to deploy their limited resources or when and how it is decided to respond to a natural hazard-related disaster or to people affected by conflict dynamics. South Sudan also presents the relevance of working towards disaster prevention as it is difficult to respond in HIC scenarios (see Chapter 5). However, my research in South Sudan informed me about the lack of space for DRR. Therefore, my second case focused on a high-intensity conflict context known to have certain body of practice with DRR, like Afghanistan.

[12] In Chapter 4, the concept of state fragility is discussed in a critical and reflective manner.

Table 4 Pre-selection of cases

Country	Recurrent Disasters	World Risk Index (2015) to Disasters * Total		Fragile States Index (2015) **		INFORM Risk Index of Humanitarian Crisis and Disaster***	GDI - Global Peace Index (2015) ****	Dutch Travel Advice *****	International SOS Travel Risk Map (2016) Travel Risk	Total humanitarian funding per Country (http://fts.unocha.org) 2015 ($US)	2016, June ($US)
South Sudan	Drought (very high)	N/D (Very High qualitative assessments)		114.5	Very High Fragility	7.9	3383	red	Extreme Travel Risk	1,364.4	481.8
Somalia	Drought (High)	N/D = no data		114	Very High Fragility	8.7	3307	red	Extreme Travel Risk	595.6	286.0
Afghanistan	Drought (medium), Earthquake Floods	9.55 %	High	107.9	High Fragility	7.9	3427	red	Extreme Travel Risk	431.6	178.7
Yemen	Cyclones, Floods, and Drought	6.00 %	Medium	108.1	High Fragility	7.5	2751	red	Extreme Travel Risk	1,486.1	382.9
Syrian Arab Republic	Drought (medium), Storm	5.59 %	Medium	107.9	High Fragility	6.6	3645	red	Extreme Travel Risk	2,354.5	1,165.6
Central African Republic	Drought (n/d)	7.02 %	Medium	111.9	Very High Fragility	8.3	3332	red	Extreme Travel Risk	384.9	67.3
Mali	Drought, Floods	8.75 %	High	93.1	Alert	6.6	2310	red / orange	Extreme Travel Risk	206.3	116.5
DR of the Congo	Drought, Floods, Earthquake	N/D = no data		109.7	High Fragility	6.9	3085	orange / red	High Travel Risk	514.4	141.8
Pakistan	Earthquake Flood	7.03 %	Medium	102.9	High Fragility	6.4	3049	orange / red	High Travel Risk	327.1	68.3
Chad	Drought	11.05 %	Very High	108.4	High Fragility	6.0	2429	orange / red	High Travel Risk	286.5	71.9

* Measures the risk of disaster as a result of an extreme natural event (http://www.worldriskreport.org/)

** Compound Index based on multiple indicators. The higher the value, the higher the State Fragility (http://fsi.fundforpeace.org/rankings-2015)

*** Index made by multiple UN and international organizations based on three dimensions: hazard and exposure (to both human and natural events), vulnerability and lack of coping capacity. Scale from 1-very low to 10-very high, with scores over 7 indicating high levels of risk (http://www.inform-index.org/Results/Global)

**** Index built to measure the level peacefulness of a country, based on the level of security and safety in the society, level of militarization and level of conflict, both internal and international (http://www.visionofhumanity.org/). The higher the value, the lower the level of peacefulness (and higher the level of insecurity and conflict). The lowest score (indicating the highest level of state peace) was obtained by Iceland with a score of 1148. The highest value (lowest level of peace) was Syria with a score of 3645.

***** The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a Travel Advice compendium listing information by country. Based on the level of security, the country has developed an advisory system with 4 categories: red (not advisable), orange (only necessary trips), yellow (beware, security risks), and green (no special risk advice).

Afghanistan was a case where DRR was practised in conflict conditions, and it had also matched the pre-conditions defined above. Afghanistan was highlighted for being a case affected by several disasters. On top of the drought present since 2017, it has experienced floods and a 7.5 magnitude earthquake in 2015 left over 100,000 people in need for humanitarian aid (OCHA 2015a). Also, the protracted conflicts and wars in the last decades have accumulated almost 2 million casualties (Dowling and Menning 2015:4), and the present conflict, from 2015, has also taken thousands of casualties, raising the fragility of the state to high levels. Additionally, its body of practice on DRR and other disaster-related agendas provided an opportunity to better understand disaster governance arrangements in a HIC scenario.

Yemen was selected at later stages of the research, looking for the best case that together with meeting the aforementioned conditions, could also delve into the research questions and the results obtained in the cases of South Sudan and Afghanistan. Particularly, the first two cases demonstrated how HIC scenarios are moments of protracted crisis, which many times have seen relevant development-related interventions before HIC levels and, with that levels of conflict, assistance chiefly turning to focus on humanitarian aid and relief actions. The main question here was (and as part of the general research sub-questions too) what happens with development and DRR histories when conflict erupts? Yemen is a case with a strong and recent history of development and the war started relatively recently, all of which highlighted Yemen as the perfect case to delve into all of these research inquiries.

Table 5 Most diverse cases' conditions.

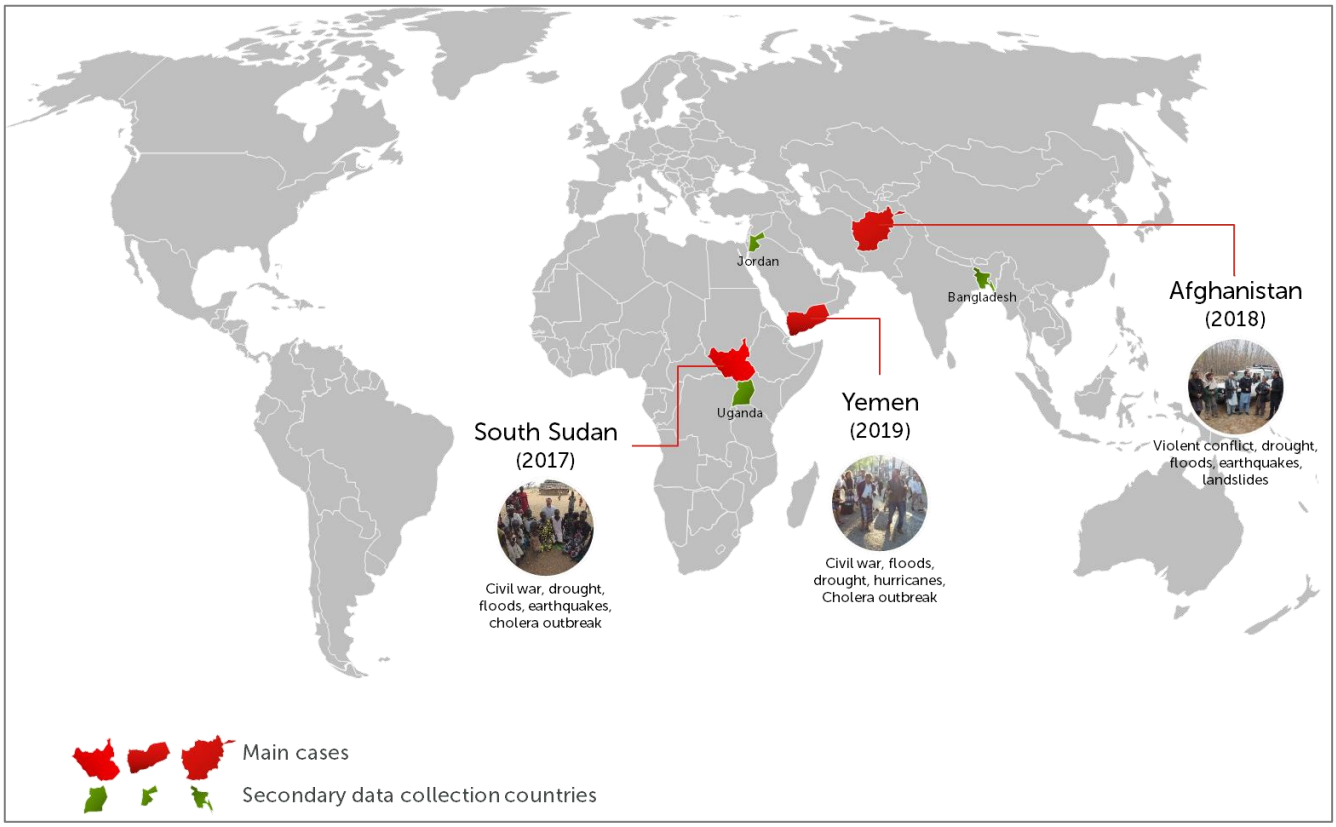
	South Sudan	Afghanistan	Yemen
Amount of funding (2015 + 2016)	High (See table 4)	Low (See table 4)	High (See table 4)
Attention from the international community to the **disaster**	Low	Medium (Earthquake 2015 and floods, but low to the drought)	Medium
Attention from the international community to the **conflict**	High	High to Medium)	High
Presence and functionality of central government	Low	High	Low
Political focus and conditions	Political focus was on the conflict. The drought was barely mentioned	Political focus on the conflict. Disaster received medium attention	Political focus on the conflict. Disaster received low attention

The three cases, therefore, were selected for the analytical gaze they offer as a case of conflict in HIC scenarios and disaster-related actions. The three cases proved to be positive extremes regarding the level of conflict and provide, at the same time, relevant differences allowing a diverse research foci, as presented in Table 4 at the INFORM and GDI indexes, and in Table 5 that summarise the *diverse* factors among the cases.

Relevant challenges related to HIC scenarios entailed the need for additional data collection in other countries. Uganda was the secondary data collection country for the case of South Sudan. South Sudan presented a reduced number of historical and sociodemographic information of the country, but some universities and scholars in Uganda have been systematising and studying South Sudan since 2012, if not earlier. Also, many organisations working in South Sudan are based in Uganda. In Uganda some prominent UN and regional organisations have offices, which allowed me to access more information. Multiple people affected in South Sudan also fled to Uganda, as in the case of Akong presented in the introduction.

In the case of Afghanistan, multiple academics and organisations working in the country that can provide relevant regional information are based in Bangladesh and India, including the international development organisation BRAC. Therefore, interviews and document collection were also carried out in Bangladesh. Regarding Yemen, restrictions on getting into the country drove the decision to conduct remote research from The Netherlands and Jordan, as presented in more detail in the Introduction and Chapter 7.

Figure 4 World map with case studies: South Sudan, Afghanistan and Yemen.



Source: Prepared by the author

Figure 4 depicts the three cases selected and their secondary data collection countries. It also provides information on the conflicts and multiple disasters that the country is at risk of, and the year in which fieldwork was carried out in each of them.

3.3. Research methods for data collection

This research had moments of desk and fieldwork research. A set of data collection methods were used in each of those stages. Based on Yin's (2009:102) categorisation of data collection, this research used five out of six sources of information that he presented. Desk research consisted of an initial and on-going literature review analysis and interviews with experts on the topics. Interviews were used not only to inform what literature was most relevant, but also to inform the design of the surveys and specific case study interviews. In some cases, interviewees provided directions of what to read as well as their views on the situation, all of which informed the findings and conclusions.

A literature review was essential in this research to build a theoretical framework for: (1) designing data collection method and instruments; (2) understanding and operationalising the main research variables; and (3) analysing the obtained data (Robinson and Reed 1998:58). During fieldwork phases, the methods used were participant and direct observation, interviews, focus group discussions and documentation and archival record collection. In-depth interviews before, during and after fieldwork phases were conducted to obtain first-hand information from a wide range of research participants. Also, for field research the use of participant observation was highlighted as a tool of utmost relevance to contrast discourses and practices of disaster response and risk reduction interventions.

Table 6 presents the methods used in detail, including: the method's conceptualization; special considerations regarding its use; sources of data used or produced; and to which objectives the method contributed information. Following this general outline, considerations on why these methods were chosen are presented.

Additionally, remote research strategies were also used to address the challenge of researching in high-intensity conflict scenarios. Remote research encompasses all research techniques applied via the phone or Internet rather than in person. In this research I used moderated remote research tools, where the 'researcher talks directly to the participants as they use the interface in question, and it's good for obtaining rich, qualitative feedback' (Bolt and Tulathimutte 2016 online). Remote research was used in every case at some point. For example, in South Sudan and Afghanistan, although I conducted fieldwork in the country, some regions and areas were out of my reach due to access and security constraints. In those cases, people were interviewed remotely. In the case of Yemen, the impossibilities of gaining access to the country drove the decision to conduct remote research from the Netherlands and from Jordan, as presented in more detail in Chapter 7 'The case of Yemen'.

Table 6 Main research methods

Method	Definition	Considerations	Source of Data
Literature review	'(A) systematic search of published work to find out what is already known about the intended research topic (Robinson and Reed 1998:58).	The sources of information were academic publications, newspapers articles, videos and documentaries on the subject, official documents from governments and from civil society. In the case of grey literature[13], the need to confirm the information with peer reviewed or official data was also taken into consideration.	Secondary
In-depth Interviews	In-depth interviews are a method in which the researcher conducting a (semi) structured interview asks open-ended questions orally and records the research participants' answers (Goodman 2001).	The language and the degree of structure varied with each research participant. This method was used at different stages of the research. A Plain Language form and Participant Consent Information form were also provided (in Arabic or other local languages).	Primary
Participant observation	Participant observation is a type of field research where the researcher observes and studies a group of people through participating in the activities of the people or groups under study. (Thyer 2001)	Participant observations were overt (i.e. everyone knows it is happening and the researcher is observing the actions).	Primary
Remote research	Remote research encompasses all research techniques applied via the phone or the Internet rather than in person	In this research I used moderated remote research tools; mainly the conduction of interviews via Skype or similar communication tools whenever it was not possible to reach the interview by other means. Online surveys were also conducted.	Primary

To be able to properly conduct research in high-intensity conflict scenarios, a research plan was developed, addressing issues such as informant confidentiality, fieldwork procedures, training, security measures, data collection and protection and reporting processes. The main source for this protocol is the 'Security guidelines for field researchers in complex, remote and hazardous places' (Hilhorst et al. 2016), a document to which I also contributed as an author.

3.4. Data analysis

The analysis of the information was done in four steps as presented in Table 7. Each step sought to provide information that will feed the following one with results presented on different chapters of this dissertation.

[13] Grey literature is commonly unpublished and provides less formal information, usually defined as a 'genre of literature [that] includes theses and dissertations, faculty research works, reports of meetings, conferences, seminars and workshops, students' projects, in-house publications of associations and organizations… [forming a] body of materials that cannot be found easily through conventional channels such as publishers, but which is frequently original and usually recent' (Okoroma 2011:789).

These steps, rather than sequential ones in the research process, overlapped and were followed at different moments.

It is important to consider that each of the chapters informing the theoretical framework (Chapter 4), the cases (Chapters 5, 6, and 7) and the discussions and conclusions (Chapters 8 and 9) has their own strategy to analyse the information obtained. Therefore, each of the chapters also presents in more detail the specific methods of analysis used to answer their own objectives.

Table 7 Steps of analysis

Steps of analysis & chapter	Main sources	Aim of the Step
Step 1 - Literature review: *Chapter 4*	Literature review Interviews	To explore the theoretical answers to the research question and objectives.
Step 2 - Case studies: *Chapters 2, 5, 6 and 7*	Literature review, interviews, focus group discussions, review of documents, and observations	To obtain information from case studies in order to answer the research sub-questions and delve into the case research focus.
Step 3 - Comparative analysis to answer the research sub-questions: *Chapter 8. Comparative analysis and cross-cutting Findings*	The results from Steps 1 and 2	To analyse the information from the case studies in an aggregated way to respond to the research objectives.
Step 4: Systematic analysis to answer the main research question: *Chapter 9. Discussion and conclusions*	The analysis from Step 3	To systematically analyse all the collected information to provide an answer and reflections to the main research question.

Despite the differences in analysis of each step, Steps 1 and 2 in general used a content analysis technique, specifically thematic analysis. This thematic analysis was assisted by the qualitative data analysis software Nvivo, using codes based on: the operationalization of the main research dimensions; emergent codes from new relevant information; and general themes emerging from the content analysis.

Particularly relevant for a middle-range approach to theorisation was the comparative and cross-cutting analysis both between the cases and between the cases and the literature. This analysis was done using *resonance* analysis, as will be explained in Chapter 8. In brief, the comparative resonance analysis sought to understand the dynamics and elements that each case presents, despite how different they might be, that resonate between them in light of what are my cases a case *of* and the main research objectives to be studied (Lund 2014).

3.5. Fieldwork: safety and security considerations

Fieldwork is at the core of this research project. However, conducting fieldwork research under high-intensity levels of conflict that are also affected by disasters and humanitarian crises can be challenging, as presented in the introduction. To be able to conduct fieldwork in a way that is ethical, that preserves the safety and security of all actors involved (from research assistants to research participants to myself) and that facilitates the research process rather than hindering it, a comprehensive fieldwork preparation plan was designed and implemented. The plan, presented as Appendix 11.3, includes among others:

- Comprehensive fieldwork risk assessment
- Health and medical procedures
- Transportation, communication and navigation
- Food and water
- Security information architecture
- Emergency plan
- Languages
- Field research, fieldwork trainings and certificates

This plan relied on the 'Security guidelines for field research in complex, remote and hazardous places' (see Hilhorst et al. 2016), which I co-authored. The manual was 'designed to assist researchers in conducting their research in hazardous, remote or complex environments as safely and securely as possible' (Ibid. 2016:5). In addition, I took multiple security trainings before and during this research project in order to learn the best ways of working in unsettling environments, thus reducing safety and security-related risks and facilitating the research process. Having these training certificates and previous experiences proved to be a valuable asset for gaining access to remote and hard-to-reach areas of research, particularly for obtaining authorisations for transportation and access from the UN and other INGOs.

Together with considering the physical aspects of safety and security, special attention was given to mental health while planning and conducting fieldwork research. Trainings and experiences working with the psychology of emergencies and psychological first aid also proved essential, as conducting fieldwork in HIC scenarios involves working and interacting with people that may have been through traumatic experiences from conflict, war or disaster. Therefore, the way that I interact with research participants needs to be done in a manner that provides a safe environment and avoids doing any further harm when talking about sensitive topics.

Importantly, safety and security considerations in fieldwork play a crucial role in conducting ethical research, since proper handling (or not) of these considerations can bring significant impacts, positive or negative, for our research. Therefore, the ethical considerations reviewed below are relevant to the process of conducting field research and research in general.

3.6. Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations have informed the research design, the data collection process, data analysis and the reporting of this research. To me, the ethics of research is a pillar of the research process and should not be considered a mere administrative hurdle to cross by filling out forms and obtaining approval from an ethics committee. Thus, I sought to make these central to my research.

Not engaging with research ethics can be detrimental for ongoing and future research processes, as it would not only place others and myself at risk of more or less evident harm, but it would also risk reducing the legitimacy of researchers and the conducted research itself. Not considering the ethical dimensions of research can also hamper future research projects for others, for example, by increased reluctance to issue research permits or grant access to specific research contexts. The organisations that we represent, work with, or that facilitate our research can also face negative consequences, including economic costs and damage to reputation or external relations. Unethical practices in research can invalidate our efforts and results, obscuring all possible positive impacts of our research endeavours. Considering and operationalising ethical considerations is thus a way to protect each actor involved in the research process, including the institutions, and ensures the legitimacy of my research and its results. In addition it would facilitate the development of future research.

Ethical considerations should also contemplate power relations and imbalances, our positionality and the potential harm that our actions and interactions can create or exacerbate. I recognise that by being a white person (although, by being Latino, I do not always feel or identify as white), a man, and conducting this research for a University in The Netherlands brings with it a series of privileges and triggers several perceptions in people. There are systems of exclusion, oppression and discrimination in every society. Racism and white supremacy are real problems, and I am part of them and have benefited from them even without wanting to. Also, researching humanitarian aid and disasters (and the very same practices of humanitarian and disaster governance) are rooted and tinted in colonial practices and mentalities (De Waal 1997; Donini 2012b; Gaillard 2019a). Therefore, as part of the ethical considerations of my research, I need to include a personal commitment to observe deeply any form in which I unconsciously promote, validate, nourish or commit any of the problems mentioned above - and change that in me, as well as prevent to reinforce them and find ways to counter these practices in my research process.

These considerations become crucial when research is conducted on disasters in HIC scenarios for a number of reasons. People living in HIC scenarios are typically vulnerable to multiple situations and hazards, and research practices can impact these people negatively, resulting in detrimental consequences for their lives and livelihoods, including for their personal safety. In such contexts, which are often authoritarian, information gathered for research purposes can be used to frame research participants by accusing them of

dissent or even treason. In such contexts, where the level of poverty is usually high, research facilitators, translators, or assistants are often considered wealthy or to have valuable social connections, prompting requests that can make research associates uncomfortable among their own people, mainly family and friends. Also, in HIC settings, people can be distressed or traumatised by conflict, displacement, or disaster. Questioning them about these sensitive topics can further elevate their distress, for example by asking people to recall traumatic events or to consider novel situations or possibilities that were not part of their existing frames of reference. These are just some examples of the sensitivities related to research conducted in HIC scenarios and with disaster-affected people that makes an ethical approach to research essential.

In order to adhere to ethical principles whilst conducting research, I followed six steps taken from the publication 'Security guidelines for field research in complex, remote and hazardous places'[14].

1. **Respect the dignity of research subjects, their culture and their environment**

In order to ensure that respect formed part of my research approach, I always first obtained informed consent from all research participants and informed them of the right to withdraw from the research whenever they wanted to. Consent, however, could not be obtained in writing in the majority of the cases, as people were either reluctant to sign documents or because they were illiterate. Thus, consent was mostly granted verbally and captured on recordings. Where recordings were not allowed, the giving of consent could not be recorded. Nevertheless, consent was always requested and participants were always informed of the right to withdraw.

While anonymity and confidentiality are easy to offer to research participants, keeping that promise in HIC scenarios is not. During the process of conducting fieldwork in South Sudan and Afghanistan, I was often asked to show my research to authorities, including the documents on my computer, the pictures on my camera, notes in my agenda and notebook and voice recordings. This happened at checkpoints, in the offices of authorities, or as a 'standard procedure', as military and other armed actors put it. In HIC scenarios, there is a consistent level of suspicion of what foreigners are doing in the country and for what purpose, especially when they are not humanitarian aid actors. Because the role of researchers is not well understood, authorities regularly thought that we were working as journalists, human rights observers, or spies. This forced me to clearly articulate my research objectives to ensure that my research was clearly understood and not perceived as malevolent. As a result, multiple security and ethical considerations that I took in this research relate to managing what is perceived about me, the research participants, and the research project in general. These considerations included a careful assessment and management of my online profiles and

[14] Hilhorst D, Hodgson L, Jansen B, Mena R (2016) *Security Guidelines for Field Research in Complex, Remote and Hazardous Places*. The Hague: ISS-EUR.

interactions, such as my biographical page on the university website, my social media accounts, and the publication of blog posts.

Maintaining the anonymity of all research participants in these scenarios therefore is complex and requires proper planning and preparation before embarking on fieldwork. I took several steps to ensure this, including encrypting and storing information in secure and hidden locations on my computer. I also used code names or pseudonyms when referring to research participants and places. These codes were used during the transcription and analysis of the data and also during the scheduling of meetings.

Although the technique is far from perfect, I attempted to erase traces of the people I spoke with when using the snowballing technique. The main strategy was not to interview a person recommended to me by a research participant, but someone else related to or recommended by this person. In doing so, the 'middleman' could be cut out and direct ties between people could be obscured. In HIC places, however, it can be difficult to find and reach people to be interviewed; therefore, doing the above can be complicated from a methodological and the research point of view, as cutting off the traceability of this snowball system could mean losing access to key informants. It is here that fieldwork demonstrates, once again, that it must be conducted while maintaining a balance between the objectives of the research, and methodological, ethical, and safety and security considerations.

The proper handling of data or recordings during and immediately after the interviews was essential to protect the research assistant's anonymity and to retain confidentiality. Memory cards in the recorders were thus switched immediately after the interviews. I also developed a plan for how to encrypt, protect, and responsibly use email and other means of communication (including phones and smartphones) to avoid information being leaked regarding my whereabouts, my activities, people I interacted with, and the information I could obtain.

The psychological wellbeing of research participants also needed to be considered. Before conducting the research, I had built relevant practical experience in the psychology of emergencies and psychological first aid by taking several courses and working as a disaster researcher and disaster responder. This knowledge allowed me to adjust my interviews, questions, and practices in ways that would not cause trauma to research participants, for example by reliving experiences, but also to recognise signs of trauma, anxiety, or fear and to terminate or adjust the interviews when necessary. These tools were also applied in relationships with the research assistants, including translators. Their indirect participation in the research also led them to hear stories from research participants that could have caused distress. Ethical research practices from my side had to consider these possibilities and how to address them adequately.

Similarly, despite being the head of a family or leaders, research participants often were also minors. I therefore participated in training courses on how to interact with children. These ethical considerations not only ensured that everyone participating in the research process was respected, but also enabled and improved the quality of my research.

Another important preparation regarding respecting the dignity of research subjects, their culture, and their environment was to have at least three interviews or exchanges with native residents of the visited places to learn about local customs, norms and traditions, including greetings, dress codes, and interactions with their surroundings. This limited possibilities that I would cause offense. I also made sure that I knew basic phrases of each of the local languages that I heard during my research, and due to the knowledge of the low level of access to resources, I tried to minimise my burden by limiting my consumptive practices.

2. Safety first for researchers, research assistants, and informants

As stated in the security guidelines mentioned above, 'the presence of the researcher in the field can have repercussions for the security of other people. Researchers have to be aware of this and act in accordance, to avoid endangering assistants, informants and people from the wider community' (Hilhorst et al. 2016:14). The multiple actions mentioned above, which include ensuring anonymity and confidentiality, were all intended to ensure the safety of all people related to my research project. Several additional measures were also taken. First, research participants were free to choose the location of the interviews, except when these places could pose a risk either to them, to research assistants, or to myself. Second, research assistants' safety and security were carefully considered, for example, by assessing the ways in which their involvement in my research could pose problems for them. Many translators and other assistants came from the same or similar communities and regions where research was conducted, which complicated matters due to their personal relationships with some of the participants, particularly in ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. In addition, biases during the translation or interpretation process could arise.

Safety for research participants also extended to other actors facilitating the process, particularly during the fieldwork phase. For example, in many HIC areas the risk of kidnapping is high. These kidnappings usually occur while travelling from one place to another when vehicles are intercepted. When kidnappings occur, it is common for the drivers of the taxi or vehicle to be killed to eliminate witnesses. My personal safety and the safety of those travelling with me were of primary concern, and I ensured that any measures taken would also protect those around me, including the person who was driving and other possible passengers.

Similarly, my day-to-day activities could have placed at risk those in close proximity to me, either those in my living quarters or the stores I frequented, or any other person with whom I would interact, due to perceptions or assumptions regarding their ties to me or having information about me. All of this relates to what was

mentioned before about managing people's perceptions of my motives as researcher. Also, the implementation of a sound security scheme reduced the risk of these situations which, in turn, means a significant personal preparation and planning of the actions to be done every day, all day: routes that I take when moving to a place or how I interact with people.

When the safety and security of those involved in the research project could not be ensured (including my own), the research design and methods had to be adjusted. For example, obtaining a research visa to go to Yemen proved to be impossible. Instead, I was offered the option to go with a tourist visa. This would entail lying at airports and on occasions about my motives for going to the country. At the same, it would have made it difficult to obtain extra research permits in the country. Therefore, the decision was made not to travel to Yemen, but to develop a strategy for doing remote research instead. I considered hiring a Yemeni researcher in Yemen to support me in obtaining information, documents, and conducting interviews. However, after talking to researchers in Yemen and other people working or living in the country, I found that hiring someone for this purpose could expose that person to multiple risks that I would not be able to minimise or manage appropriately. Thus, I decided against it. The research design had to be altered, as some of the research questions could not be answered adequately due to this limitation.

Sometimes, despite all safety and security schemes in place, situations that can bring negative consequences can still occur. In these cases, we must also have an action plan and be prepared to respond adequately in time. But again, this is only accomplished with preparation, training, and development of response plans prior to fieldwork. In my case, I have received more than five safety courses and advanced first aid courses, which allows me to respond adequately to some adverse situations that occur in HIC places. A security plan and protocol was also developed with the team supervising my research and with the university, as a proper response often needs to be coordinated or supported by institutional means or actions. All of this must also be considered as part of my ethical considerations, since it allows for responsible work, which reflexively considers the effects of my research for all people and organizations present in my research endeavours, as will be seen in the following consideration.

3. Respect and avoid doing harm to the position and reputation of research institutions

The same concerns noted above also applies to the research institutions that my project is linked to. In this research, I was representing the International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University Rotterdam, but I am also connected to a number of organisations in the countries where I conducted fieldwork, including NGOs and UN agencies. I was thus seen as affiliated with different organisations at different phases of my research. While this could have played a role in terms of bias in the answers I obtained, it also meant that my actions could have been seen as representing those organisations supporting or hosting me. Engaging in

unethical research practices therefore could have affected the reputation of the organisations that I was affiliated with, which I tried to prevent. In more extreme cases, unethical research practices can also spill over to the closure of some organisations, affecting their ability to continue working in a specific place, or even their complete expulsion from a country or region. In HIC places, this can result in less organisations providing humanitarian aid in affected areas and, therefore, also have negative consequences for the people already affected by conflict or disasters. Thus, ethical considerations and practices of my research project became crucial for the position and reputation of research organisations.

4. Respect the principles of empirical research

I consider this ethical consideration to be of utmost relevance in HIC scenarios. During this research process, I had the opportunity to engage with the work of others who are focusing on the same HIC cases or others, like Syria. I found that their information collection processes were sometimes not transparent. Similarly, in conferences or meetings, these researchers (or also journalists) were asked about the triangulation of their data to ensure the validity of their findings or similar questions, like how they can be sure of the 'veracity' of their results having small number of participants in their samples or having visited only the capital of the country. More than once I heard as an answer: 'because I was there'. Subsequent conversations provided more details, such as that the perceived complexity of HIC scenarios does not permit high research standards. Just having been there seemed to justify this lack of rigour, and give them enough credit to say something about those places.

However, HIC scenarios do not justify the failure to conduct research rigorously and ethically, and what is needed is a realistic plan to use sound research methods to obtain information. HIC scenarios, further, involve adjusting our research questions and methods or research plans, or finding creative ways to address the challenges that conducting research in HIC scenarios entails. However, all these considerations need to be informed. In my particular case, I made sure that the limitations and challenges I faced were recorded in every report, research article, or publication. For example, some interviews were not recorded and, therefore, in reality, some quotes are paraphrasing what people said. Other limitations, such as not being able to interview more women, are also detailed, as well as the steps to overcome these.

Problems of plagiarism, misrepresenting the results, and academic fraud are also practices that I am committed to avoid and prevent during research practices.

5. Act responsibly in the dissemination of research results

The results from this research project have been transacted and disseminated in many forms, from articles and reports to blog posts and presentations at conferences and meetings. In all of them, not only were the

anonymity and confidentiality of research participants considered, but also the effects of the results, leading to their presentation in a way that avoids harm or stigma and respects the people and places I visited.

6. Recognise the dynamics of being part of the research situation

Research is a two-way process in which 'people may endeavour to have their vision represented, try to bend the research into desired directions and enrol researchers to act on their behalf as a broker to the outside world' (Hilhorst et al. 2016:14). HIC scenarios are not exempt from this reality, which I kept in mind while engaging with research participants and assistants. One of my ethical practices was never to promise something that I could not realise and to always be honest and transparent about the possible impacts and benefits that my research might or might not have on them.

A more delicate practice in this regard is dealing with corruption, bribery, or similar practices. During this research project I was often asked to pay special fees to be able to conduct research or to pay entry fees or passing taxes at checkpoints or to get interviews. While in general I never accepted nor approved of such practices, researching in HIC also taught me that acting ethically entails reflection and is not a strict categorisation of what is good or bad. For example, sometimes the price to go through a checkpoint was money for food or water, so instead of paying, I took the opportunity to share water and food with the people at the checkpoint - encounters during which relevant and enriching conversations took place.

Challenges of applying these guidelines

Following these six ethical guidelines was not always easy. One of the reasons is that they do not mention concrete steps to take and things to avoid; rather, they serve as guidelines. To follow these guidelines requires being reflective and carefully assessing how to act in multiple situations, which in HIC scenarios sometimes requires deliberating in a short period of time, and under high levels of stress, which course of action to take. Another reason is that acting ethically during research requires finding a balance and proper integration between these ethical guidelines, research methods, and research questions - a process that sometimes results in the modification of our methods or even the adjustment of our research questions.

Having an ethical approach to research is also a continuous process, not just something that is declared and designed at the beginning of the research process. It requires reflecting on these guidelines before, during, and after the research project. This last point, on the continuous need to reflect on ethics during our research, proved to be essential in HIC scenarios, where the volatility of the general context rendered many decisions or plans obsolete in a short period of time. Finally, following these guidelines and deciding how to implement them and how to act was a process that required discussion and reflection with other people, chiefly other members of the research project, including my supervisors and other advisors.

4. STUDYING DISASTERS DURING HIGH-INTENSITY CONFLICT

Addressing Disasters in High-Intensity Conflict Scenarios: Challenges and Legitimation Strategies[15]

4.1. Abstract

This chapter reviews the process of responding to disasters in places affected by high-intensity levels of conflict and explores the essential features and challenges that this type of conflict poses for disaster response, risk reduction and disaster governance. Using the notions of humanitarian arena, legitimacy, and power relationships, the chapter presents the different strategies that aid and society actors (those for whom humanitarian aid action is part of their core function and those for whom is not) use to respond in these complex settings, contributing to the study of the nexus between social conflicts and disasters such as earthquakes, droughts, or hurricanes. This chapter makes an original contribution to the disaster response literature by reflecting on the utility of using high-intensity conflict scenarios as an analytical category, to inform better policies and practices on disaster response in these specific types of conflict.

Keywords: Disaster response, high-intensity conflict, aid-society actors, legitimacy, humanitarian arena

4.2. Introduction

The earthquake in Afghanistan in 2015, as well as the decade-long drought in Somalia, exemplify the challenges faced by multiple types of actors, including local and international ones, when responding to or reducing the risk of a disaster related to hazards such as earthquakes, droughts or hurricanes, in places affected by high levels of social conflict. Access and security issues of all involved stakeholders contribute to

[15] This chapter is a revised and longer version of the peer-reviewed publication: Mena R (2018) Responding to Socio-environmental Disasters in High-Intensity Conflict Scenarios: Challenges and Legitimation Strategies. In: Brauch HG, Oswald Spring Ú, Collins AE, et al. (eds.) *Climate Change, Disasters, Sustainability Transition and Peace in the Anthropocene*. 1st ed. Politik – Economics – Society – Science (APESS) 25. Berlin: Springer, pp. 27–66. This chapter also adds the important section 3.4 'Disasters and conflict interaction' and modifies the presentation of information in the original text.

the political and social strategies required to develop a comprehensive and effective disaster response. This chapter examines the process of disaster governance in places affected by high-intensity levels of conflict.

With this, this chapter's purpose is to contribute to disaster response and DRR policies and practice by understanding better the special features required in responding in places where, among other response challenges, wide-spread violent social conflict occurs. Exploring the multiple dynamics of the social and political aspects of the co-occurrence of disaster and widespread violent conflict is, therefore, a critical issue. Using the term *high-intensity conflict* (HIC) as an analytical category to understand moments during protracted crises, this chapter sets itself the following questions: 'what does it mean to respond to disasters in places affected by HIC', 'how can actors respond and prevent the risk of disasters in HIC contexts?', and 'how are disaster and conflicts related?'. Answering these questions, this chapter seeks to provide an exhaustive theoretical and conceptual framework for this research project, which will allow for further understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of the research sub-questions 1 and 2 primarily, and indirectly to all the research sub-question of this dissertation.

Methodology

Methodologically, the chapter is based on an extensive literature review on humanitarian aid, disaster response, violent social conflict, and on legitimacy and institutional power relationships. The review included books, journal articles, reports, policy documents, and protocols[16] published or released up to November 2016. It also included grey literature and audio-visual material, including blog entries, websites, and documentaries.[17] After this desk research, seven interviews were carried out with two academics, two aid practitioners, one consultant and two aid beneficiaries. Table 8 provides more details on each interviewee.

The aim of the interviews was to present and discuss the results of the literature review with different actors and to identify analytical blind spots. Finally, the chapter is also to some extent informed by the author's own experience conducting fieldwork in HIC countries like South Sudan or Afghanistan, although the interviews, participant observations, and other data gathered in those cases are not included in this chapter.

[16] 'Policy documents and protocols' refer to documents written by United Nations, NGOs, donors, and other aid organisations describing procedures, norms and/or standards. E.g. The Sphere Handbook, the International Humanitarian Law, security guidelines of some NGOs.

[17] Grey literature is commonly unpublished and less formal information, usually defined as a 'genre of literature [that] includes theses and dissertations, faculty research works, reports of meetings, conferences, seminars and workshops, students' projects, in-house publications of associations and organizations… [forming a] body of materials that cannot be found easily through conventional channels such as publishers, but which is frequently original and usually recent' (Okoroma 2011: 789). Every time that grey literature was used, the information was validated with peer reviewed documents, official data and statistics, or via interviews and triangulation of the information presented.

Table 8 Description of interviews

Code	Interviewed	Gender	Description
AC1	Academic	Male	Professor of humanitarian aid with vast experience in consultancies and evaluation.
AC2	Academic	Male	Researcher on humanitarian aid with experience in project management with international non-governmental organisations (INGOS) and the United Nations.
AP1	Aid practitioner	Female	INGO project manager with more than 10 years of experience in emergency projects, some of them in HIC areas.
AP2	Aid practitioner	Male	National NGO project manager with experience in emergency response and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programmes. NGO from a HIC country.
C1	Consultant	Male	International consultant on disaster risk reduction and resilience with experience working with United Nation agencies, INGOs, Donors and developmental organisations. Experience in HIC countries.
B1	Disaster affected person	Female	Person affected by extreme drought in a HIC affected country.
B2	Disaster affected person	Male	Person affected by extreme floods in areas of high intensity conflict, who then volunteered for rescue and humanitarian relief operations.

Source: the author

Regarding data analysis, thematic content analysis was carried out by tabulating all the information obtained. Analytical codes consisted of 44 initial analytical categories and the construction of new emergent sub-categories. During later stages of this analysis, these analytical categories were reduced to a smaller number of themes. The codes, the sample, and further information are presented in Appendix 11.2.

4.3. Unwrapping high-intensity conflict scenarios and disasters response and risk reduction

As presented by Demmers (2012), it is important when studying violent conflict to be clear about the differences that exist with the concept of war and also to understand that there are multiple types of conflict, not all of them violent. In this chapter I propose the use of 'high-intensity' conflict as an analytical term to represent a moment during violent conflict that has a particular set of governmental arrangements and social problems, and imposes specific challenges for disaster response and risk reduction, shaping their actions and outcomes.

High-intensity conflict scenarios

To unwrap the notion of high-intensity conflict (HIC) scenarios or moments, it is necessary first to understand better the role of violence in conflict situations. Violent social conflict is generally depicted as a competition, clash, or contradiction between two or more social groups or actors over a specific goal, resource, or interest involving the use of manifest violence to pursue their objectives (Oberschall 1978; Homer-Dixon 1994; Galtung 1996b; Demmers 2012; Estévez et al. 2015; Ide 2015). Manifest violence is here conceptualised as a 'visible, instrumental and expressive action. It is this kind of violence that is generally defined as "an act of

physical hurt"' (Demmers 2012:56). Sometimes it is also termed physical or personal violence (Galtung 1969), when one person 'is physically damaged or physically restricted without giving consent to the activity' (Cameron, 1999 in Gasper 1999:10). Whereas manifest and direct forms of violence are evident, structural and cultural forms of violence are also important in HIC scenarios. Structural violence is embedded in social structures or institutions, preventing people from meeting their basic needs or reducing their potential for realisation (Galtung 1996). Cultural violence is symbolic and present in many aspects of a culture that legitimises the other forms of violence (Galtung 1990). In other words, structural and manifest violence are 'legitimised and thus rendered acceptable in society' (Galtung 1996: 196).

Although less overt than physical violence, structural violence plays a relevant role in HIC settings. Structural or indirect violence refers to such violence that do not have a subject (person) as the main source of the violence that has been committed (Galtung 1969). This does not mean that actors are not involved in violence, but that violence in these cases does not result *directly* from one subject wanting to hurt another. Rather, violence results from societal structures of power and repression that enable and create the conditions for violence (Demmers 2012; Galtung 1969). The boundaries between physical (personal) and structural violence are blurred many times. In South Sudan, for example, rape and sexual violence are culturally accepted, particularly if they are part of battle or conflict-related actions (Chatterjee 2017; Cumming-Bruce 2019). As a result of this, multiple women and men are raped when a group takes over a village. These acts of rape cannot be seen solely as the result of one person or one group of actors wanting to directly harm another person. This sexual violence needs to also be seen as structural, embedded in power relationships and rooted in cultural and historical practices. Structural violence in HIC scenarios is, however, present in many forms, including the lack of access to proper health systems or gender-based violence beyond its personal and physical manifestations (Lake 2019). In Afghanistan, Yemen and South Sudan, gender disparity is part of everyday life for people, with women having reduced access to public spaces, participation the labour market, and gendered pay inequity (or gender wage gap).

Another way to see how violence does not always manifest physically and can be associated with disasters is the notion of slow violence, defined as 'violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all' (Nixon 2011:2), which includes disasters, deforestation and climate change. As Nixon (2011:3) illustrates

> [p]olitically and emotionally, different kinds of disaster possess unequal heft. Falling bodies, burning towers, exploding heads, avalanches, volcanoes, and tsunamis have a visceral, eye-catching and page-turning power that tales of slow violence, unfolding over years, decades, even centuries, cannot match.

By only taking into consideration the physical violent manifestations of conflict, it would be easy to conflate HIC and war; but HIC is broader. For example, war can be defined as occurring during HIC times, where usually states are involved against each other or against non-state actors, and the casualty threshold reaches a thousand people through battle-related deaths per annum in international wars and per conflict in civil and intra-state wars (Collier and Hoeffler 2001; Demmers 2012). HIC scenarios, however, occur in more than those places and moments where wide-spread social violent conflict involves over a thousand casualties. Other characteristics of HIC include moments where, due to the level of conflict, local authorities and governments have minimal or no effective control over regions of the country, generating a high level of state fragility. However, sometimes it is the internationally-recognised government or its allies (like in the case of Yemen) that is the one exerting physical violence, and through it they have strong control of the territories. The meaning of state fragility in a context of HIC will be further discussed below.

The irregular or fragmented provision of goods and basic services in HIC, together with the levels of violence, usually results in high rates of migration of people looking for safety from their localities, regions, or countries (see Demmers 2012; Grünewald 2012; Healy and Tiller 2014; Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research 2016; Hilhorst and Pereboom 2016; HPN and OPM 2010; Keen 2008a; Maxwell and Majid 2015). As a result of this displacement, conflict spreads over the territory and beyond, creating impacts on neighbouring countries and regions (Keen 2008a; Maxwell and Majid 2015). The provision of aid and response is difficult and restricted due to a range of challenges (detailed below), with access and security being the most overt ones.

An important consideration is that HIC moments are fluid situations that ebb and flow over time. Therefore, they are not permanent; they are neither isolated events regarding macro conflict dynamics, nor do they occur once and disappear. Most of the time, they represent specific long moments within a protracted crisis, developing out of or leading into low conflict or post-conflict periods. HIC and conflict can also unfold at different levels of a country. At the national-macro level, for example in the case of Afghanistan, the conflict between the Taliban and the government Afghan government and armed opposition groups (AOGs) manifests. This macro level conflict, however, is dynamic. It can affect and be affected by local conflicts and tensions (Demmers 2012; Kalyvas 2003; Keen 2008a). Conflict also manifests at the provincial-meso level, for example between state authorities or between state level actors and armed groups. Finally, it is also seen at the local-micro level, between community members, between villages, or between the local population and NGOs or governmental representatives or offices.

As previously presented, clear examples of HIC scenarios can be observed at moments in South Sudan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, and Somalia. In all these countries, it is possible to observe all the characteristics mentioned above, although stronger in some cases and weaker in others. In some of those countries, the

government is stronger than in another, but in all of them there are regions where the control of the territory is in the hands of state-contesting parties. Over a thousand casualties per annum have occurred in all the cases, a large number of people have fled, and the provision of goods is fragmented in parts of the territory. Moreover, even within the HIC category, there are a variety of possible different cases.

It is important to stress, though, that the categorisation of a country as HIC, low or post-conflict is political and related with several international agendas. For example, Afghanistan is often labelled as a post-conflict country, a strategy that seeks to attract investors and donors, while also strengthening internal images of the government. However, the country does not comply with most international conditions of a post-conflict country (Zenkeviciu 2007).

Complex emergencies

A concept that includes similar elements to HIC is 'complex emergencies', which is used to describe a humanitarian crisis resulting from the combination of large-scale violent conflict, political and economic instability, and/or disasters, usually requiring an external humanitarian response (Keen 2008; OCHA 1999). Complex emergency is also an operational term in the humanitarian aid sector. The declaration or call to label a situation as a complex emergency is usually presented to the Inter-Agency Standing Committee by any humanitarian aid agency or organisation that assesses a crisis or emergency requiring a system-wide response from the humanitarian aid sector (IASC 1994). As a result, declaring a situation as a complex emergency usually mobilises funds and agencies' coordination and planning.

Although helpful in understanding HIC scenarios, the concept of complex emergency and HIC differ in some important respects. The concept of 'complex emergencies' describes the *outcome* of a diverse range of factors and the process of responding to them, mostly by aid interventions (Keen 2008). The construct of complex emergencies emerges not only because of the complexity of the emergency itself, but also because of the complexity of the responses to these scenarios that must take into account numerous factors such as dangerous settings, political use of aid, or donor dependency, to name a few (Davey et al. 2013; Duffield 1994). HIC scenarios describe a range of social and political arrangements present in a moment of a protracted crisis, without describing them as an emergency and without questioning the need or ways to respond to them. Moreover, HIC seeks to contribute to understanding the particular moment when the conflict reaches its highest violent period resulting in the conditions listed above. It is possible to say that, if complex emergencies are 'protracted political crises' (Duffield 1994: 4), HIC might be moments within them, describing key features of the conflict. The idea of complex emergencies has important attributes for the understanding of HIC, including the relevance of the relationship between humanitarian aid and the military, peacekeeping operations, and other protection groups (Dijkzeul 2004; Duffield 1994; RPN 1997; Stoddard,

Harmer, and Haver 2006). Another relevant distinction is that HIC enables an analytical distinction from other types of conflict, notably low-intensity conflict, as mentioned before. Complex emergencies can also develop in non-HIC scenarios, including post-conflict settings.

Fragility

Similar to 'complex emergency', 'fragile state' is another concept regularly used to study scenarios similar to HIC situations. For example, as Slim and Lopes Morey highlight, 'international policy typically describes States in protracted conflict as either failed or fragile' (ICRC 2016:16), particularly when it concerns humanitarian aid interventions. It is important here to distinguish that state fragility is not the same as government or governance fragility. While governments are formal or informal temporary organisations or institutions that govern and administrate a state or country, the state represents specific geographic entities or organised communities under the same political, legal, and fiscal arrangements (Bealey and Johnson 1999; Taylor 1993). A state is also defined as a 'political association that establishes sovereign power within a defined territorial area and possesses a monopoly of legitimate violence' and has four main elements: population, territory, governments and sovereignty (Harrison and Boyd 2003:17). Therefore, states tend to be more permanent and exert their power through different governments in place. These governments can be present and exert control on different levels (most notably at the national, regional or local level) of a territory or state (Bealey and Johnson 1999; Lahera 2002).

State fragility seeks to represent a state that is 'unable to perform its core functions and displays vulnerability in the social, political, and economic domains' (Sekhar 2010: 1). In this sense, describing a state as fragile means that multiple actors 'managing key life-saving and life-building services are often under resourced and overwhelmed' and, therefore, 'if efforts to stabilize these services fail, then infrastructure and services become increasingly fragile systems of public provision' (ICRC 2016:17). These states are also typically framed as failing to provide human security due to the concentration of poverty that they generate (Duffield 2007). However, in the same fragile states, it is possible to have the presence of strong governments or systems of governance. In every case of HIC studied for this research, the national government had a tight level of control over sections of the territory and some, or all, borders with neighbouring countries; and they still performed some level of international activity.

State fragility, though, should not be seen as defining a whole country or territory. Different areas of a country can present different levels of state and governance fragility, as in the case of Kabul, Afghanistan, where is possible to access services, but it may be that in other areas these services are not available or are highly fragile due to conflict dynamics (Goodhand 1999; ICRC 2016; Mena et al. 2019). Moreover, 'in many conflicts, the staff and operating systems of national authorities can be split apart by the lines of conflict,

leaving former colleagues cut off from one another and unable to coordinate supplies and services' (ICRC 2016:17). This fragility can persist after HIC moments, including during post-conflict scenarios (Melis 2018), remaining as pockets of fragility in a protracted crisis. For example, while we can have a stable and capable system of governance, the state can be fragile in some places, like in refugee camps or areas with HIC.

The previous discussion on state fragility can promote further debates and nuanced discussions. For example, as presented by Jackson (2018), the Taliban have a strong level of control over some territories and services, including education and healthcare. In that sense, it would be valid to ask how fragile or not is the statehood of Taliban's territories. Also, as the same author asserts,

> control is not an all-or-nothing, zero-sum equation; the reality is that parts of government continue to function in areas of Taliban control under a hybrid service delivery arrangement, and the Taliban encourage government service delivery as long as this is according to their rules. (Jackson 2018:29)

The previous is also relevant in moments of HIC or during war times. Discussions on fragile states can be reduced to thinking that humanitarian and development actors are the only ones providing people's basic needs and services (Rocha de Siqueira 2017). However, as seen, there are alternative systems of governance in place, even in conflict-affected spaces. Despite the presence of these alternative systems of governance, aid actors arrange the majority of essential services and goods (Wood et al. 2001a). These 'releases of liability' facilitate the ability of the governmental parties involved in the conflict to devote more resources and efforts to the conflict itself, rather than reply to the needs of the people on their territories (Duffield 2001; Hoffman and Weiss 2008; Keen 1998, 2008a). In turn, this creates more fragility, which is concealed or patched up by aid actors, strengthening conflict dynamics and many times creates more harm than it reduces (Anderson 1999; Donini 2012b; Keen 2008a). In that sense, the relationship between state fragility and conflict can be seen as complex and reciprocal: conflict is mentioned sometimes in the literature as a cause of fragile states, as much as fragile states are the cause of conflicts.

Finally, state fragility is not the same as fragile settings, as these

> are defined by high levels of uncertainty and unpredictability, both at the micro-level of people's livelihoods and at the macro-level of political stability. Uncertainty derived from weakness or unresponsiveness of (state) institutions is one dimension of that and contributes to institutional flux. (Hilhorst, van der Haar, and Weijs 2017:3).

Fragile settings can contribute to state fragility as they speak about the fragility of non-governmental institutions (elite or economic, for instance) that influence a particular place (Hilhorst, van der Haar, et al. 2017; Putzel and Di John 2012).

Regarding disasters, due to the vulnerability of their population and probably reduced response capacities, fragile states have a higher disaster risk (Mitra and Vivekananda 2015). Conversely, disasters can also increase the risk of fragility. Mitra and Vivekananda (2015:3) systematise the ways in which disaster can do this: (1) disasters increase vulnerability and compound grievances, (2) disasters place stresses on governance as they 'overburden and undermine the capacity of already fragile institutions to adequately respond, heightening grievances among communities', and (3) humanitarian disaster responses lacking conflict- and climate-sensitivity can increase state fragility and cause harm. In fact, the following section will discuss that working in fragile states is one of the biggest challenges for disaster response in HIC. In this sense, fragile states play a role as a causative factor for both conflict and disaster or increase people's vulnerability against natural hazards (GFDRR 2015).

Together with state fragility, in all cases reviewed, national governments are one of the parties involved in the conflict. These features can be seen in Afghanistan, Yemen, South Sudan, Syria, and Somalia – with some important differences among them, though. This situation plays into a dual complexity in terms of the governance and coordination of disaster-related actions, chiefly disaster response. On the one hand, the national government has the main role in coordinating disaster response while their fragility and involvement in the conflict might hinder their capacity to act and manage disaster risk reduction and responses. Actually, HIC-affected countries rely heavily on international aid in their responses and the coordination of it (Mena and Hilhorst 2020). On the other hand, by being the official government in the conflict, aid actors adopting the principle of neutrality and independence may be persuaded not to include the government in coordination efforts as it would compromise their access to territories held by contesting parties. At the same time, the strength of the government can mean that, at some level, aid actors should inform, respect, and seek authorisation for their actions from national authorities, as clearly represented in the case of Yemen. This paradox and the ways in which aid and society actors deal with it is a familiar situation for humanitarian and developmental aid programmes but has not yet been a feature of disaster response models. The legitimation strategies that aid and society actors have adopted to manoeuvre through this challenge are described later.

While section 3.5 presents in detail which actors are present in HIC scenarios, it is important to highlight here that in HIC scenarios humanitarian actors are tasked with both response to 'emergencies' caused by conflict and disaster response, and therefore, there is often no difference in who is providing one service or the other. The problem in this case can be the lack of expertise by aid actors providing humanitarian relief of the specifics of working with disasters, especially when it comes to acting in ways that would reduce the risk of future disasters.

These ideas about the roles of states, the actors involved, and the vulnerabilities of the local population reinforce the proposition that studying disaster governance in places affected by high-intensity levels of conflict is more than just knowing how an action (DRR and disaster response) occurs in a specific context. It is about understanding the shared social factors explaining the conflict and the disaster, an exercise in revealing a dynamic process where each phenomenon plays a role with the other.

Disasters, disaster response, risk reduction and governance

Disasters, as well as conflicts, result from a complex combination of multiple factors. On the one hand, hazards, as natural events with the potential to damage property, produce social and economic disruption, cause death or injury, and environmental degradation (UNISDR 2009: 4). On the other hand, vulnerable human populations lacking the mechanisms, response institutions, resources, and knowledge to prevent being affected by, or to mitigate the impact of, hazards (Aboagye 2012; Hewitt 2013; Todd and Todd 2011; Wisner et al. 2004). When a natural event affects people and their livelihoods significantly, the result can be a disaster; the impact of hazards or events that can have severe consequences on vulnerable human populations and their possessions.

Hazards also include latent conditions representing future threats, but to produce direct social damage requires a particular set of conditions - leaving aside the effects on natural environments, e.g. the effects of volcanic eruption on an isolated island (Parker 2006; Todd and Todd 2011; UNISDR website 2017). These physical, social, economic, and environmental conditions which determine the susceptibility of a community to the impact of hazards are generally termed 'vulnerabilities' (UNISDR 2009). Therefore, disasters are social constructions triggered by natural phenomena, turned into hazards, and these hazards turned into disasters mainly due to people's vulnerability and decisions (Kelman 2010; Wisner, Gaillard, and Kelman 2012a).

Risk (disaster risk) is another common term used as a function of hazards and vulnerability, establishing the likelihood that people will be affected by hazards (Collins 2008; UNISDR 2009; Wisner et al. 2003). Risk can be reduced and managed by reducing people's vulnerability and/or people's exposure to hazards (Todd and Todd 2011; UNISDR 2013), although many experts signal that exposure is actually part of people's vulnerability (see Kelman 2018). García Acosta (2005a, 2005b, 2006) balanced these approaches explaining how the social construction of disaster risk has been, historically, approached by disaster scholar in two ways: earlier as the *perception* of disaster risk or, since the late 1990s, disaster risk associated with *people's vulnerabilities*. The first indicates how the perception of risks (or not) is what makes social groups or societies vulnerable to disasters, and the second indicates how only the analysis of the genesis of what leads to situations of vulnerability of specific groups of society is what allows the understanding of disaster risk (García

Acosta 2005a). This second trend aligns with the analysis of the *root causes* and *dynamic pressures* of disaster risk, to be reviewed below.

Hazard also plays a role in the general classification of disasters. The speed of onset determines the time that it takes for a hazard to reach its peak manifestation or impact. Based on the speed of onset, disasters are usually classified into two categories: slow- and rapid- onset disaster. Slow-onset emergencies, like disasters, are defined by UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) as those 'that do not emerge from a single, distinct event but one that emerges gradually over time, often based on a confluence of different events' (OCHA 2011:3). Rapid-onset disasters (sometimes also called sudden-onset disasters) develop, as the term implies, rapidly or almost immediately. The speed of onset must not be confused with the predictability of an event. Although there is no internationally agreed upon list classifying disasters or determining what is 'slow' or 'sudden', most disasters are classified as sudden-onset. In general terms, earthquakes, cyclones, typhoons or hurricanes, flash flooding, landslides, avalanches, and volcanic eruptions are seen as rapid-onset disasters. Some examples of slow-onset disaster are droughts, sea level rise, water salinisation, and erosion.

Barton (1970) presents that classifying disasters based on the speed of onset can be more gradual, using the categories: sudden, gradual, and chronic. He also add that disaster can be classified based on the 'scope of the impact (geographical, number of people), duration of the impact itself (short or long), and social preparedness (low or high)' (1970:41).

The above being said regarding the speed of onset of disasters, the reality is that what can be slow or rapid is the development of the hazard, *not* the disaster. Disasters are socially and politically constructed, as reviewed before, and it takes time for the development of the social conditions that determine people's vulnerability and make them prone to be affected by a hazard (Ball 1975; Kelman 2010; Wisner et al. 2004). As Knowles (2013) shows with multiple examples, disaster can be seen as the result of more than a century of decisions and events, including the development of laws, regulations, public policies, or scientific knowledge. Disaster can be seen as a historical process, not only socially constructed, but also strongly culturally determined (Bankoff et al. 2015; García Acosta 2006; Krüger, Greg, et al. 2015). In that sense, every disaster is slow-onset in its core as it depends on social conditions that build up and grow over time, which again, puts more responsibility on us in choosing to reduce the risk of disasters or not, especially considering all the time that disasters give us to prepare for them or to even prevent their occurrence (Kelman 2020).

Disasters, in brief, result from *vulnerable* populations being exposed to (natural) hazards (Bankoff et al. 2004; Blaikie et al. 1994; Cannon 1994; O'Keefe, Westgate, and Wisner 1976). Conflict scenarios, on the other hand, play a key role in the development and maintenance of social vulnerabilities, resulting in disaster response

in HIC scenarios becoming muddled with other relief and aid efforts related to the crisis (Hilhorst 2013a). Furthermore, people's lack of coping and responding mechanisms is also a result of conflict and other social situations, such as poverty (Bankoff 2001; Mitra and Vivekananda 2015; Wisner et al. 1976). Vulnerability is, in this sense, a key concept that links conflict and disaster. As defined by Bankoff (2001:24), vulnerability 'denotes much more than an area's, nation's or region's geographic or climatic predisposition to hazard and forms part of an ongoing debate about the nature of disasters and their causes'.

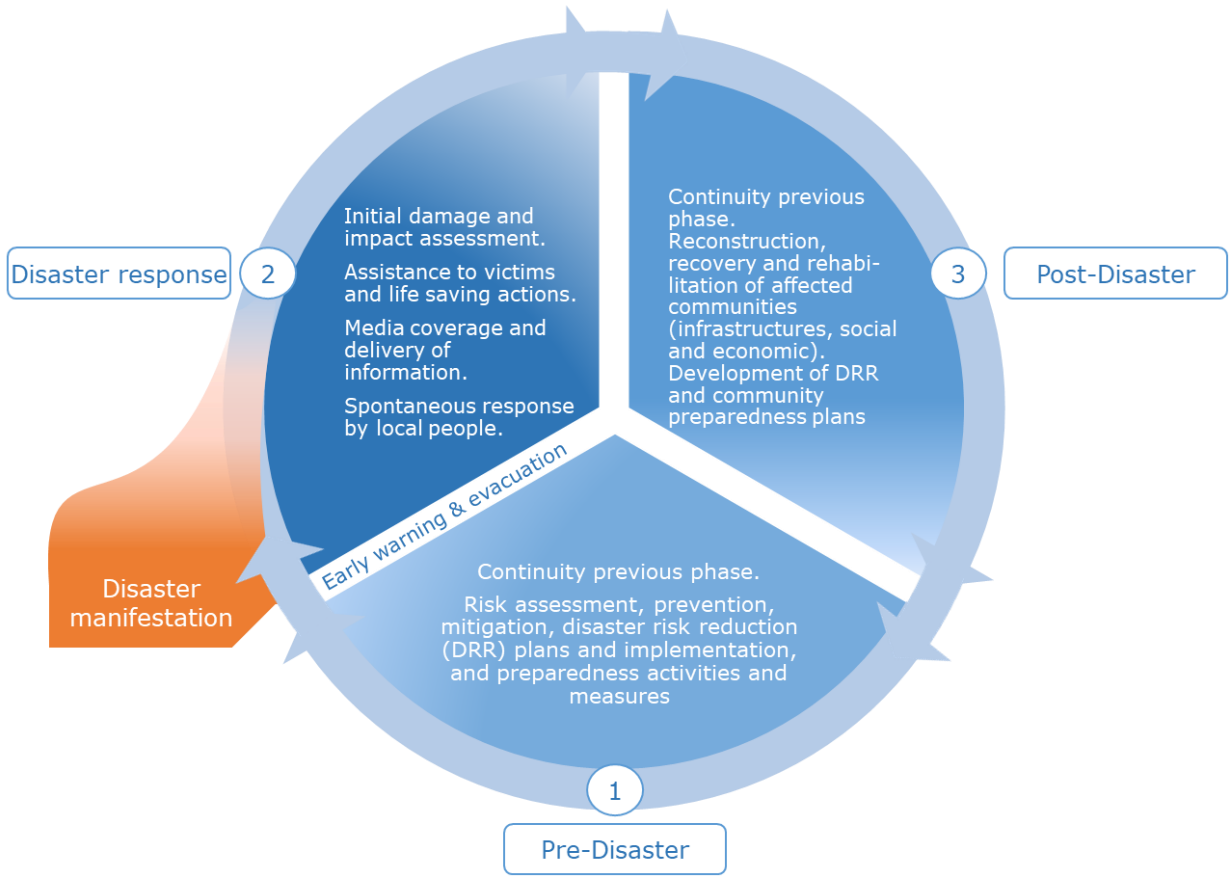
Disaster management

To prevent, manage, and respond to disasters, disaster risk managers, specialized institutions, and aid agencies use a multi-phase disaster management cycle. This cycle 'includes [the] sum total of all activities, programmes and measures which can be taken up before, during and after a disaster with the purpose to avoid a disaster, reduce its impact or recover from its losses' (Khan, Vasilescu, and Khan 2008:46). The cycle has three main phases (see Figure 5 Disaster management cycle). The first is *pre-disaster*, including all prevention, mitigation, DRR, and preparedness activities and measures, including early warning (Mohanty et al. 2019). This phase seeks to reduce human and property losses and vulnerability. The second phase is *disaster-response* including an initial damage and impact assessment and assistance to affected victims to ensure that needs and provisions are met and suffering is minimised (Todd and Todd 2011; UNISDR website 2017). Media coverage and delivery of information about the disaster are also part of this phase. Alongside and before this formal disaster response phase, a more spontaneous or less official response starts among the same people affected and local actors. The third phase is *post-disaster*, with a first sub-stage focused on providing continuity with the previous phase, initial infrastructure recovery, and rehabilitation of affected communities. In a second sub-stage, social and economic long-term recovery plans are implemented, together with DRR measures and activities focusing on enabling community self-protection (Parker 2006: 4–6; Vasilescu et al. 2008: 47). It is important to highlight that these phases do not present clear beginnings or endings - usually they overlap and any potential moment of 'connection' between one and the other is blurry at least. This is especially the case if these activities are occurring in conjunction or overlapping with conflict humanitarian aid activities - such as in the case of the example of South Sudan and the Ugandan refugee camp presented in the Introduction.

During the process of disaster response, it is possible to observe a larger number of actors (mostly humanitarian ones in HIC, as mentioned in the previous section), actions and procedures beyond that specific phase of the cycle. During disaster response, all the other elements of the cycle are present in addition to the actors and actions that only occur at that precise moment of the emergency. Moreover, HIC are periods of a particularly protracted crisis and disaster responses are also periods on a longer continuum of the disaster management cycle. When both periods coincide, due to the nature of each of them, the impacts

that the actions might have on the wider population are significant. Finally, as it will be shown, in HIC scenarios, disaster response occurs in ways not yet well understood thus providing the opportunity for a scholarly and political inquiry.

Figure 5 Disaster management cycle

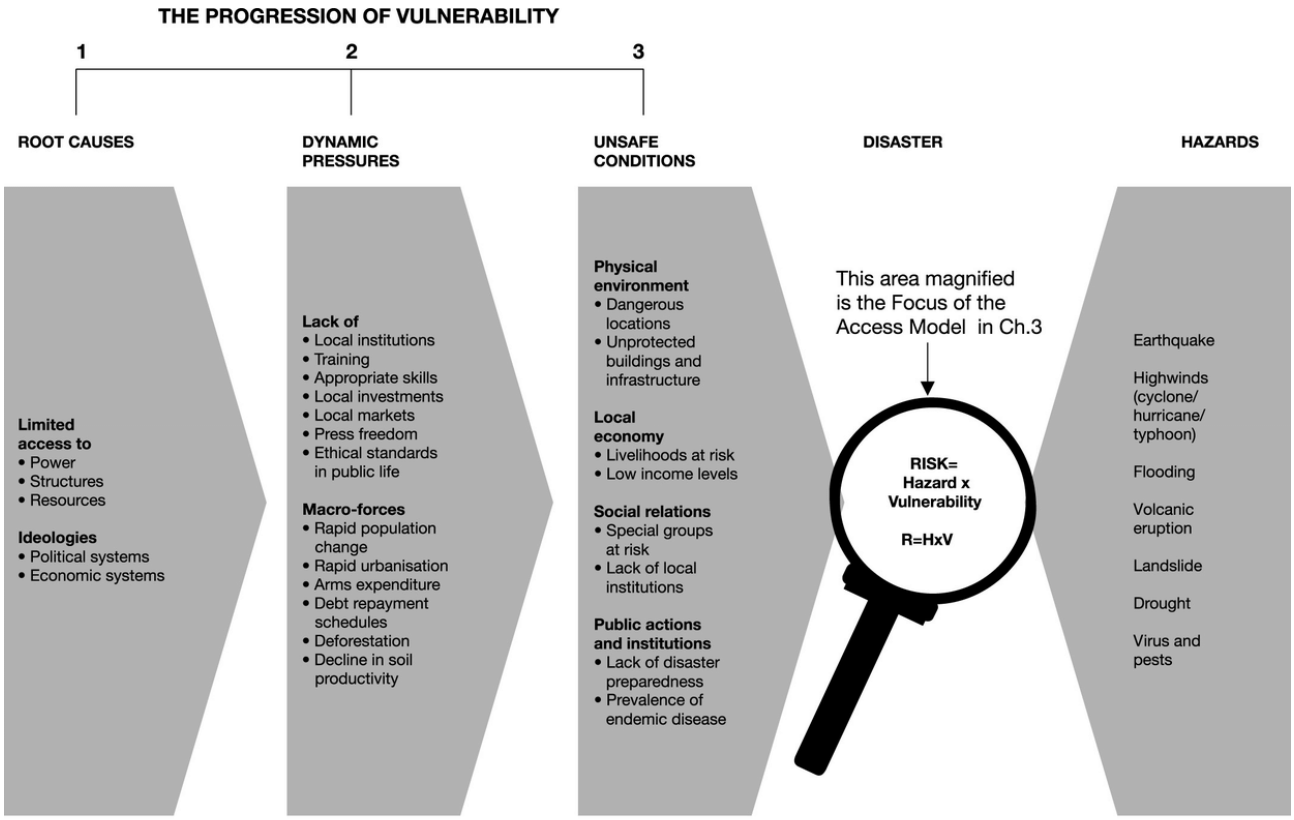


Source: Prepared by the author

Beyond the cycle and its focus in disaster management, the idea of disaster governance presents a broader focus encompassing policies and normative frameworks associated to the management and promotion of DRR, disaster response and disaster knowledge production. It presents the responsibilities of all actors involved in disaster-related actions, including government, civil society, and private actors that are present and act at the global, national, regional, and local levels, on the social, economic, and political dimensions of disasters (Field and Kelman, 2018; Hilhorst et al., 2019; Tierney, 2012; UNISDR, 2017). The governance of disasters, furthermore, is shaped by the interaction between multiple aid and society actors (Hilhorst, Mena, et al. 2019). Figure 8 'Conflict and disaster governance' (see section 5.2 for further discussion) illustrates the relationships between the different elements of a disaster mentioned above with conflict, including disaster governance and process of production and reduction of disaster risk.

To understand and study disasters, Wisner, Gaillard and Kelman (2012), adapting a figure by Terry Cannon (see Wisner et al. 2004:8), offer a framework in six variations explaining how disaster can be framed understanding hazards, the progression of vulnerability, resources, capacities, and the progression of safety or the way out of vulnerable conditions.

Figure 6 Pressure and Release (PAR) model



Source: Wisner B, Blaikie P, Cannon T, et al. (2004) At Risk: Natural Hazards, People's Vulnerability and Disasters. Second. London; New York: Routledge. Page 52

Understanding that the risk of disaster results from the interaction between hazards and vulnerability, the Pressure and Release (PAR) model (see Figure 6) presents a way to better understand how disasters occur. In the model, disasters are the result of two opposing forces (also called pressures): 'those processes generating vulnerability on one side, and the natural hazard event (or sometimes a slowly unfolding natural process) on the other'(Wisner et al. 2004:50). Vulnerability is built progressively in three stages, also called the progression of vulnerability: root causes, dynamic pressures, and unsafe conditions. Root causes are an 'interrelated set of widespread and general processes within a society and the world economy […] that give rise to vulnerability' (Ibid. 2004:51). They can also be seen as structural forces or underlying causes of vulnerability and disasters (Oliver-Smith et al. 2017). They relate to the distribution of power in a society, the function or dysfunction of a state, or the allocation and distribution of resources. Dynamic pressures play the role of translating root causes into unsafe conditions and can include a large set of processes and activities,

including urbanisation processes or deforestation. Unsafe conditions represent the particular shape that vulnerability takes in a particular moment in relation with a particular hazard (Wisner et al. 2004).

Release or relief of pressure in the PAR model comes when vulnerability is reduced. This happens when people have access to 'the capabilities, assets and livelihood opportunities that will enable them (or not) to reduce their vulnerability and avoid disaster' (Wisner et al. 2004:88). The DRR strategy, presented before, aims for a broader approach, in which the risk of disaster can be addressed by systematically reducing the factors creating vulnerability (release) but also, for example, by reducing people's exposure to hazards (UNISDR 2017). However, as argued by Kelman (2018), exposure can also be seen as a factor of vulnerability.

Communities

Before moving forward in the understanding of conflicts and disasters, it is important to highlight that although in previous paragraphs the concept of communities has been used laxly by quoting others' work, in this research 'community' is used critically. Community is a buzzword in disaster and humanitarian studies, but needs to be used reflectively, understanding that: first, working or researching with a community will often not include everybody, as usually the voices of those in power are more present (Cannon et al. 2014; Bankoff et al. 2015); second, the idea of a community also brings the romantic notion of groups of people that live together in harmony, collaborating with aligned needs, priorities, and goals (Bankoff et al. 2015; de Beer 2013; Grunewald 1999b); third, communities also present their conflicts, divisions and power struggles which need to be considered for research, disasters and humanitarian aid (Grunewald 1999b; Mena and ARC 2018b). In other words, the idea of a community can be seen as a myth (Cannon et al. 2014) that needs to be used in a reflective and critical manner.

4.4. Disasters and conflict interaction

Disasters and conflict can both have severe negative consequences, but people's attitude towards one and another can be different. That difference can be explained by the fact that for many people disasters are still considered a natural phenomenon. Comparing the earthquake that struck Lisbon in 1755 and the attack to the Twin Towers of New York on September 11, 2001, Alexander (2002) provides a review on how two events seen as a catastrophe can be interpreted differently just by associating one to natural causes and other to human-made ones. The earthquake in Lisbon is 'regarded as impartial, a visitation upon humanity but not a reprisal' while the attacks to the towers are the result of 'human malevolence, fruit of a system of ethics that few of us can begin to comprehend, but that we universally condemn' (Alexander 2002:6). The same occurs with disasters in high-intensity conflict (HIC) scenarios. HIC scenarios are seen similarly as terrorism-involved occurrences and, therefore, as the result of human actions, while disasters are still primarily perceived as non-human-made.

The previous distinction also translates to differences in how (violent and armed) conflict is seen to affect people's vulnerability and to facilitate disaster occurrence, versus how disasters are seen to affect and create conflict. Stallings (1988) present how this approach to disaster (as natural and external to society) can influence explanations of how they affect conflict. Disasters can be seen as an independent and exogenous variable triggering people's responses and actions (as not social), or as a dependent variable where disasters derive from social conditions. The second approach allows for a recognition that disaster and conflict have a dynamic relationship: not neutral, but politically and socially influenced. As Stallings (1988:1) presented, 'disasters are not politically neutral with respect to their consequences'.

In line with previous studies, as presented by Peters and Kelman (2020:1), 'scholarship has tended to focus on investigating causal linkages between disaster (including those associated with climate change) and conflict'. In both cases - of research studying how disasters can affect or produce conflict, and how conflict can affect or produce a disaster - results are diverse, with some of them indicating causative relationships and others denying or nuancing it (Peters and Kelman 2020; Streich and Mislan 2014; Xu et al. 2016). Rather than seeing these two trends as contradictory, I prefer to view the relationship between disasters and conflicts as dynamic and contextual. Also, across different types of disasters and different types of conflict in different countries, regions or historical settings, it is not only possible but very expected that we will find different results. Actually, diversity is what has characterised disaster studies for more than half of a century (Alexander et al. 2020; Gaillard 2019a). What is more, as presented by Kelman (2012:1), 'conflict and non-conflict disasters are inextricably linked'.

Two terms present in the literature to address the disaster-conflict relationship or co-occurrence are 'dual disasters' and 'divided disasters'. The term *dual disasters* refers to moments 'where a humanitarian crisis with human-made political roots overlaps with a humanitarian crisis induced by environmental disaster' (Hyndman 2011: 1). Dual disasters focuses on disasters and conflict occurring in the same location (Hyndman 2011; Waizenegger and Hyndman 2010). *Divided disasters* focuses on 'disasters and conflict 'that occur in different locations within the same state' (Field 2018:S266). Both concepts are complementary since each one allows observing different aspects of the disaster-conflict nexus.

> While dual disasters in the same locale invite immediate analysis of the consequences of the crises (in other words, the disaster and the conflict) and how these events, and their associated responses, directly interact with each other to spawn or exacerbate challenges and vulnerabilities […] divided disasters invite immediate analysis of the responses, and how the redeployment of resources to one event may spawn or exacerbate challenges in the other. (Field 2018:S266)

Presenting information based on case studies on Sri Lanka, the Philippines, and Indonesia, studies using *dual* or *divided* disaster as a research lens, show that the relationship between disasters and conflicts is complex, dynamic and highly contextual (Field 2018; Hyndman 2011). To address this complex conflict-disaster relationship, in the following two subsections I will present: first, literature indicating how disaster can trigger or affect (positively or negative) the occurrence of conflict and, second, how conflict can trigger or affect disaster occurrence.

Disaster influencing conflict

The literature presents that disaster can lead, trigger or facilitate (violent) conflict or reduce its likelihood and even influence conflict resolution and peace (Peters and Kelman 2020; Streich and Mislan 2014; Walch 2018). Most studies showing that disasters can trigger or influence conflict (also named in the literature as political unrest or instability and social disruption), indicate that the process is generally indirect, mediated by other means such as resource scarcity (see Brancati 2007; Drury and Olson 1998; Homer-Dixon 1994; Mach et al. 2019; Nel and Righarts 2008) or climate change. While the effects of climate change on agriculture can provoke market shocks and from there conflict (IPCC 2012; Mach et al. 2020), climate variability can also produce extreme weather-related events than can turn into disasters, which in turn influences the presence of conflict via, for example, resource scarcity again (see Bai and Kung 2010; Hsiang, Burke, and Miguel 2013; Ide 2015; Mach et al. 2020).

Another set of literature presents that disaster can affect (intrastate) conflict by prolonging its duration (Eastin 2016), increasing the effect of conflict (Brancati 2007), stressing ethnic differences (Schleussner et al. 2016), reassignments of efforts and resources to disaster response (Field 2018), or be 'catalysts of political instability in only those states, which are already prone to conflict' (Omelicheva 2011:1). Disaster risk reduction and prevention actions have also shown to produce social conflicts that differ from those produced by disasters, for example, by implementing flood protection walls that modify the amount of water available for different communities up or down a river (GFDRR, 2015; Heijmans, 2012; Heijmans et al., 2009).

Literature contesting that disaster can induce conflict has been published for decades (Buhaug 2016; Dynes and Quarantelli 1971; Hyndman 2011; Mach et al. 2019; Quarantelli and Dynes 1977; Stallings 1988; Xu et al. 2016). Some of this literature presents nuanced results showing, for instance, that the effect of (rapid-onset) disasters over conflict, civil and violent arrest varies over time and depends on the type of disaster (Nardulli, Peyton, and Bajjalieh 2015). Other studies are more positive, indicating how solidarity and agreement between people during the response to the disaster can actually bring out the best in people, decreasing the likelihood of violent conflict (Dynes and Quarantelli 1971; Stallings 1988; Taylor 1977). Preceding these studies, Barton (1970) presented a qualitative system of analysis to study people's behaviour in the face of

collective-stress situations, including disasters. His study shows how disasters and emergencies more often lead to 'supportive behaviour' than not towards the victims of an emergency or disaster (Barton 1970). A more recent body of literature shows how disaster can even positively influence conflict resolution (e.g. Evin 2004; Kreutz 2012; Régnier 2011; Siddiqi 2018) or also reduce the risk of civil war (Slettebak 2012). The best exhibitor of this last body of knowledge is the field of disaster diplomacy, which 'emerged as a thread of explanatory research that investigates how and why disaster-related activities do and do not influence peace and conflict' (Peters and Kelman 2020:1).

Disaster diplomacy has shown that diplomatic efforts and processes can be affected by disaster-related activities (Kelman 2012, 2016). Pre-existing conditions and interests need to be present so that disaster-related activities can affect these diplomatic endeavours positively, towards peace or conflict resolution; by itself, disaster risk reduction or responses are unlikely to create peace or reduce conflict (Kelman 2016). While a body of disaster diplomacy research has focused on foreign diplomacy or how disaster-related activity can reduce (or not) conflict between countries or nation-states (e.g. Ganapati et al. 2010; Kelman 2016; Streich and Mislan 2014) other body of research has studied intra-state, inter-state or regional conflicts (e.g. Gaillard et al. 2008; Kelman et al. 2018).

Two findings are consistent in disaster diplomacy literature. First, that disaster-related actions can affect diplomacy endeavours (but 'do not lead to the initiation of conflict' (Streich and Mislan 2014:70)), and second, that this effect is limited and mostly short-term, as disaster-related actions most commonly do not generate long-term or significant impact (Gaillard et al. 2008; Kelman 2016; Peters and Kelman 2020; Siddiqi 2018). Disaster diplomacy research also inform about how conflict can affect disasters occurrence or their impact (Kelman 2016; Streich and Mislan 2014). The following section, 'Conflicts influencing disasters' present information about this.

Important for HIC scenarios is the fact that 'disaster diplomacy could succeed when those in power decide that they want it to succeed and then use their power for that goal' (Kelman 2016:5). Power in HIC country-scenarios is contested and divided, between international the recognise governments, AOGs, private actors, and humanitarian aid and development groups, all of them interacting with disaster-related agendas (Siddiqi 2018). This complicates things even more, because when a group in power wants to make or promote these changes, it will always have to negotiate it with many other groups also in positions of power, as presented below.

Literature presenting the relevance of a conflict-sensitive approach by disaster practitioners also shows positive possible effects of disaster-related action over conflict dynamics (CARE International 2015; Garred 2007; Hyndman 2011; Vivekananda 2011). Peacebuilding is not the same as do-no-harm or conflict-sensitive

though, as peacebuilding (and conflict resolution) is a discipline with its own field of expertise (Barnett et al. 2007; Cousens, Kumar, and Wermester 2001; Woodrow and Chigas 2009). Do-no-harm and conflict-sensitive approaches, instead, aim for aid actors to recognize the impact of their actions on conflict dynamics, particularly exacerbate or produce conflict. From that recognition is expected they can modify or adapt their projects and programmes so as to avoid negatively impacting conflict dynamics (Mena and ARC 2018b; Vivekananda 2011; Woodrow and Chigas 2009).

Some of the scholarship presented above has studied the relationship between disaster and conflict in a quantitative way (e.g. Billon and Waizenegger 2007; Drury and Olson 1998; Eastin 2016; Nel and Righarts 2008; Omelicheva 2011; Schleussner et al. 2016). These studies, however, present different limitations, like a reduced presentation of different types of disaster, differences in dependent variables adopted for conflict, outdated datasets, or small sample sizes (Caso, 2019). Therefore, to address these challenges, Caso (2019) developed a large-N and disaggregated analysis to estimate how different types of disasters affect the likelihood of countries engaging in various types of armed conflict. Caso and other researchers, including myself, developed this work further and wrote a journal article[18], where we argue that

> despite the rise in the co-occurrence of disasters and armed conflicts, there is no statistically significant evidence to suggest that disasters trigger or sustain armed conflicts - at least directly - at the macro (country) level. Instead, we find that cross-country variation in armed conflict is largely explained by preconditioning factors (namely, lower levels of development, less democratic accountability, and larger population size), as well as by past conflict experiences and resource dependence (as an additional conflict trigger).[18]

Our research also acknowledges that the results are based on a macro-scale analysis and focused on armed conflict. Meso and micro levels of conflict can yield different conclusions on how disaster occurrence can contribute to social conflict, as some of the studies presented before suggest.

Conflict influencing disasters

Multiple authors have problematised the relationship between conflict and disasters in the past (e.g. Marktanner, Mienie, and Noiset 2015; Mitra and Vivekananda 2015; Nel and Righarts 2008; Peters and Peters 2018; Streich and Mislan 2014; Walch 2018). Wisner (2012) present four ways in which violent conflict affects disaster. First, '[v]iolence as cause of social vulnerability and institutional weakness' (2012:67), including people's displacement due to conflict and war; infrastructure destruction such as bridges, electrical network

[18] Caso N, Hilhorst D, Mena R, Papyrakis E (2020) *Does disaster cause armed conflict? Empirical evidence from the last three decades*. Presented to Journal of Peace Research. Under review.

and road; and livelihood deterioration. Other authors contribute to this idea indicating the effects of conflict on (disaster) governance (Field and Kelman 2018; Hilhorst, Mena, et al. 2019; Tierney 2012), and more generally on how conflict creates vulnerability that, among others, increases the risk of disasters (Bankoff et al. 2004; Hilhorst 2013a; Wisner et al. 2012a). Using the cases of the famine in South Sudan in 1997, drought in Afghanistan between 1999 and 2001, and the earthquake and flooding in Colombia in 1999, Buchanan-Smith and Christoplos (2004) indicate how the indirect effects of conflict increased the impact the disasters. As they present, conflicts create impoverishment and displacement, contribute to high rates of malnutrition, and reduce the capacity of local institutions to act, thereby increasing the vulnerability of people and the impact of disasters.

Second, Wisner (2012:68) highlights how violent conflict 'increases hazard frequency and intensity' by affecting vegetation, water resources, or landscapes, resulting, for example, in deforestation that increases the risk of disasters. He also mentions how conflict-related displacement can negatively impact landscapes and increase the risk of hazard frequency and intensity. Mach et al. (2019, 2020) and others (Field and Kelman 2018; Marktanner et al. 2015) also support this second idea. Third, violent conflict can be 'an obstacle to effective disaster relief and recovery assistance' (Wisner 2012:68), not only by hindering access to affected territories but also by diverting funds and human resources (national and international ones) that otherwise would be useful for mitigating or responding to disasters. Field and Kelman (2018) also noticed how conflict could hinder local knowledge and historical experiences with disasters, in part by furthering displacement, which Wisner (2012) mentions too.

Fourth, 'violence as an obstacle to good DRR practice' is mentioned by Wisner (2012:69) and indicated by others (Feinstein International Center 2013; Heijmans 2012; Walch 2018), stressing how the social engagement of communities or the application of local knowledge to mitigate risk might be impossible during violent conflict (Hilhorst 2013d; Krüger, Bankoff, et al. 2015). For example, studying the 2004 tsunami in in Aceh and Sri Lanka, a well-known case of study among disaster diplomacy scholars, Kelman (2016) presents the conflict affected local livelihoods reducing people's capabilities to develop disaster risk reduction actions against tsunamis. To the above, Mach et al. (2020:5) adds that the 'effects of armed conflict and war are severe and long-lasting for societies and, importantly, greatly increase their climate-related vulnerability', which in turn increases the risk of disasters. Proposing a typology of three wartime political orders (rebel stability, informal stability, and fragmented landscape) Walch (2018) studied the impact of armed conflict on DRR using the cases of the Philippines and Mali. The author concludes that

> rebel groups that control territory and enjoy good relations with the local population and existing institutions can play a positive part in making DRR more sustainable in conflict-affected regions. In situations where rebel groups have no territorial control, robust informal institutions can fulfil a

> stabilising role and create a more stable wartime political order and thus have a positive effect on DRR. Finally, in settings where there is unclear territorial control by actors and where informal institutions are weak or inexistent, DRR interventions are unlikely to have any kind of positive impact. (Walch 2018:S256)

Walch (2018) also highlights the positive impact that the inclusion and participation of local leaders, armed rebel groups and informal institutions can have in DRR projects.

Following up on the quantitative research project mentioned above (see Footnote 18 above), a new quantitative analysis[19] on the relationship between conflict and disaster was developed to unpack how armed conflict affects disaster occurrence and disaster-related deaths. This new large N-study, using the datasets of the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP 2019) and the Emergency Events from the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (EM-DAT 2020), studied the correlation between more than 4,242 conflicts in 157 countries between 1989 and 2018 and disasters in the same timeframe and countries. The results present

> that armed conflicts are strongly and positively correlated with disaster occurrence and increases the likelihood of disaster occurrence between 5% and 6%. We also find that the effects of armed conflict on disaster-related deaths are statistically significant even after controlling for levels of development, democratic institution quality, population sizes and its distribution, and country sizes. According to our estimations, armed conflict increases the deaths related to disasters between 16% and 34% depending on the disaster-related deaths variable used. Our results are consistent after controlling for several socio-economic variables and for different disasters and armed conflict variable.[19]

Bringing together literature informing qualitative ways in which conflict can affect disaster together with this empirical account of that impact, it is possible to observe that violent conflict does affect the occurrence and impact of disasters. The particularities of this in HIC scenarios are what the cases of South Sudan, Afghanistan and Yemen present in more detail. The literature reviewed and the interviews related to this chapter show that during a protracted crisis, escalation to a HIC scenario or moment can develop rapidly, and maybe disaster governance arrangements do not adapt quickly enough to the new setting. Therefore, from the time a conflict turns violent and the most overt challenges of it emerge, the response to disasters occurring in (like drought or floods) or suddenly striking a particular area changes immediately, but not necessarily in a coordinated or planned way. On the contrary, once the level of conflict diminishes, most actors continue to respond in the same way (with an emergency mentality) for a while with a kind of inertia (Koch et al. 2009).

[19] Caso N, Hilhorst D, Mena R (2020) *How can armed conflict increase the probability of disasters and their consequences*. Presented to Journal of Peace Research.In review.

It may be the case that aid and society actors decide to wait until they are sure the level of conflict has really changed, showing further how conflict dynamics relate with disaster agendas (and, therefore, affects disaster occurrence).

This and previous sections have unwrapped disasters, disaster response, and DRR in relation to conflict in general and to some extent with HIC moments. The following section will explore the specific challenges that HIC scenarios present for disaster response and DRR, and for whom. In other words, it will examine who in HIC is responding and acting on disasters, and what this singular moment during a protracted conflict means for their actions. A subsequent section unwraps how these actors overcome these challenges and are enabled to act.

4.5. Actors and Challenges of Disaster Response in HIC

Humanitarian Arena and Aid-society Actors

In responding to a disaster, several actors are present. In HIC scenarios, the available literature suggests that single-mandate organisations - those with a 'strict focus on life-saving humanitarian assistance' - and diaspora groups are the most common actors delivering aid particularly for disaster interventions (Hilhorst and Pereboom 2016:85), while in the broader humanitarian aid sector (responding to a broad range of crisis-related needs) multi-mandate organisations perform the majority of these actions (OCHA 1999; Wood, Apthorpe, and Borton 2001b; Keen 2008a; Demmers 2012; Maxwell and Majid 2015; Hilhorst and Pereboom 2016). The presence of other actors must not be ignored, as stressed in some interviews (AC2, AP2, B2). For instance, local people and the private sector together form a large group of responders. As an example of the scale of these actions, medium or large humanitarian operations may include tens of NGOs, UN agencies, different components of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and national societies, plus a dozen other private and corporate organisations as well as local people, institutions and governments (ALNAP 2015; Weiss 2007; Wood et al. 2001a).

Studying this large group of actors can be difficult. One way to facilitate the process is to find ways to organise or divide them into groups. It is easier to observe and analyse these sets of actors in aggregate mode, which also makes it possible to discover common patterns among groups. The sorting can be done via cluster analysis, the 'art of finding groups in data' (Kaufman and Rousseeuw 2005:1) but this requires studying all actors and then finding commonalities among them. Another option is to develop typologies, as theoretical categories based on the attributes describing each group (Babbie 2013). This research decided to classify different actors following a typology approach, resulting in two main groups - *aid* or *society* - as will be defined in detail.

As an analytical concept, the aid-society construct is dynamic and represents the relationships between different actors of the aid and society spheres without always identifying to which specific sphere the actor belongs. I define aid actors as those for whom humanitarian actions are part of their core function and who are usually part of, or at least linked to, international institutions. Society actors - and especially disaster-or conflict affected people themselves - may also play relevant roles in the response, but humanitarian aid is not part of their core function. Local state and non-state institutions and local people are some of these society actors. Aid actors, however, should not necessarily be seen as totally external to the realities of the places where they act: they 'add a layer to the complexity of governance in crisis-affected settings, creating an imprint on the institutional landscape as it unfolds' (Hilhorst 2016: 5). Conversely, society actors interact with aid in strategic ways to pursue their own interests and agendas. As a result, all the actors involved in disaster response form an *aid-society arena* - an aid-society relationship that occurs within a humanitarian arena. Table 9 attempts to map aid-society actors in these two categories, accounting for the diversity of players involved in HIC scenarios for disaster response and humanitarian aid.

It is important to stress, though, that aid and-society actors as analytical categories allow me to understand some common characteristics between actors with broad and general common core functions. As such, I do not try to represent categorically the role of any actor, as these categories are fluid and some actors may transit from having been aid actors at some moments before becoming society actors. In this sense, is also relevant to see that some actors are institutions that consist of people and other are actual people. With the institutions might be more stable to see them as aid or society actors, but people can more easily transit from one group to the other, as actors within institutions. Depending on where they come from, they can go back and forth between being in the aid and society categories. This fluidity of the concepts, and the actors which they seek to represent, is already a reflection of how dynamic and at times messy the interactions of multiple and diverse actors involved in humanitarian aid, development or disaster-related actions can be.

From an actor-oriented perspective the term 'humanitarian arena' seeks to represent 'the outcome of the messy interaction of social actors struggling, negotiating and trying to further their interests' (Bakewell, 2000, p. 108–9 in Hilhorst and Jansen 2010:1120). The arena is built by the multiple actors, institutions, and stakeholders involved in the process, including those without exclusively humanitarian interests (Hilhorst and Jansen 2010; Hilhorst and Pereboom 2016). Humanitarian action is, in this sense, an arena where all actors related to the response, including people affected, negotiate and shape the outcomes of aid (Collinson and Duffield 2013; Ibid. 2010).

Table 9 Aid-Society actors

AID	SOCIETY
UN system and agencies	
Regional and inter-governmental humanitarian organisations	
International aid and humanitarian organisations	
IFRC – ICRC	
National relief organism	
ICRC national societies	
INGOs (International non-governmental organizations)	
Inter-regional or transnational organization	
International - multinational private and corporate organisms	
Donors	
Military and armed groups: Peacekeepers, blue helmet, national armies, armed rebel/opposition groups, mercenaries	
Media, journalist, photographers	
Evaluation teams (methodologist, evaluators, evaluation manager, facilitators)	
Volunteers	
Religious institutions	
Researchers	
NGOs	
Funding and financial institutions	
	Other national governments
	National government
	Ministers and national agencies
	Parallel states-governments and state-contesting parties
	Local governments and authorities
	Local institutions
	Local people

Source: the author

A characteristic of the arena is that aid gets shaped in practice, in contrast with the concept of humanitarian space, as aid is not limited to the physical, working, and ideal spaces where it should be delivered following well-known humanitarian principles (Hilhorst and Jansen 2013). The notion of humanitarian space is also frequently used by many actors to legitimise their actions and interest, framing themselves as neutral, ethical, needed, or distant from local political contexts (DeChaine 2002; Hilhorst and Jansen 2010). In contrast, the concept of arena, as presented by Hilhorst and Jansen (2013), is empirical and built on people's practices, including all social-political strategies and negotiations, formal and informal actions, and everyday practices occurring in, and for the delivery of, aid. Therefore, this approach allows for the observation of the ways in which it is possible for multiple actors to respond in HIC, recognising that the practices and the shape of the response is a result of the relationships amongst all involved players.

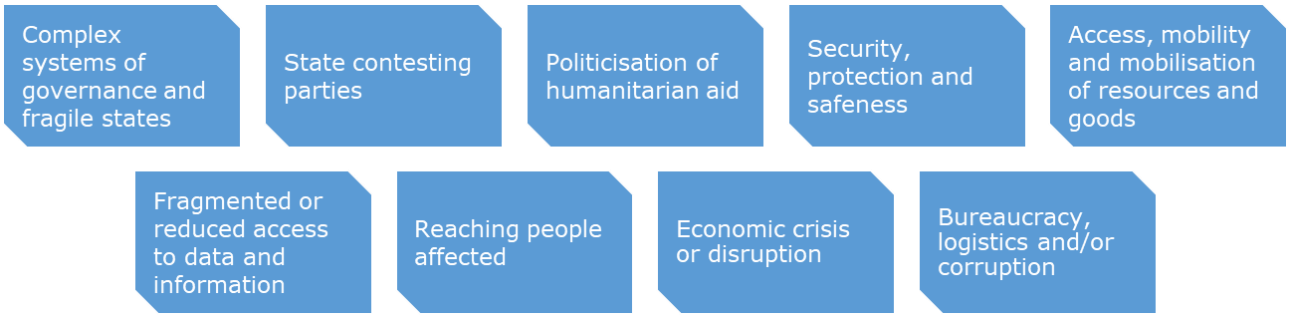
Each group of institutional actors is constituted out of an important number of sub-actors playing a particular role. It must be noticed, though, that given the combined effect of the disaster and the conflict, it becomes

impossible to differentiate accurately between actors responding primarily to the conflict, or to the disaster. As stated by Wood et al. (2001a:3), 'to determine who are the actors participating in the humanitarian system seems to be an impossible mission, as it usually includes thousands of individuals worldwide and uncountable organisations'.

Challenges for disaster-related actions in HIC Scenarios

In HIC scenarios such as the ones described here, humanitarian actors have to respond in complex scenarios presenting multiple challenges. The challenges in HIC scenarios (to be reviewed in detail below) include issues of security, access, reduced supply of services and goods, deficiency of information, complex governance at the local or national level, economic problems, difficulties of reaching people in need, or challenges in the establishment of refugee camps and settlements. As presented in a report from Médecins Sans Frontières, as a result of these challenges 'UN agencies and INGOs are increasingly absent from field locations, especially when there are any kind of significant security or logistical issues' (Healy and Tiller 2014:4). These challenges on the ground affect not only disaster response but humanitarian aid actions.

Figure 7 Challenges for disaster response in HIC



Source: Prepared by the author

Among these challenges (illustrated in Figure 7 Challenges for disaster response in HIC), the so-called weak or complex governance systems are an overarching challenge from which many others derive, such as reduced access to information or economic crisis. Following sections present the main challenges found in the literature regarding responding and reducing he risk of disasters during HIC.

Complex governance systems

The governance issue also plays a significant role as a link between the response and governance of disasters and the conflict. Complex systems of governance can involve the complexity of multiple and parallel systems of governance in one territory and can include different economic and political systems in some parts of the territories. For example, a study about the Central African Republic (CAR) mentioned the presence of 'three parallel governance structures: local government or civic administration; the tribal administration for

different tribal groups; and humanitarian governance structures which include the United Nations organizations, international, and national non-government organizations, and donor countries' (Young and Maxwell 2009:vii). Their complexity is not only based on the many (and sometimes unknown) governance systems in a place, but also from the lack of knowledge that could enable a way of manoeuvring through them. For example, the presence of parallel governance systems implies that the coordination of responses is not only fragmented, but entails negotiation and coordination with multiple parties (Loeb 2013; Magone et al. 2011; Wood et al. 2001a). These multi-governed scenarios make the coordination, access to information, and the whole process more complex, and issues of legitimacy and power are intertwined with this challenge.

For humanitarian actors from the international aid community, the challenge of complex systems of governance includes, for example, having to negotiate with state-contesting parties that often fall under the political label of rebels or terrorists. Another name frequently given to these actors is non-state armed groups. These negotiations are generally driven by political interest from both the armed groups controlling territories and from donors, national governments, and the international community which may wish to have a say in allowing or participating in negotiations (Ibid. 2014; Magone et al. 2011). For the UN system or donor countries, deals with these actors can be an opportunity to negotiate and/or pursue other agendas by imposing conditions on aid (Atmar 2001). Negotiating and engaging with those parties has also confronted many humanitarian actors with ethical, legal, and political dilemmas, especially the international aid agencies (Jackson and Davey 2014; Loeb 2013; Pirotte, Husson, and Grunewald 1999). At the same time, local actors - both responders and aid beneficiaries - also pursue their agendas and interests in negotiations with humanitarian players.

In addition, the contesting parties and the open social conflict affecting the territories may drive the development of norms, legal frameworks, and protocols that, despite being developed most of the time within the framework of increasing the protection of people, might hinder disaster response or risk reduction. In HIC scenarios the use of drones is widely contested; nevertheless, recently many disaster responders have been using them to obtain data about affected areas. Introducing medicine or medical equipment to these places can be trapped in large multiple 'bureaucratic layers', as described by two practitioners interviewed (AP1, AP2). The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent and the United Nations Development Program (IFRC and UNDP 2015) document 'The Checklist on Law and Disaster Risk Reduction' also presents more examples of these situations, especially with regard to the laws and legal frameworks required for appropriate disaster risk reduction and response. However, one academic interviewed (AC2) stated that in places with HIC levels of conflict, disaster response was not prioritised or

facilitated because every action is read as a move in the conflict. The political reality of the conflict thus permeates into disaster response.

Politicisation of humanitarian aid

This politicisation of humanitarian aid is, therefore, another challenge for humanitarian response to disaster in conflict-ridden areas (Atmar 2001; Davey et al. 2013; Hilhorst 2013b; Kelman 2012). Humanitarian actors' decisions and actions unfold in a political arena (Hilhorst and Jansen 2013; Magone et al. 2011). These dynamics do not only occur at the local level, as the geopolitical use of aid and disasters also reach regional and international arenas (Barnett 2011; Wood et al. 2001a). The political aspect of the disasters can also be seen as a window of opportunity, for example, in cases of disaster diplomacy as seen before, where disaster-related activities may reduce conflict by inducing cooperation, peaceful negotiation, and diplomatic opportunities between the parties involved (Kelman 2006, 2016; Peters and Kelman 2020). For example, the case of the 1999 earthquake affecting Greece and Turkey explored by Ganapati et al. (2010) showed that, under specific conditions, disaster could lead to long-term collaboration between countries, including 'disaster-related collaboration at non-governmental level' (Ganapati et al. 2010: 176). This politicisation also extends to response funding processes in the HIC area. In some cases, as presented by Wood et al. (2001a), governments are cautious to support actions in these HIC scenarios so that, along with UN agencies grants and pool funds, NGOs and other responders working in this setting depend on funding coming from private sources, including bank loans. However, cases like South Sudan or Afghanistan showed that government-driven funds represent the majority of aid funding (Financial Tracking Service, 2016).

Safety and security

Another main challenge for disaster response in HIC is related to security. This challenge includes the protection and safety of multiple actors from different threats, both in terms of conflict as well as disaster. One concern is the protection of affected people from the disaster itself and its related events or effects, for instance aftershocks, unstable terrains, or contaminated flood water (Healy and Tiller 2014; HPN and OPM 2010). In HIC scenarios, the protection of affected population and respondents from other people must be added to those concerns (Grünewald 2012; Healy and Tiller 2014; Maxwell and Majid 2015; Stoddard, Harmer, and Ryou 2014). Here, security concerns refers to violent acts associated with the course of the conflict and not the cases of looting or violence resulting from people's reaction to a disaster which is less frequent than suggested by the media (Alexander 2013; De Waal 1997). Another situation that challenges the safety and security of humanitarian action is what De Waal (2018:196) coined counter-humanitarianism, which is the rejection of humanitarian norms and 'legitimizes political and military conduct that is indifferent to human life or subordinates human life to others end'. An example of counter-humanitarianism are the

actions of extremist armed groups which often carry out attacks against civilians and aid actors in conflict-affected territories.

Some results arising out of security concerns have been the development of strong security policies, the construction of compounds or 'bunkerisation' of aid agencies, the development of remote management, and the increasing distance between aid workers and people in need (Donini and Maxwell 2014; Duffield 2012; HPN and OPM 2010; Maxwell and Majid 2015; Smirl 2015). Although this last trend is generally associated with humanitarian aid actions, including emergency and developmental ones, multiple interviewees (AC1, AC2, AP1, AP2, C1) agreed that in HIC scenarios disaster responders, local and internationals, operate in the same way.

The claim of increasing distance between aid workers and beneficiaries can be contested saying that this is true only in the case of international actors. International organisations providing assistance commonly transfer security risk to local staff and local NGOs (Stoddard et al. 2006), resulting in local actors becoming closer to people in need and international actors becoming more distant. Another aspect of this 'localisation of the response' via national staff as a response to insecurity is the strengthening of remote management and remote programming (Donini and Maxwell 2014; Ibid. 2006). Remote management entails 'the practice of withdrawing international (or other at-risk staff) while transferring increased programming responsibilities to local staff or local partner organizations' (Egeland et al. 2011: xiv). Not to be confused with the decentralisation of decision-making, remote management is supposedly a temporary managerial adaptation that occurs from outside of the affected country or from the capital with respect to affected regions and territories (Donini and Maxwell 2014; Egeland et al. 2011). The localisation of the response as a way of outsourcing security risk raises multiple questions about the ethics of relocating this risk to local actors, the accountability of the process, and the possible impacts for humanitarian principles, to name a few (Donini and Maxwell 2014; Egeland et al. 2011; Slim 2015; Stoddard et al. 2006).

The security challenge has also increased the inclusion of the private sector in HIC scenarios, particularly regarding access and securitisation. The case of Somalia is an example of the intervention of private groups: after the Black Hawk episode (helicopters from the U.S. were shot down), the only means to ensure access and provide security to the humanitarian sector was outsourcing that responsibility to private corporations (Maxwell and Majid 2015). The interviews conducted for my research revealed another example of using the private sector including hiring private trucks and charter flights for the distribution of goods in South Sudan and the use of private financial service providers to transport cash needed for cash transfer programmes, paying for salaries and services, and buying local goods (AC2, AP1, AP2, C1). Despite all soft and hard security measures, security is a constant concern for aid workers. Among others, books and chapters like Neuman and Weissman (2016), Roth (2011), Fink et al. (2014), Stoddard et al. (2006, 2014), and a report from IFRC

(2011) provide a description of these experiences and what it means for aid actors to work in dangerous settings.

Access and mobility

Mobility and access to different territories is challenging for all actors, from local people to international institutions (Hilhorst and Pereboom 2016). In addition to the safety issues already mentioned, roads are often not clearly mapped or in poor condition in countries or regions affected by HIC. Roadblocks, hijackings, check-points, landmines, and ambushes are also a general concern (Menkhaus 2010; Pottier 2006). If public transportation is available, it tends to be unstable, unsafe, and irregular, especially between cities. Oil shortages and the high prices for fuel are further obstacles. This leads to the impediment of free movement for seeking help, insecurity during long walks, as well as reduced access to respondents and providers of humanitarian aid (Caccavale 2015; Duffield 2012; Grünewald 2012; Hilhorst 2016).

The expected temporary solution to access issues was based on the principle of 'humanitarian negotiated access' which is underpinned by the humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence. But nowadays access is fragmented and humanitarian institutions have to resort to their negotiation capacities, to hiring private security and helicopters, or to finding alternative ways of access[20], which often bring into question some of the humanitarian principles when one has to negotiate for access (Donini and Maxwell 2014; Duffield 2012; Grünewald 2012; Healy and Tiller 2014; Maxwell and Majid 2015). Actors like the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) play a role in negotiating access, but the increasing numbers of groups fighting each other and humanitarian organisations on the ground makes the coordination and negotiation of access in a unified way highly challenging (Donini 2012b; Hilhorst and Pereboom 2016; Schwendimann 2011). In addition, when negotiating, humanitarian actors usually see themselves 'negotiating in practice that which is non-negotiable in principle' as many times they have to accept or deal with conditions that they would not have to confront in other situations (Mancini-Griffoli and Picot 2004:11). In HIC scenarios, as also pointed out by some research participants (AC2, C1, AP2), these difficulties of access already existed before the disaster in the affected territories and produced a deficiency of goods and services that disable local responses (Grünewald 2012).

Technology plays a role in circumventing access and security issues. Airdrops or aerial delivery of aid and the use of drones to obtain information are strategies invoked by these issues (Bastian et al. 2016; Belliveau 2016; Emery 2016; Giugni 2016). The use of satellite imagery is more and more popular when responding to

[20] Mentioned and reaffirmed in two interviews (AC1, AP1).

multiple disasters including drought, floods, earthquakes, and tsunamis (Harvard Humanitarian Initiative 2011; National Research Council 2007).

Fragmented or reduced access to data and information

Another significant challenge that occurs at different stages in the disaster response cycle is the lack of, reduced, or fragmented information on the country or some regions of it. First, it complicates the process of coordinating and planning of aid and response (Comfort et al. 2004; Wood et al. 2001a). Secondly, any attempts at assessment and accountability of the response are frustrated (Wood et al. 2001a). These issues affect governments, local institutions, humanitarian aid agencies, and the international community in different ways. This information deficiency, though, is not exclusive to HIC settings and is also present in other disaster and conflict affected settings. Some HIC countries, like Afghanistan, have a long history of research and aid operation and it is easier to access some of the necessary data, although in some regions controlled by non-governmental parties this information may not be up-to-date. At the other end of the spectrum, in South Sudan the level of information about disasters and aid operations is still low despite its protracted conflict history.

Affected people, who are usually asking where to go, what to do, and wondering what is actually happening (particularly when affected by rapid-onset disasters), are confronted with a lack of, or reduced access to, information to help them make informed decisions. The level of rumours in these settings can be high and hence produce more collateral impact. In a different vein, not addressed in this article due to space constraints, data and information are political. The lack of, use, and ways in which information is produced, framed and managed is not neutral and usually responds to multiple agendas and interests, even in the humanitarian aid and disaster response spheres (Cottle 2014; Herman and Chomsky 2010; Olsen, Carstensen, and Høyen 2003; Robinson 1999; Wanta, Golan, and Lee 2004).

Reaching people affected

Reaching people affected or in need of aid is also challenging for two reasons besides the previously mentioned ones (access and reduced information). In HIC settings, the levels of internally displaced people (IDPs) are usually high, meaning that it is not always clear how many people could have been present and affected by a disaster. Except for those in refugee/IDP camps, settlements, or in 'protection of civilians' sites (PoCs), the location of people can be in some cases difficult, especially in rapid-onset disasters. Although the fact that IDPs are concentrated in PoCs may be advantageous for disaster response because aid agencies are already there at the time of the disaster and therefore access to affected territories may be easier, these places also represent a second set of challenges in HIC scenarios. Refugee camps and PoCs tend to be more permanent settlements (Jansen 2013, 2015; Lilly 2014), thus, the boundaries between the response and the

post-disaster phase become blurred, making the initial task of meeting people's needs and reducing suffering more complex.

Reaching out to disaster- or conflict-affected people to provide them with aid is usually described as an on-going process that lasts until they can regain certain levels of self-sufficiency or recovery. However, special cases such as the Angola 2013 drought showed that sometimes aid can be delivered only once and in a limited way, after which people were left without help because of the denial of the existence of the disaster (Tran 2013). Both dynamics - people being displaced and settling down in refugee camps, settlements, or PoC sites - defy the notion that disaster response and relief is a temporary action; which is similar to conflict-affected situations. Once again, the border between the effects of the disaster and the conflict become blurred, making it difficult to know if people are moving and seeking refuge due to the conflict, the disaster, or a combination of both. The story of Akong, presented in Chapter 1. Introduction, is a good example of this situation.

Refugee camps play a role in most HIC scenarios with their own political and social dynamics, which are not restricted to the camp itself. As Jansen asserts, 'the relation between refugees and aid actors does not stop at the camp's boundaries' (2015:1). This implies another challenge for the response, because despite the existence of camps, it is not always clear how to reach people in need. In fact, up to 69% of refugees (UNHCR 2017) or disaster-affected persons stay outside the camps, living in neighbouring areas (A.R. 2018).

Economic crisis

Usually, HIC scenarios are also in economic crisis, including recession, instability, inflation, or breaking up of the supply chain of goods and services (Grigorian and Kock 2010; Rother et al. 2016). The lack of or difficulty in accessing services and commodities under these conditions expose external aid workers to the challenge of being self-sufficient, especially in cases like South Sudan or Syria. Responders must be able to bring with them everything that they need to provide relief or 'have robust local supply chains, pre-planned and with a positive rather than negative impact on local economy' (Norton et al. 2013: 84) so as to not burden the limited supplies available. For local people, HIC scenarios may also include tax payments, as was the case in Somalia with Al-Shabaab (Maxwell and Majid 2015:6). On top of the economic burden imposed by the conflict, disasters usually have a serious economic effect on the population (Keen 1998; Spiegel et al. 2007). On the one hand, they increase their expenses substantially since they need to replace what was lost, and on the other hand, they may stop receiving income as many productive activities are affected and people stop working. Consequently, post-disaster recovery, reconstruction and rehabilitation processes may be delayed until the levels of conflict decrease (GFDRR et al. 2016; McGrady 1999). Protracted conflicts, thus, are likely to produce protracted recovery and reconstruction phases in HIC scenarios.

Because of people's poor access to commodities and services in some regions (due to the economic crisis, disruption of supply chains and roads, and minimal purchasing power), reliance on aid will last longer than disaster response in non-conflict zones, and the process of dependency and protracted crisis will be reinforced. Dependency here is used to mean that the response may result in a large web of interdependencies and co-shaping amongst multiple actors, which becomes embedded in people's everyday lives (Harvey and Lind 2005; Hilhorst and Jansen 2010). This is not meant as a normative observation (neither positive nor negative), but shows the challenge of responding in a complex social context. Accessing services and goods depends on the capacity of each actor involved to move around in the social-humanitarian arena rather than only on a market-oriented strategy of buying and hiring. In many cases of disaster response, actors find it difficult to make the time to build or understand this larger social context.

Bureaucracy, logistics, and/or corruption

Related to the economic crisis and the protracted state of the crisis where HIC occurs, disaster response is also many times confronted with corruption, bureaucratic procedures that are not always clear or are constantly changing, and lack of transparency. These issues affect both aid and society actors, making the response more expensive, slower or less efficient. In a similar vein, as discussed by Keen (1998), violence plays an economic role in civil wars and also in all HIC settings. Violent crises are far from irrational: they are a rational response to the interest, frequently economic, of some actors (Keen 1998). Disaster response models cannot be blind to this reality and they must start including this situation of 'rational', economically driven violence in model development, especially when responding in HIC scenarios.

Solutions, strategies and coping mechanisms

In relation to a more developmental model of action, these complex situations drove the development of the Sphere Project and its 'Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response' handbook, with a first edition published at the end of the nineties (Sphere Association 2018; Sphere Project 2011). Part of this learning process and thinking about acting in a HIC was the emergence of 'new wars' such as the military interventions of Africa and Asia, or the ex-Soviet conflict of the early nineties (Davey et al. 2013). These wars were 'new' insofar as they represented an intensification of attacks on civilians thus weakening and destabilising governments' legitimacy and bringing new challenges to the humanitarian sector (Newman 2004).

Particularly relevant for a comprehensive understanding of disaster in HIC is the human security approach. Human security brings the focus onto people involved in everyday practices, even in areas of conflict, focusing on the role of military interventions or the state as the single protector of citizens (Gasper and Gómez 2014a). It also emphasises that complex situations have multiple stressors and, for instance, drought

as a disaster may be the cause of more suffering than military interventions (Gasper and Gómez 2014b). Therefore, in HIC scenarios disaster response may play a vital role in reducing peoples' suffering even though disaster response may be seen as a side issue due to the conflict.

Coping with these challenges draws on the capacities of aid-society actors to negotiate with other players, legitimise their actions and presence, as well as change and adapt their actions and strategies according to the context. This last point is of utmost relevance because to act, people and institutions must have the power and legitimacy to do so. Power is relational and legitimacy is part of power relations (Beetham 2013). Without legitimacy, power relations are coercive, and with legitimate power the compliance and acceptance of others is ensured (McCullough 2015). But this can be a difficult task in HIC scenarios, where the level of legitimacy of multiple actors is at stake. For example, the government or any authority is not always legitimate and its actions may be seen as coercive by other groups. However, power exerted coercively is also common in these settings and for some actors is a valid way to legitimise their actions. Legitimacy and power relations are complex, highly nuanced processes with multiple dynamics. The following section will discuss them in more detail and how they unfold in HIC settings during disaster response and risk reduction.

4.6. Responding and reducing the risk of disasters in HIC Scenarios

Responding or reducing the risk of disasters is also challenging in HIC because, theoretically, the process needs to be guided by local or national authorities. The organisation of international aid and humanitarian agencies is also supposedly, coordinated by functional states and known protocols (Todd and Todd 2011). In reality, the process usually begins with local people and institutions, including the ones affected by the disaster, providing aid to each other. Later on, aid agencies join to the efforts relating to local actors, modifying the shape that the response takes. Therefore, it needs to be clear that there is always a response to the disaster, whether it is driven only by local people, aid agencies present on the site because of the conflict, or other state and non-state institutions. Also, collecting information on what happened, the number of people affected, and basic needs to be covered is neither a non-linear nor a fast process (Comfort et al. 2004; Walle and Turoff 2008). This also applies for slow-onset disasters such as droughts, because the process to consider them a disaster that requires a response can also be a complex and lengthy one (De Waal 2018; Maxwell and Majid 2015; OCHA 2011). In cases where the disaster occurs in places affected by violent social conflict, as in HIC scenarios, extra layers of complexity are added to the response (Harris et al. 2013; Keen 2008a). Finally, the lack of central coordination or control over relevant parts of the territory by state governments compel multiple aid agencies and state and non-state actors to build knowledge and act directly between them.

When it comes to work in context of conflict and its challenges, Goodhand (2001) provides the pertinent distinction between working *in*, *on,* and *around* conflict. Working around conflict signifies that many projects and organisations who avoid conflict will only work in areas where there is no active conflict, which often coincides with government-controlled areas. Working in conflict means that some organisations and projects can work in areas with active conflict without necessarily intervening or actively engaging in conflict dynamics. This category resounds with the do no harm approach (see Anderson 1999), as it recognises the possibilities of working in places affected by conflict while not exacerbating or creating more tensions. Working on conflict, instead, includes all projects and organisations working directly with conflict causes, effects or dynamics. This includes, for example, peace building projects and interventions.

Legitimacy and (power) relationships are both embedded in social relations, which in turn are rooted in larger social constellations, such as the HIC scenarios presented in this dissertation. Therefore, this research stands on the premise that the responses of international aid and local state and non-state actors chiefly depend on the type of conflict that the place affected by a disaster is facing. Besides, the relationships between the actors involved not only shapes the response, but the response itself affects these relations. Therefore, to understand the complex socially constructed nature of the response in HIC settings, it is necessary not only to know how aid agencies and state and non-state actors respond but also how the response is affecting and affected by the interaction among these actors.

Legitimacy and Power

Situating the notions of *legitimacy, power,* and *negotiation* at the core of disaster response in HIC scenarios is not a naïve proposal. It is to state that beyond the moral drivers and technical aspects of these dynamics, disaster response is not only political, but also relational. It depends on a large aid-society arena where, as mentioned by Warner (2013:83), disasters convey political capital, legitimacy and 'may serve humanitarian but also utilitarian political instrumentality'. Moreover, these concepts have long-standing political and sociological relevance, requiring a better understanding of what they mean here and how they are used to study disaster response.

Legitimacy is a concept that has been addressed by different schools of thought. One group of thinkers conceptualise legitimacy as belief or voluntary agreement on the part of a community that a rule or institution must be obeyed (e.g. Levi and Sacks 2009; OECD 2010; Stel et al. 2012). This perspective for Bauman (1992) and Beetham (2013) does not allow tracing of the relational aspect of legitimacy that involves the actor seeking legitimacy from those actors who legitimise it. The body of research using the first definition above is more associated with the study of states' and governments' legitimacy, especially as service providers. Other literature on legitimacy describes a process in which non-state actors find legitimacy in the

citizenry as holders of legitimacy in fragile states (La-Porte 2015; McCandless 2014), even in the case of armed non-state actors (McCullough 2015). Another approach studies legitimacy in a more focused manner, for example, NGOs' legitimacy based on a four-fold model: the market model, the social change model, the new institutionalism model, and the critical model (Thrandardottir 2015).

An alternative definition of legitimacy, adopted in this research because it provides a better fit for the questions addressed, is the one provided by Lamb (2014:34): 'worthiness of support, a sense that something is "right" or "good" or that one has the moral obligation to support it'. This broader definition of legitimacy is contextual and can apply to all sorts of actors. The term 'conferee' is used in Lamb's approach for the person who is being assessed for legitimacy and 'referee' is the person who judges the conferee as worthy of legitimacy. It must be stressed that this definition of legitimacy is used here within an actor-oriented perspective and so, as asserted by Pattison, 'rather than the focus being on whether a particular action is justified, the concern is with the justifiability of the agent undertaking the act' (2008:397). This notion is crucial for disaster response results in HIC, as will be discussed later.

The legitimacy of an actor may change depending on who the referee is (McCullough 2015), and the referee and conferee may also contest or negotiate the legitimation process of the other (Hilhorst and Jansen 2013; Lamb 2014). To study the legitimacy of aid-society actors, this multi-directional aspect of legitimation is of the utmost relevance, as each actor may need to seek legitimacy from different audiences, requiring different strategies. For instance, an NGO must seek legitimacy at the same time, and by different means, from a donor, from the government of the country where they are responding, and from the affected communities.

In the case of (international) humanitarian interventions, for example, two main legitimating factors justify the worthiness of support of their actions: the humanitarian motivations and the humanitarian outcomes (Bellamy 2004). These perspectives indicate that the disinterested, impartial, and ethical call to prevent suffering (motivation view) or the capacity of an intervention to produce humanitarian benefits (outcomes view) are the primary legitimating factors for humanitarian action and disaster response. The outcomes view must be complemented with the *effectiveness* approach, so that not any outcome is valid, but only the successful ones (Pattison 2008). Beyond these factors, there are multiple secondary and singular factors legitimating aid actions (Bellamy 2004). To recognise these other factors, including those associated with society actors, a more complex approach is necessary.

In line with the above, Lamb (2014) proposes a framework to assess legitimacy based on its multidimensional, multilevel and bilateral aspects. The first step in Lamb's framework is to identify legitimacy for what, according to whom, and by what criteria. Then, there are multiple indicators to be obtained and ways of analysing them. Without going into the details of the methodology, his development and the variety of

approaches articulated account for the relevance and complexity that the study of legitimacy involves. It is not only contextual but also dynamic and embedded in a large set of power relations.

Related to legitimacy is the concept of trust. Disaster and conflict-affected people might legitimise the role and presence of aid actors and some (governmental) authorities. At the same time, they are often mistrustful of them. The notion of trust can also further the use of the concept of legitimacy. Studying NGOs' legitimation strategies via communication practices, Vestergaard (2014) found that in the past aid actors built legitimacy communication around all the good they were doing (moral legitimacy). However, scepticism from affected people towards aid actors and actions have meant that NGOs build their legitimacy in order to gain public trust (compensation based legitimacy): 'ultimately the consequence of the adaptation to public distrust is that humanitarian organizations refrain from taking a stance and assuming the role as moral educators, leaving their proposals for engagement with distant suffering in a moral vacuum' (Vestergaard 2014:524).

Power is another concept with multiple theories explaining it (e.g. Dahl 1957; Foucault 1983; Parsons 1964; Weber 1964). The focus here is on power as a social construction, implying the capacity or ability of any subject to achieve outcomes and make decisions, as described by Giddens (1984:257). Giddens' approach to power relates to the capacity of multiple actors to act. He presents an operationalisation of the concept of power based on who provides that capacity, who exerts power, and how it is produced and reproduced. This toolset proved to be useful in exploring further aid-society action in HIC and processes of legitimation.

The exercise of power, in Giddens' view, relates to two kinds of resources: first, allocative or economic resources, such as control over material things, including means of material production and reproduction, and secondly, authoritative resources, like control or organisation of other people's actions, relationships, and social time-space (Giddens 1984). Hence, people's actions are based on their power and interest to act. But power is relational as people are embedded in social relationships and, as a result, their power interacts with the allocative and authoritative resources of others (den Hond et al. 2012). Power is, therefore, 'generated in and through the reproduction of structures of domination' (Giddens 1984: 258), but this does not mean that power is associated with conflict only by producing oppression, struggle or division (Giddens 1984). It is just a medium to produce change that may, or may not, clash with others' interests. In HIC scenarios, many actors tend to feel powerless; at the same time, many others need to gain power to respond to conflict and disasters, as expressed by two interviewees (one affected person and one practitioner).

Giddens also argues that 'there is never a situation in which there is absence of choice' (as cited in den Hond et al. 2012: 239) and therefore people always make decisions that lead to their actions, even if they are difficult, limited, or constricted by the context. It is not uncommon to find in the media or hear from different society actors the idea that during HIC or disasters people are forced to act in specific ways, or that the

surrounding conditions predetermine their actions. Giddens' notion of power allows for a defence of the contrary: people always have agency, and they are active in the construction of their social reality (Giddens 1984). For instance, people affected are far from passive and empty *recipients of aid;* rather, they develop strategies to legitimate their position and pursue their objectives (Hilhorst 2013b).

However, and although everyone has some level of power to act, as warned by Mascarenhas and Wisner (2012:48), 'much power is concentrated in the hands of relatively few individuals, institutions and nation states. This distribution of power affects the social distribution of risk and the resources dedicated to reducing risk'. The role of institutions here is key, as power is mediated by them. Institutions have greater time-space extension than individuals and may also have higher levels of allocative and authoritative resources (Giddens 1984). For example, in the case of nation-states, Giddens calls them 'power containers' (cited in Best 2002). Although institutions' capacity to take a decision and make changes are sometimes bigger than individual actors, they are also more constrained, because they are embedded in bigger social power systems (Best 2002). Therefore, as argued by Hilhorst (2013a: 7), it is necessary to understand 'how power constellations are negotiated and how they are subject to change'.

States as power containers have the capacity to decide which problems of a society to address, including making decisions regarding which risks are acceptable (Mascarenhas and Wisner 2012). Those decisions are not made in a vacuum and most of the time economically and politically powerful people and groups are involved (Bankoff et al. 2004; Hilhorst, Weijs, and Haar 2017). These groups and minorities create vulnerability because that vulnerability is, in their perspective, for others and will not affect them; however, some vulnerability will affect them due to the interconnected nature of vulnerability (Kelman 2020).

Power enables actors to act, for instance, to respond to disaster or reduce their risk; and *legitimacy* is the concurrence that these actions receive from other players. Power also plays a relevant role in the process of deciding to respond and reduce the risk of disaster or not. However, we should not oversimplify these relationships, as many actions may be legitimate for some people, but not for others. The capacity of some actors, individuals, or groups to position their legitimation over the legitimation of others also requires the use of power. Power and legitimacy, in these terms, are a two-way dynamic, where both are mutually used by and for the other. Moreover, as warned by Beetham (2013:39), legitimacy is not merely the legitimation of power, '[it] is not the icing on the cake of power, which is applied after […] and leaves the cakes essentially unchanged. It is more like the yeast that permeates the dough, and makes the bread what it is'.

In a humanitarian arena, these institutional and aid-society actors' power to respond results in a complex set of processes that shape not only the response but also the actors involved in it, including the people affected by disaster and conflict and first responders. Humanitarian aid, from this perspective, is like 'a conduit

between places and people, facilitating relief and reconstruction assistance as well as political legitimacy and, hence, the political and economic stability of a place' (Kleinfeld 2007: 170 in Hilhorst and Jansen 2010:1119).

Strategies to Respond in HIC Scenarios: Legitimacy and Negotiation in Practice

Due to the complexity of HIC and the challenges discussed, not all aid or society actors are able to access the places affected and to respond or work on DRR, and some need to negotiate and legitimise their actions. Exploring the process in which aid and society actors relate, negotiate. and legitimise themselves is a challenging task too. In the first place, it is challenging because none of these aid-society groups are homogeneous and there can be significant differences among their actors. Second, not only do each of the actors engage in multiple relationships at the same time, but these relationships also change over time. Even in the case of the same relationships, the strategies and legitimation processes may change. Aid-society relationships are multidimensional, multilevel, and bilateral. Third, the literature has two main biases: (1) the literature is mostly written from a top-down approach, discussing international humanitarian agencies (mainly INGOs and the UN apparatus) legitimacy and negotiation in relation to local-national governments and armed groups; and (2) the literature focuses on the frameworks enabling humanitarian interventions in foreign territories, hence it focuses on international actors.

This last point includes debates about international law and the rule of law (e.g. Beal and Graham 2014; Hehir 2011; Zifcak 2015) and the feasibility of the use of force or protected interventions (e.g. Malanczuk 1993; Recchia 2015; Seybolt 2008). Another body of literature discusses the role of the UN Security Council and the responsibility to protect people-affected and civilians (e.g. Chesterman 2002; MacFarlane et al. 2004; Newman 2002; Troit 2016; United Nations 2015a). In both sets of literatures, there is also a cross-cutting debate about the differences between legality and legitimacy (e.g. Chesterman 2002; Newman 2002; Zajadlo 2005). Notwithstanding these two tendencies, there is an emergent and growing literature on (1) the internal legitimacy of humanitarian interventions, as the process in which national-local governments legitimate aid actions to their own citizenry (e.g. Buchanan 1999; Vernon 2008); (2) humanitarian aid, legitimacy and parallel governments (e.g. McCullough 2015; McHugh and Bessler 2006); and (3) the active involvement of aid beneficiaries and volunteers in negotiating and legitimating their actions.

Trying to separate aid and society actors' legitimacy strategies is intricate. They share many strategies, many others are interrelated, and also from a referee and conferee point of view, the legitimating strategies of one may or may not be judged as legitimate by the other. Despite how intricate this exercise might seem, it is possible to observe some broad sets of strategy in aid or society actors. The following paragraph will describe some examples of them for disaster response in HIC scenarios.

In addition to the humanitarian motives and the humanitarian outcomes mentioned above, and regarding the legitimacy of aid actors for what, according to whom, and by what criteria, the right to intervene in cases of large-scale humanitarian crisis and disaster is well-recognised by the international community (Bellamy 2004). This international legitimacy has two main pillars: international law and the United Nations Security Council (Chesterman 2002; Hehir 2011). As presented by Bellamy through the examples of Somalia and Haiti, 'the Security Council identified human suffering and governance issues as threats to international peace and security and therefore legitimate objects of intervention' (Bellamy 2004: 218). These two pillars are widely used in cases of violent armed conflict but their utilisation and validity is less clear for disaster response in places not affected by conflict. In effect, in 2014, with regard the Ebola outbreak[21] in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea, the UN Security Council held its first meeting ever to deliberate on an intervention in a public health crisis (Cohen 2014; UN News 2014). In fact, in two interviews conducted in Sierra Leone during 2016 about the Ebola response, two aid actors mentioned the relevance of advocacy for the epidemic to be classified as more than a health crisis in order to obtain more resources.

The humanitarian principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality have also been set out for aid actors as 'a magic key to the humanitarian space with an attitude of ultra-pragmatism' (Magone et al. 2011: 3). They act like a shield behind which any action is valid and legitimate, sustained by ideas about what is good, ethical, and moral (Hilhorst and Jansen 2010). In fact, in the interviews, humanitarian principles were emphasised by all research participants as the main factor legitimating their actions. The principles, moreover, may legitimate aid actors' presence in HIC by presenting themselves as detached from political struggles (Leader 2000), a situation also mentioned by one of the two aid disaster-affected interviewed (B2): 'we accept them [he humanitarian actors and disaster respondents] because we know they are here to help all of us without caring about the conflict'. However, the other person affected (B1) problematised this assumption by asking the question: 'how is possible that they don't care about what the others are doing?' I have seen this last question frequently raised during fieldwork in countries affected by HIC, not only by people affected but also by (I)NGOs. Some practitioners expressed the view that, although they follow the principle of neutrality, they will never voice it because that could be seen as lack of caring or that they do not stand against the actions of one or other of the fighting parties.

In HIC scenarios, some aid actors not only see the principles as a universal legitimator, but also impose them on others (Leader 2000). If other people respond without following the principles, they are not seen as part of the humanitarian space (Collinson, Elhawary, and Foley 2012; DeChaine 2002; Hilhorst and Jansen 2013). However, they certainly remain part of the humanitarian arena, as discussed earlier. This valid for aid and

[21] In this example, the Ebola epidemic outbreak is also considered a disaster under the definition of a disaster presented before.

also - to some extent - society actors: they both seek to be seen as following the principles in order to be valid actors in the arena (Hilhorst and Pereboom 2016). State-contesting armed groups also use the principles as an action framework and legitimator (McHugh and Bessler 2006). In HIC scenarios this can reach another level, where the principles are also seen as the borderline of what is ethically expected and accepted in social action, especially in war time. As Leader states (2000:3), 'the principles assume at least an acceptance that war has limits, that the belligerents are concerned with political legitimacy, and that all states have an interest in preserving respect for the IHL [international humanitarian law]'.

The process of professionalising humanitarian action and disaster response (in part to respond to challenges, in part to increase efficacy and efficiency) opens a new legitimator for relief actors and enables multiple actors to respond to disaster in HIC settings (De Waal 1997). For instance, water managers for droughts, or professional rescuers in cases of earthquakes, validate and legitimate their actions as professionals in those fields. Likewise, appropriate behaviour by staff members of aid and societal institutions also lays down a base for legitimacy. Accountability and actions assessment is also a relevant legitimating factor, especially for aid actors to its donors and beneficiary governments (Donini and Maxwell 2014; Wood et al. 2001a). Professionalism also legitimises actors to be present in HIC scenarios, especially considering the security risk. Disaster response and humanitarian aid organisations have increasingly hired security managers, developed security protocols, and focused on strengthening security management (Donini and Maxwell 2014; Roth 2011; Stoddard et al. 2006).

In an arena like HIC where resources and access are restricted, the professionalism stamp of some actors legitimises them over others (De Waal 1997; Grunewald 1999a; Hilhorst and Jansen 2010). This has also been relevant as legitimation between the same aid actors in competition for funds and personnel (Mosse 2013; Wood et al. 2001a). As a result, it can be difficult for societal (local) responding organisations to validate themselves against the more professional aid (international) actors in the arena (Hilhorst and Jansen 2010). That is why society actors develop different legitimacy strategies than aid actors. One situation that I have seen in HIC zones and that was confirmed by both practitioners interviewed (AB1 and AB2) is the growing trend for local NGOs to hire professional (sometimes international) grant managers and accountants to seek funds from the so-called 'big donors'.

The concept of 'gratuity', or debates about what can be paid for or not, is a more hidden factor of legitimation. Aid actors provide their response to disaster not for profit or without commercial interest and any attempt to do it for profit can be criticised. This applies to initiatives offering help in exchange for work and also to the reduction of taxes in exchange for donating money. HIC scenarios allow this phenomenon to be observed in a particular way. For example, it seems to be legitimate for aid and society actors to find protection under state or internationally mandated armed forces (like UN peacekeepers) but not to pay for

private armed protection (HPN and OPM 2010). However, and in the spirit of being legitimated by being professional or efficient, some initial debates have taken place about what can be learned from management techniques used by for-profit organisations that could be helpful in an aid and response context (McLachlin et al. 2009).

In a similar vein, but moving towards the strategies of legitimation used by society actors, it is also possible to find legitimated interventions of armed groups in disaster response in HIC scenarios. For example, states may use army intervention or authorise peacekeeping missions with humanitarian agendas (Malanczuk 1993). However, it is again important in these cases to distinguish between legitimacy and legality (Seybolt 2008). These actions may be perceived as legal and legitimate by some actors, but not by others.

In places in HIC, rebel armed groups may also act in the response, but their legitimacy usually pre-dates the disaster and then extends to the response (Arjona 2008; Magone et al. 2011). This legitimacy is in relation to local actors, so, to be legitimised by external actors, armed groups have begun to act in compliance with international legal norms (McHugh and Bessler 2006). State-contesting armed groups may also seek to build legitimacy by engaging with aid actors to counter the non-legitimation that they meet from official governmental actors (Grace 2016). However, it must not be seen as the intention of aid actors to confer legitimacy on armed groups by acting with them. This is a well-known dilemma among aid actors, usually dealt with through explicit declarations of non-recognition or legitimation of these groups, even when they sometimes need to work with them (Jackson and Davey 2014; McHugh and Bessler 2006). In high intensity conflict settings it is useful, then, to reflect on these controversial and complex situations, especially in cases of disaster response, as it is easy for many actors to name the disaster as the cause of local problems rather than as real social factors; in this sense, disasters are seen as external and unrelated to the conflict.

Society actors may also find in the response arena that their legitimacy is part of what can be broadly called a cultural-community framework. As presented by McCandless (2014), heritage and blood as well as family and tribal bonds, can be legitimating factors rooted for many communities. However, it can also be seen as biased for many other actors. For response activities, this local legitimacy is sometimes more relevant than official recognition, as local actors are the ones who reach affected people first and local legitimacy, in turn, strengthens their power and general legitimacy, at least de facto. Similarly, some NGOs and other actors (from aid and society) claim their legitimacy through a religious approach (De Cordier 2009). They justify their actions on an ethical basis, but also they act in coordination with local groups of the same religious community, thus gaining access to the response arena (De Cordier 2009; Krafess 2005; Paulson and Menjívar 2012). In HIC settings this also leads to stronger social networks to facilitate security and manoeuvre through the challenges.

All the examples mentioned above show how legitimation is crucial for the overall success of humanitarian operations and disaster response, yet such endeavours are inherently challenging. The legitimation strategies do not work as 'recipes' and often require negotiation. Magone et al. (2011) state that everything is open to negotiation in the provision of aid, although it is not always a recognised practice.

Humanitarian aid and response is highly politicised and negotiations, along with dealing with political issues, must weigh ethical (e.g. following the principles) and legal considerations (e.g. following the international humanitarian law) as well. For this reason, negotiations may operate under confidentiality agreements or within closed circles (Grace 2016). The response occurs in an arena, and competition among aid and society actors may also lead to privacy or secrecy throughout the negotiations. In cases of rapid-onset disaster, quick action is needed and it can be helpful to bend the rules and operate outside the normal conduits. One academic (AC1) and the consultant (C1) interviewed said that the mindset can be, 'the emergency requires prioritising the aid no matter how it is done'. An analysis of this trend leads to the conclusion that under HIC conditions and in cases of conflict such as those described here, rules and procedures are less relevant and the negotiations occurring in the field are the real enablers of disaster response. This connects to what was mentioned above on how legitimation of the actors, facilitating their success in these negotiations, is part of their power or capacity to act.

Humanitarian negotiations do not only occur in confidential or closed circles but also in the everyday practices of aid-society actors (Hilhorst and Jansen 2010). In fact, a UN manual on negotiation says that humanitarian negotiations are

> those negotiations undertaken by civilians engaged in managing, coordinating and providing humanitarian assistance and protection for the purposes of: (i) ensuring the provision of protection and humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations; (ii) preserving humanitarian space; and (iii) promoting better respect for international humanitarian and human rights law. (McHugh and Bessler 2006:1)

It is through these negotiations and processes of building legitimacy that aid-society actors manoeuvre through the challenges in the humanitarian aid arena to respond to disasters during HIC times. In doing so, the response is shaped and, additionally, the actors' power relationships are shaped, providing an opportunity to study the everyday practices of disaster response.

4.7. Studying disasters during high-intensity conflict

The previous review of literature reveals the complexity of studying disaster response and DRR in a context of HIC. Not only is it a highly interdisciplinary task, but it is also the result of navigating through the concepts

and using them in a transdisciplinary way. Applying the knowledge here gathered to study disasters during HIC in an empirical way, conducting fieldwork, and later analysing the results using the knowledge systematised here presents multiple challenge that arise from the main characteristics of the phenomena that I am addressing. This subsection highlights these challenges.

First, studying disaster-related actions is challenging because this relationship is ontologically a complex process: alongside its technical and economic aspects, it is also highly political, social, and contextual-historical (Cannon 1994; Hilhorst 2013a; Knowles 2013). HIC scenarios never show clear distinctions between the conflict and the disaster, and it is difficult to know if the response is tackling the effects of one, the other, or both. The response and prevention of disasters, therefore, may always address planned and unplanned sufferings, as termed by Gasper (1999), like manifest intentional violence (planned) or reduced local capacity to respond due to societal dysfunction (unplanned). Moreover, every place is exposed to different created hazards (Kelman 2020; Wisner et al. 2004), and each population has its own vulnerabilities (Wisner 2010) and to some extent networks for resilience (Berkes and Ross 2013; Paton, Smith, and Violanti 2000), and every society has its own history at the base of their conflicts and disasters (Demmers 2012; Knowles 2013; Krüger, Greg, et al. 2015).

Another challenge lies in the fact that several theoretical prerequisites of disaster response and DRR on the ground in HIC places may not be present. For instance, in theory, it is typically suggested that disaster response activities are organised and executed by local or national authorities. The organisation of international aid and humanitarian agencies is, supposedly, also coordinated by states within known protocols (Todd and Todd 2011). In HIC scenarios, and for humanitarian aid actor and considering the humanitarian principles, these prerequisites can be paradoxical.

Disaster response and humanitarian aid, moreover, is supposedly a short-term intervention in advance of a long-term and more permanent response by governments and other organisations. In other words, disaster response seeks to focus on saving life and assessing damages, leaving long term interventions (like recovery or reconstruction actions) to following phases. However this is not always the case: protracted crises tend to produce protracted aid and responses (Harmer and Macrae 2004). The actions to save lives tend to prolong and perpetuate, entering a cycle of response or emergency, not transitioning in a timely sequence to following phases. The phases, as mentioned, overlap and can move backward too. However, the illusion that phases always move sequentially and present clear transition moments creates challenges for many practitioners (multiples examples are presented in Pirotte et al. 1999). In HIC scenarios, a similar dilemma is faced by actors responding to the conflict. Reaffirming these observations, one of the practitioners interviewed (AP1) mentioned a question frequently raised in HIC environments: ‘until when are we providing

emergency aid for the conflict and when do we need to start moving or we are already developing development programmes?'

Studying disaster response in HIC is challenging not only for the difficulties of conducting fieldwork in HIC places, but also from a theoretical point of view as presented here. These challenges arise from the dynamic, inter- and transdisciplinary characteristics that disaster and conflict have, which requires an equally interdisciplinary and dynamic approach to address them.

4.8. Conclusion

Current disaster response and risk reduction models do not incorporate scenarios where disasters, like those deriving from earthquakes or floods, occur in places affected by violent social conflict. The political and academic attention given to (1) the relation between social conflicts and disaster response, and (2) the differences between multiple conflict scenarios and disaster response, is still low. Contributing to filling these gaps and proposing a way to deal with them, this chapter explored the process of responding to disasters in places affected by one specific type of conflict: widespread violent social conflict.

The chapter proposed the use of high-intensity conflict scenarios (HIC) as an analytical category that would permit the study of disaster response and risk reduction in this particular type of scenario. By conducting an extensive literature review on scenarios matching the HIC profile and using experiences of disaster responses that attracted international aid and responders, the chapter tested the value of HIC as an analytical category. The findings suggest that the features of the HIC scenarios provide a unique opportunity to better understand response processes. Distinct from terms like 'complex emergency' or 'fragile states', HIC scenarios represent a period in a protracted crisis where, alongside violent social conflict, a particular arrangement of social and political conditions generates a scenario that features complex governance systems, insecurity, access constraints, people displacement, economic instability or crisis, among others. Moreover, as reviewed, there is no one type of HIC setting but a range of possible settings fitting its definition, where the specific context plays a role in how response is designed and implemented. HIC as an analytical category allowed for the study of the large network of actors involved in the process and the mechanisms that they use to cope and respond to disasters under these challenging conditions. The concepts of aid-society, humanitarian arena, and legitimacy played a key role in this.

Aid-society relationships and the humanitarian arena performed as effective analytical tools to explore and enable the study of the large constellation of actors and strategies present in disaster response. Aid-society made visible, and brought attention to, the need to include not only local actors but also donors, evaluators, and the private sector in the scenario, in addition to the most prominent actors in humanitarian aid like UN agencies and INGOs. The notion of the humanitarian arena strengthens the actor-oriented perspective by

centering the analysis not in the physical space where the response occurs but on the interaction of aid-society actors, as well as their negotiations and processes that shaped the responses. The legitimacy focus was demonstrated to be a consistent entry point revealing a multitude of strategies used by aid and society actors when responding to disasters. In HIC scenarios, where the coercive use of power is present (and constantly challenged at the same time), the analysis provided a more complex and broad overview of the different ways in which various actors, from UN agencies, armed groups, people affected, or rescuers (to name a few) enable themselves to act and cope with the challenges that these settings produce. The role played by humanitarian principles, the professionalisation of disaster response, international law, and the cultural community background of each actor were all highlights in the analysis. Additionally, the analysis showed the way to explore further the notion of power and the relevance of institutions. These relationships shape the response which, in turn, shapes the aid-society relationships in a symbiotic dynamic.

Regarding the challenges, the analysis revealed that alongside the overt and well-known security and access complications, there is a wider web of social, political, and economic conditions hindering responses in HIC. It allowed the observation of the challenges faced not only by aid but also by society actors in the response process. Complex governance arrangements during HIC proved to be an overarching challenge. Many other issues are dependent on, result from, or are generated by being associated with this factor. Although these results can be expected given the fact that we are discussing places affected by high levels of conflict, it is no less important, especially because the solutions tend to be more technical and focused mainly on the logistics of providing aid and responding rather than political and social change. This last point also highlights the limitations of observing the response only from an aid actor's perspective and reinforces at the same time the need for an aid-society approach to disaster response. Moreover, it accounts for the relevance of studying the relationships of people involved, especially how they manoeuvre through the humanitarian arena. Being legitimate, having the capacity to negotiate, and using different resources and strategies are essential in HIC settings (and most probably, in any social arena).

One of the challenges in HIC conditions is the overlap of disaster response and humanitarian aid programmes in responding to the effect of the disaster. It can be said that most of the challenges, legitimacy strategies, and aid-society actors mentioned here are also present in general emergency and humanitarian aid programmes in HIC scenarios. The new contribution of the chapter to the existing literature lies in the fact that responding to disaster in these scenarios requires an understanding of the compound social and political nature of disaster and conflict. Without a more in-depth comprehension of what that means in HICs, all disaster response models might fall short in meeting their objectives. However, we must beware that the compound nature of both general emergency and humanitarian aid programmes does not lead us to ignore the differences that exist, the special characteristics of one and the other. Maintaining awareness of the

differences in the two spheres of activity allows us to understand better what that composite nature means, how the interaction works, and how it affects work on the ground.

This last challenge permeated this research and its analysis. From an analytical point of view, it was difficult at times to assess whether the information presented in the literature and the interviews was clearly about disaster response or about humanitarian aid in general terms. Highly relevant, there is still little discussion about the relationship and the differences between disaster response and humanitarian aid. This, at the same time, strengthens the value of the analysis presented here.

For policy makers, practitioners, and scholars, the concept of HIC offers an opportunity to address disaster governance in moments of high violence during protracted crises. Multiple documents provide information about the growing levels of insecurity that aid workers face nowadays in their work (e.g. Duffield 2012; Roth 2011; Stoddard et al. 2006, 2014), but how this translates into disaster response is less clear. This chapter contributes information about specific characteristics of HIC, enabling all these actors to assess whether the places in which they are responding match this scenario. For those cases where the response is occurring in HIC scenarios, the chapter systematises the multiple actors that could be found on the ground, facilitating the networking process and participation. Furthermore, it informs aid-society actors about the challenges they may face, allowing for better planning and implementation of disaster response. The analysis of legitimacy and negotiation processes and the systematisation mechanisms and strategies in place for disaster response might help practitioners and policy makers in the development and also evaluation of disaster response.

The literature reviewed extensively in this chapter leads to the observation that, despite the information gathered here, there is still limited academic understanding on disaster response in HIC scenarios, especially regarding aid-society relationships and disaster governance. The reviewed theoretical frameworks provided a relevant starting point for further research to start filling the gaps. The recurrence of disasters in HIC and the effects of them on local populations and institutions make this task every day more urgent. Global climate change, increasing levels of socio-economic inequality, profound unsolved gender bias, global environmental resource depletion, and the increased rates of violent social conflict are just some factors pointing to the need for better and more comprehensive disaster response (Blaikie et al. 1994; Gaillard, Fodham, and Sanz 2015; Mach et al. 2020; Tierney 2012). Comprehensive management of and response to complex disasters and crises comes from a thorough understanding of them. In this regard, it would be fruitful to pursue further research on the topic, in order to continue contributing to disaster response policies and practice by understanding better the special characteristics of responding in HIC and other types of conflict scenarios.

5. THE CASE OF SOUTH SUDAN

Pastoralist kids and their cows at drought affected area. Western Bahr el Ghazal, South Sudan (R. Mena, 2017)

Path dependency in prioritising in disaster and humanitarian response under high levels of conflict: A qualitative case study in South Sudan[22]

5.1. Abstract

In high-conflict scenarios, humanitarian needs often surpass what can be done, and humanitarians are faced with ongoing processes of deciding whom to prioritise and where to work. This process is often referred to as 'targeting', but this article uses the concept of 'triage' to emphasise how prioritisation is a continuous and political process rather than a one-off technical exercise to find the best match between the people to assist and the programme objectives. This study focused on South Sudan, exploring the formal and informal dynamics at the national, regional and local levels of humanitarian decisions on where to focus resources. The article is based on semi-structured interviews and multiple meetings and observations of programmes over four months of fieldwork in 2017. This fieldwork was beset by many of the problems that humanitarians also encounter in their work, including complicated access, logistics difficulties and security challenges. Humanitarian action is meant to be flexibly deployed to respond to priority needs resulting from conflict activity or weather-related disasters, and agencies have multiple tools and policies to facilitate this. However, in reality, we find humanitarian action largely locked into path-dependent areas of intervention because agencies must rely on logistics, trust and local partners, all of which take years to develop.

Keywords: Humanitarian aid, high-intensity conflict, targeting, triage, politics of prioritisation, disaster response, path-dependency, South Sudan

5.2. Introduction

Humanitarian action is supposed to be agile and fast in responding to disasters. For present-day disasters, it usually takes only 24 hours before basic needs surveillance is completed and aid is on the way. The international community has become highly organised in coordinating disaster response, through the virtual On-Site Operations Coordination Centre,[23] for example, enabling the quick matching of needs and capacities,

[22] Article submitted to 'Journal of International Humanitarian Action'. Authors: Mena, R; Hilhorst, D.

*The first and main author is responsible for the initiation and design of the research, data collection, data analysis, and writing and revision of the manuscript. The second author substantially contributed to the initiation and design of the research, and the critical revision, improvement, and final approval of the manuscript.

[23] The On-Site Operations Coordination Centre is a 'tool that provides a platform for the coordination of international response activities in the immediate aftermath of a sudden-onset emergency or a rapid change in a complex emergency' (OCHA 2018d:3).

with all authorities, international agencies and donors able to follow in real-time what is required. The question is whether this applies equally to disasters that happen in conflict areas. In such contexts, the response to a disaster is likely hampered by the multiplicity of challenges characterising humanitarian activity in conflict areas. However, conflict areas have the advantage of humanitarian agencies already being present and operational; these agencies can thus be expected to be agile in refocusing their activities to respond to the disaster.

The case of South Sudan in general and particularly the response to the famine declared by the United Nations (UN) (2017) in 2017 present a sobering picture regarding the agility of humanitarian action. Although the World Food Programme and some other aid actors managed to reach the affected areas soon after the declaration, this was impossible for the vast majority of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), or it took some of these organisations a rather long time to access famine-affected areas, despite the availability of significant funds and the sense of urgency brought by the declaration of famine. This study explored the response to disasters in conflict settings using the case of the 2017 drought in South Sudan.

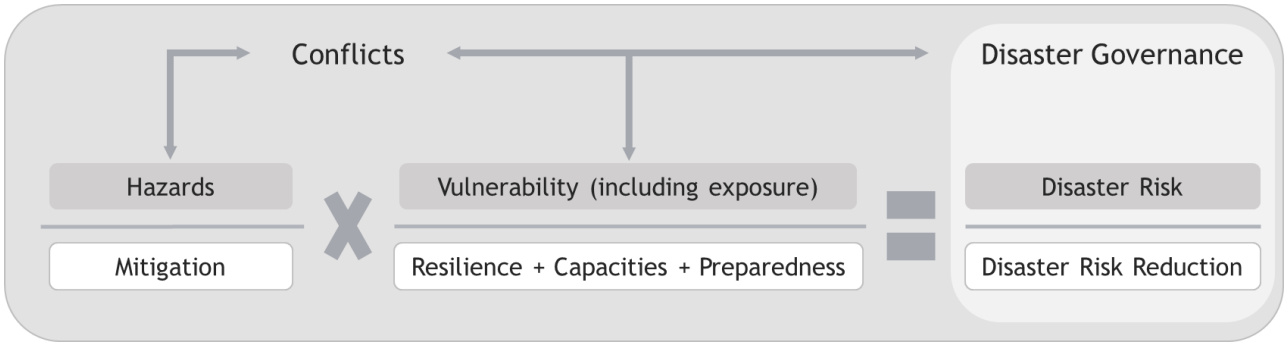
Understanding the particulars of disaster response in conflict-affected areas is of paramount importance. Caso (2019) reported that, from 1960 to 2018, the average yearly percentage of countries affected by conflict that also faced a disaster was 67%. From 2009 to 2018, the average yearly co-occurrence of conflicts and disasters was 78%, meaning that the population of almost four out of every five countries affected by conflict in a given year also had to cope with at least one disaster in the same year. Most deaths caused by disasters occur in conflict-affected and fragile states (Peters 2017), and the impact of a disaster on people's livelihoods is greater in conflict-affected and fragile contexts (Hilhorst 2013b; Wisner 2012).

While the exact nature of the relation between disaster and conflict is still subject to debate, the coincidence of disaster and conflict is evident when we unpack the elements that make up disaster risk. Since the 1980s, there has been a broad consensus that disasters related to socially-constructed natural hazards such as droughts, floods, storms or earthquakes are far from natural. As expressed by the pseudo-formula of DR = H * [(V/C) − M], disaster risks (DR) come about when hazards (H) meet vulnerability (V), and can be counteracted by multiple variables, including capacities (C) and mitigation (M) (Wisner et al. 2012a:24). Disaster risk reduction encompasses all 'systematic efforts to analyse and reduce the causal factors of disasters. Reducing exposure to hazards, lessening the vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improving preparedness and early warning for adverse events' (UNISDR 2017:online). The main interrelated variables in the process of reducing the risk of disasters are the mitigation of hazards, individual and social preparedness (Benson, Twigg, and Rossetto 2007; Buckle 2012), capacity development (Ginige, Amaratunga, and Haigh 2010; Rose and Jayawickrama 2016; UNDP

2010; Wisner et al. 2012a) and building, improving and maintaining people's resilience (Davoudi 2012; Kelman 2008; Manyena et al. 2011; Paton et al. 2000).

Conflict may contribute to disaster risks through adversely affecting any or all of these elements. First, hazards such as floods or droughts come about through natural–social interaction, and they can be magnified because of, for example, unsustainable land use, water management or deforestation. Second, conflict may intensify vulnerability or push people to be exposed to disasters. Places under conflict usually rank among the lowest on all indicators related to the Sustainable Development Goals, with a high prevalence of poverty, disrupted markets and a lack of access to health care (Mena 2018). Conflict also creates displacement, leaving people in places with greater exposure to hazards. Finally, weak governance, a lack of political will, damaged infrastructure and the de-prioritisation of disasters in the face of other problems negatively affect the capacities to respond to a disaster and the general disaster governance process.

Figure 8 Conflict and disaster governance



Source: Prepared by the author

Disaster governance, as an overarching concept, includes the policies and normative frameworks through which multiple actors work on disaster risk reduction, including disaster management, disaster response and disaster knowledge production. Disaster governance comprises actions at international, national, regional and local levels and includes social, economic and political dimensions. Disaster governance includes every actor involved in disaster-related action, including members of the government, civil society and individual citizens, humanitarian and development systems, and private actors (Field and Kelman, 2018; Hilhorst et al., 2019; Tierney, 2012; UNISDR, 2017). Figure 8 Conflict and disaster governance' depicts the complex relationships between conflict and the multiple elements of the governance of disasters, including the production and reduction of disaster risk.

Although existing work has increasingly paid attention to the relationship between disaster and conflict (e.g. Marktanner et al. 2015; Mitra and Vivekananda 2015; Nel and Righarts 2008; Peters and Peters 2018; Wisner 2012), previous studies have rarely distinguished between different types of conflict. However, humanitarian actors acknowledge that practices and challenges heavily depend on the type of conflict scenario (van Voorst

and Hilhorst 2017). A thorough analysis of disaster response, then, requires considering the conflict scenario in which the response occurs (Ahrens and Rudolph 2006; Field and Kelman 2018; Hilhorst, Mena, et al. 2019; Hilhorst, Desportes, et al. 2019). The study presented here is part of a larger research programme that distinguishes high-intensity, low-intensity and post-conflict scenarios (Hilhorst, Mena, et al. 2019).

We know especially little about the practices of disaster response in high-conflict situations. A remarkable exception is a study conducted by Maxwell and Majid (2015) that provides a detailed account of the 2011 drought response in Somalia. This drought was the worst to hit the Horn of Africa in 60 years. In Ethiopia and Kenya, state, non-state and international actors managed to respond in time to prevent mass casualties resulting from a lack of water and food security. In Somalia, however, the drought resulted in an estimated 260,000 deaths (Maxwell and Majid 2015). This was partly because of the long-term conflict that had rendered Somalians extremely vulnerable to drought and the ongoing operations of al-Shabaab, which restricted people's ability to migrate to safer areas (De Waal 2018; Grünewald 2012; Maxwell and Majid 2015). The death toll was also exacerbated by the counterterrorist measures of donors, especially the United States. The case of Somalia clearly shows the need to invest more in research into these types of scenarios to identify lessons that can contribute to making disaster response in conflict conditions more effective. Therefore, this study focused on disaster response in high-conflict scenarios, using the case of the 2017 drought in South Sudan, which happened at a time when the country had relapsed into conflict for several years.

In high-intensity conflict (HIC) scenarios, disaster response needs are usually many times greater than the available resources and capacities. An important question driving our study was how aid actors working in such contexts decide where, for whom and how to employ their (limited) resources. According to the humanitarian principles, resources should go where the need is greatest. We would thus expect international NGOs (INGOs) operating in countries with HIC to redirect their resources to disaster-affected areas when needs suddenly arise. This study aimed to reconstruct how decision making about the allocation of aid takes place in South Sudan, examining decision-making processes at the national level, at the decentralised level and finally at the level of programme implementation.

In the jargon of humanitarian aid, the allocation of resources is done based on targeting and needs assessments 'to quantify immediate needs for emergency assistance, so that response programmes can be quickly designed' (Maxwell and Watkins 2003:78). Here, we evoke an older term – triage – to study these processes. Triage describes how medical doctors decide which patients are most urgently in need of assistance. Triage is similar to targeting on the basis of needs assessment, but we prefer to use this term to step away from the technocratic notion of targeting, to analyse the (political) processes through which decisions are being made and continuously renegotiated, and to remain mindful about the painful decisions

implied in triage. After all, in many cases, the choice is not about finding those who are the neediest, but rather about choosing between communities that are equally in need. As presented by Orbinski and Reed (2009):

> Triage is the ultimate humanitarian nightmare. Racing against time with limited resources, relief workers make split-second decisions: who gets treatment; who gets food; who lives; who dies. This impossible dilemma understandably haunts humanitarians […]

This article is based on qualitative interviews that focused on the challenges of disaster response in an HIC setting, multi-actor collaboration processes (between local, national and international aid and society[24] actors) and the processes that determine where aid flows. We also asked the research participants for their recommendations for improving disaster response in high-conflict scenarios. After the presentation of the case of South Sudan, the following sections explore the nature of HIC scenarios, describe our approach to humanitarian aid and analyse what is understood by the targeting, or triage, of aid. The methodology used in this study and the main findings are then presented, followed by recommendations. In the final section, we discuss the results and conclusions.

5.3. High-intensity conflict (HIC) and the case of South Sudan

An HIC scenario is an analytical category proposed to represent moments in a protracted crisis where widespread violent conflict occurs, leaving over 1000 casualties per year. In such scenarios, state fragility is usually high, and the capacity of the local and national authorities to maintain control over vast regions of the territory is minimal or non-effective. As a result, 'the provision of goods and basic services is irregular or fragmented, causing, together with the levels of violence, high rates of migration of people looking for safety from their localities, regions, or countries', resulting in a complicated situation for the provision of humanitarian assistance (Mena 2018:31). HIC scenarios present a particular set of challenges for humanitarian aid and disaster response. The most obvious include issues of security and the difficulty of reaching people in need (Duffield 1994; Wisner 2012; Young and Maxwell 2009). Additionally, HIC scenarios are also characterised by complex governance arrangements at the local or national level, the presence of parties contesting the state, economic crisis or disruption, and a deficiency of information or reduced access to data (Mena 2018). High levels of bureaucracy, complex and changing logistics, and corruption are also commonly present in HIC scenarios. As a result of these challenges, 'UN agencies and INGOs are increasingly

[24] Aid actors refers to all individuals and organisations that see humanitarian actions as the core of their actions. Society actors can participate in humanitarian actions, but these actions are not their main role, for example, disaster or conflict affected people.

absent from field locations, especially when there is any kind of significant security or logistical issues' (Médecins Sans Frontières in Healy and Tiller 2014:4).

Following a two-level case-selection strategy (George and Bennett 2005; Gerring 2007), South Sudan was chosen as a typical case of an HIC scenario that also has a high prevalence of disasters. The long-term social conflict affecting the country, as well as the floods and droughts impacting regions of South Sudan, informed the selection process. South Sudan's independence from Sudan in 2011 came after more than 40 years of conflict between the South and the North of what was until that time Sudan. Two years after independence, conflicts between factions of the new government and a severe economic crisis led to an internal crisis and civil war. Consequently, the country experienced a severe humanitarian crisis that has resulted in more than two million internally displaced people and another two million people leaving the country as refugees (UNHCR, 2017). A cholera outbreak with hundreds of casualties, over a million cases of malaria and severe malnutrition added to the crisis (WHO 2017). Finally, as mentioned above, in February 2017, famine was declared in some areas of the country (De Waal 2018; United Nations 2017). Disasters are also present in the country. South Sudan regularly faces multi-year droughts, large areas of the country are seasonally flooded (Government of the Republic of South Sudan, 2015) and the country also experiences earthquakes.

It is not easy for humanitarians to respond in South Sudan. The level of infrastructure is low, roads are in poor condition, vast areas of the country are flooded for several months each year and the situation is, in general, not safe. In 2017, the country was repeatedly depicted as one of the most dangerous places in the world for aid workers (see Cole 2017; Gaffey 2017; Little 2017). Since the current conflict broke out in 2013, almost 90 humanitarian workers have been killed in the country, and 82 humanitarian access incidents were reported in the first half of 2017, including attacks, threats, intimidation and harassment (OCHA 2017c).

5.4. Targeting and the triage of aid

Targeting refers to the process of deciding which populations and places need assistance, which type of assistance is needed, and when and how this assistance will be delivered, including mechanisms aiming to ensure that aid is provided only to people who meet certain criteria (Maxwell et al. 2011; WFP 2006). Targeting aims to balance quality and quantity, when efficiency in humanitarian action makes it possible to save more people, but possibly at the risk of compromising quality (Hopgood 2008). The process of targeting can be divided into two main moments: 1) identifying people in need and 2) selecting the delivery and distribution mechanism (WFP 2006).

The most relevant aspect of targeting is the question of who requires assistance (Young and Maxwell 2009:8). This question also entails deciding which people will be selected *not* to receive aid, at least for the moment. There are also always other factors playing a role in targeting, such as the humanitarian principles and

questions of access and security. This makes targeting not only about the question of 'who', but also about 'when', 'where' and 'how' to provide assistance (Maxwell et al. 2011; Patel et al. 2017; Young and Maxwell 2009).

Targeting happens at different levels of decision making. The first level concerns administrative targeting, which is done by (humanitarian) policy-makers based on needs assessment reports and other necessary data. The second level is community-based, where service providers, usually in consultation with community leaders, identify lists of people or households eligible for assistance. Third, self-targeting happens at the individual level, where those entitled to assistance decide whether to participate in the aid scheme (Maxwell et al. 2011; Patel et al. 2017).

Triage was originally a medical concept used to describe the determination of the degree of urgency of patients and prioritisation on the basis of the result in terms of who will be treated first and how. When there are limited resources and capabilities to treat and provide aid to those affected, it is necessary to sort these people and prioritise care. Similarly, in places affected by high levels of conflict, the number of people in need of assistance is usually so large that the resources and capabilities available do not allow providing aid to them all, resulting in the need to prioritise between the affected people and to target aid towards those assigned the highest priority (Orbinski 2009).

In medicine, the triage process usually involves a two-step analysis: 1) assessing the number of people in need and their specific needs[25] and 2) evaluating the capacities in place to respond. Although this is similar to targeting, the idea of triage has invited more reflection on the ethical difficulties involved. Adopting the concept of triage also facilitates the exploration of questions beyond the narrow targeting notions of 'who' and 'where' (Young and Maxwell 2009). Targeting conveys a notion of rationality and precision that seems to gloss over the complexities involved and appears to divert attention away from affected people who fall outside the targeting decisions. Triage has previously been used to describe the difficulties that humanitarian aid workers and responders face when they have to choose between crisis and disaster-affected populations (e.g. in Dr Orbinski's [2009] *An Imperfect Offering* and the documentary *Triage: Dr. James Orbinski's Humanitarian Dilemma* (see Orbinski and Reed 2009)). Redfield (2008) also used the term triage to describe

[25] In this analysis, patients are usually separated into three to five groups and tagged with a number or colour-coded label: Patients assigned to the first group are those who, although they are affected, are in a condition that allows them to wait for help, as their injuries are not life-threatening (white label or Number I). Patients in the second group are those who will not survive without immediate assistance and for whom the capabilities in place are sufficient to aid them and reduce their risk of death (red label or Number II). The final group comprises deceased people and those who, with the capacities available, will not survive regardless of any treatment (black label group or Number III). As stated in a quote before by Orbinski and Reed (2009), applying the same principle to prioritise humanitarian aid is a process of deciding 'who gets treatment; who gets food; who lives; who dies'.

and explore the difficulties of prioritisation. In this article, we use triage to highlight the dilemmas involved and to enable a focus on the everyday politics of deciding who will receive assistance and who will not.

5.5. The humanitarian arena: aid and society actors

In this article, we focus on the everyday politics and practices (Hilhorst 2018a:30) of triage, starting from the idea that the outcomes of humanitarian decision making are based on more than objective and neutral parameters (Barnett and Weiss 2008; Wood et al. 2001a). Adopting an actor-oriented approach, this research sees humanitarian aid and disaster response as an arena, seeking to represent 'the outcome of the messy interaction of social actors struggling, negotiating and trying to further their interests (Bakewell 2000 p. 108–9 in Hilhorst and Jansen 2010:1120). The relevant actors include humanitarians, authorities, communities and usually many others such as civil society, the media, the military, armed groups and religious institutions (De Waal 1997; Wood et al. 2001a).

Policies matter in our approach, but they are seen as translated through 'people's practices, including all social-political strategies and negotiations, formal and informal actions, and everyday practices occurring in, and for the delivery of, aid' (Mena, 2018: 38; see also Hilhorst and Jansen, 2013). Interactions and negotiations make up the everyday politics of aid that ultimately determine the control, allocation, production and use of resources, values and ideas surrounding aid delivery (Kerkvliet 2009). Everyday politics are as much a part of formal policy processes among authorities and powerful organisations as of the practices of service delivery, therefore, 'the everyday politics of conflict and disaster and crisis response' always plays a role in this sphere as well (Hilhorst, 2013: 1).

5.6. Methodology

This qualitative case study comprised desk review and fieldwork phases. After six months of desk review,[26] fieldwork was carried out in multiple regions of South Sudan during February and June 2017 by the first author. Additional fieldwork was conducted in Uganda at the border with South Sudan and in multiple refugee settlements (Imvepi, Rhino Camp, Bidi Bidi and Adjumani) and reception centres. The data collection comprised a total of 43 semi-structured interviews, observation of over 20 coordination meetings of multiple aid actors, 13 visits to areas affected by disasters and conflict. 13 focus groups (2–10 people per group) were also organised with men and women from affected communities, protection of civilians' sites, refugee

[26] The desk review material consisted of books, journal articles, reports, and policy documents and protocols on the topics addressed, focusing on those published in the last two decades. The review also included grey literature and audio-visual material, such as blog entries, websites and documentaries.

settlements, reception centres and urban areas of the country. Detailed research and fieldwork protocols were developed to facilitate the conduct of ethical and safe fieldwork research.

The research participants (see Table 10) were international and local staff members of UN agencies, INGOs and NGOs; governmental actors at national level; local government and other local authorities; beneficiaries; donors; academics and researchers; contesting party officials and private sector actors, including representatives from local institutions and organisations.

Table 10 South Sudan: interviews and focus group participants.

Type of actor	Number of interviews	Brief description of participants
United Nations (UN) agency representatives	8	International and national programme managers and coordinators
International non-governmental organisation representatives	12	Country directors, programme and project managers, and staff members
Local and national non-governmental organisation representatives	3	Managers and staff, mostly South Sudanese, but also international actors from neighbouring countries
National-level government officials	3	All South Sudanese men
Local government officials and other local authorities	3	
Donors	3	All men, representing one governmental donor, one UN donor and one inter-state organisation
Academics/researchers	6	From South Sudan, Uganda, Kenya and the Netherlands
Contesting party officials	2	Both South Sudanese men
Private sector actors	3	From the transportation, financial and building supplies sectors

For the data analysis, a thematic content analysis was performed, and the explanation-building technique was applied. The content analysis was informed by themes developed while reviewing the literature, and emergent themes were added as necessary during the analysis of the study data. The six main themes orienting the analysis were 1) challenges of providing aid and disaster response; 2) coordination and decision mechanisms; 3) everyday politics related to triage; 4) the official politics of triage; 5) negotiation strategies and processes and 6) solutions and best practices. All anonymised interviews, field notes, and observation field reports were transcribed, coded and organised using NVivo 11.

Reaching participants was challenging for multiple reasons. First, there was a lack of reliable communication (mobile signals and Internet access are almost non-existent in some areas of the country, and there are no landlines). Second, staff turnover was high. Third, many relevant actors were deployed in remote places all over the nation. Another important challenge involved the issue of trust. Because of the conflict in the country, many actors involved in aid were cautious when speaking with outsiders. Finally, the historical and current conflict of the country have led to a lack of information, including demographic data. Other

challenges related to a lack of proper infrastructure, bad roads and the limited availability of petrol. Security and safety constraints impeded travel to many areas.

It should also be noted that a significant number of interviews were not recorded, as per the request of the interviewee. In some cases, interviewees even requested that no handwritten notes be taken. Likewise, in the participatory observation conducted during the fieldwork visits, recording, taking pictures, filming and even taking notes were restricted. The researcher carrying out the fieldwork (the first author) had prior experience applying techniques to memorise collected information, and notes were written down as soon as possible. Whenever possible, the main parts of the reconstructed interviews were later validated with the participants.

5.7. Findings

This section presents the main findings, starting with the challenges and constraints of HIC scenarios, the need to prioritise in the provision of aid and disaster response, and the process and negotiation involved in the different levels of decision making in HIC scenarios.

Challenges and constraints of HIC scenarios

For most aid actors, the main challenges of humanitarian aid provision (including in it disaster response) in HIC scenarios are complex logistics (especially related to access) and obtaining funds. Poor infrastructure; the lack of roads, electricity and potable water; and reduced access to some regions of the country during the rainy season result in additional problems for those providing humanitarian aid. To overcome these difficulties, aid actors need to rely on a complex and expensive set of resources, such as aeroplanes, helicopters, generators and fuel, and build essential infrastructure from scratch.

Interviewees also noted that South Sudan is among the most expensive places to operate, and, even with funds secured, problems such as the country's hyperinflation can make planned budgets insufficient. Reduced access to funds was described as the primary challenge to operating by local and national NGO and governmental representatives. Donors, INGO representatives and UN officials also noted that South Sudan is expensive, even compared with other HIC crisis contexts, but they did not find this challenge more significant than other challenges.

Insecurity is another important challenge. All interviewees described South Sudan as unsafe, making it difficult to access affected places and places where aid is distributed. While aid actors are more exposed to illegal checkpoints and the risks of robberies, ambushes, landmines, bombs, shootings and kidnappings, society actors also face the risks of rape, abduction of minors to join armed groups, and death in clashes or

as retaliation. Additionally, insecurity leads to displacement, which makes it difficult to know the number and profile of affected people, as well as presenting an obstacle to reaching them.

The need to prioritise

The enormous need for humanitarian assistance combined with the limited response capacities because of major challenges to aid provision make South Sudan an ideal case in which to study processes of triage. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' (OCHA) Humanitarian Response Plan for South Sudan (HRP) aims to 'implement a strictly prioritised, targeted and coordinated response' (OCHA 2016a:18). The HRP recognises that the prioritisation of aid is necessitated by a lack of response capacity, given the extent of the crisis:

In the face of rapidly growing needs, the plan represents the result of robust prioritization and difficult decision-making by humanitarian partners […] The plan acknowledges that, given the expansion and deepening of the crisis, humanitarians will be able to meet only the most urgent and severe needs […] As South Sudan is a uniquely challenging and costly operational environment, the plan endeavours to maximize efficiency. (OCHA 2016a:17)

Prioritisation was also a major issue for the aid actors participating in this research. Despite the many obstacles, they usually felt confident about their ability to carry out their programmes. One INGO manager stated, 'We have been doing this for ages'. They mentioned that negotiating access with armed groups, airdropping food, overcoming dangerous scenarios and reaching remote communities have become common practice in the humanitarian aid sector, and they have been improving and implementing these practices for decades. However, the scope of programming is not infinitely elastic, and, as one UN official expressed, 'We know how to respond, but we cannot do it for everyone and everywhere'.[27]

In South Sudan, as in most internationally driven responses, the first level in terms of the politics and mechanism of this prioritisation comes from the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and the HRP. The HNO, developed by OCHA, works as an umbrella document covering 'the full scale and scope of needs in any given context' (IASC 2015:3). Within this needs framework, the HRP is developed by setting the boundaries and scope of the response. For example, the food security and livelihoods (FSL) cluster established the following as its target and priority:

Systematic prioritization will remain the corner-stone of the FSL response. FSL partners will target some 4.5 million people out of some 4.9 million in need of assistance. FSL partners will prioritize critical 'IPC [Integrated

[27] This phrase was mentioned in a non-recorded interview and thus may not represent the exact words used by the interviewee.

Food Security Phase Classification] phase 3, 4, and 5' caseloads. Life-saving assistance will be prioritized. The FSL Cluster will also advocate for resources for interventions that help prevent a further expansion and deepening of food insecurity in the coming years. (OCHA 2016a:19)

Although targeting and prioritisation are commonly explained in terms of funding and budgeting, in interviews and conversations during the fieldwork, it was common to hear that, even if there were enough funds to assist everyone in the country, aid actors would still need to prioritise. Triage is a process that involves ethical questions and weighs variables such as the safety of humanitarian actors, the real need to respond and the expected impact of programmes on affected communities.

As mentioned above, triage entails a two-step analysis, assessing people in need and evaluating the capacities in place to respond. The interviewees emphasised that the issue of capacities is first and foremost translated as the capacities of the affected communities. A major recurring consideration was whether communities could survive, be resilient and adapt or respond to the events without external help, either from local or national governments or from international NGOs or UN agencies. Two participants (from a UN agency and an INGO) mentioned that, when communities were found to be capable of responding and coping on their own, their organisations would use their limited resources in other communities – those that were unable to thrive without external help. Another important variable concerned aid efficiency. As expressed by one INGO staff member, 'Sometimes we have to choose between going to multiple communities where we can do something or going to the one most urgent area where we probably don't make much difference anyway'.

Different levels of decision making

The spaces and moments for triage vary from formal coordination meetings to informal social gatherings, as will be elaborated below. The main aspects negotiated are *funds*, *places*, *resources* and *moments*. This happens at three main levels in the country: *national*, *institutional* and *local.* At the national level (Level 1), triage occurs in meetings of aid clusters, donors, and the Humanitarian Country Team. The institutional level (Level 2) concerns official institutional politics and refers to the internal discussion and coordination occurring inside each aid organisation and each government ministry or department coordinating action at the national or regional level. The institutional level may be seen as the hinge between macro policies and actual implementation. This level usually encompasses NGOs' national offices, ministries, individual UN agencies and the private sector. The local level (Level 3) concerns the field offices of (I)NGOs (including local and national ones, although local ones might only participate in Level 2 and 3), UN agencies, governmental officials, local branches of private companies or organisations including churches and civic organisations, and often the recipients of aid.

In meetings at and between these levels, the most recurrent question when performing triage was whether it was feasible to respond, considering the insecurity in the country, access constraints and the lack of infrastructure and services. In two meetings, one between regional authorities and aid representatives and another of UN agencies and NGOs, decisions to decline to respond to a community need were based exclusively on the *feasibility* question. In both meetings, the decision was not presented as final. It was agreed to monitor the situation closely and seek alternatives if necessary. A participant in one of these meetings later told the first author that 'Making the decision not to help everyone is painful' (INGO manager). Like Redfield, she considered the triage of aid to be painful because it 'reminds humanitarians that they themselves participate in the selection' (Redfield 2008:209). Leaving decisions partly open for future developments may be seen as one way of coping with this painful process.

Although feasibility has many aspects, it is often related to funding. For many research participants, including government officials, NGO and private sector representatives, and contesting party officials, the lack of funds was one of the primary factors hindering humanitarian aid and forcing them to triage among the multiple affected groups and places. During the interviews, exorbitant costs and a lack of funds were often mentioned as a tipping point in the decision not to respond. UN actors and donors, in contrast, maintained that there are enough resources to respond in South Sudan, locating the problem instead in the lack of human resources, capabilities on the ground and the unsustainability of carrying out projects because of the conflict.

Local capacities and community resilience were another aspect playing a prominent role in meetings, social events and interviews. Decisions *not* to provide assistance for a certain community were often couched in the argument that the community could manage without help. HIC scenarios are part of protracted crises, and affected populations develop multiple coping and survival mechanisms. The problematic part of this in South Sudan, however, is that the conflict has damaged many of those coping mechanisms, and the analysis of communities must therefore be a constant process. Although the research participants often realised that the resilience/capacity argument may be unjustified and mask a more complex and changing situation in terms of need, the routine use of this argument may be seen as another means for aid workers to alleviate the 'pain of triage'. By banking on community capacities, aid workers can avoid the sense that they are abandoning communities.

The divisions between the three levels of decision making described here are often blurred, but each level is nevertheless characterised by specific styles of decision making, foregrounding particular values in the narratives of aid workers. The following sub-sections detail how aid is negotiated at each of these three levels of official and everyday politics.

Level 1: National-level triage. The first level of the official politics of triage in the studied HIC setting has a national focus, occurring in cluster, donor and Humanitarian Country Team meetings. At this level, negotiations seem to focus on universality, consensus and transparency. Every participant working at this level mentioned that the main aim is to decide whom to assist based on objective information and through a transparent and well-informed process. The ultimate official aim is to help everyone who needs assistance, without discrimination. Decisions, in the narrative of this level, are primarily evidence-based.

At this level, triage is negotiated and discussed between known and established parties. Organisational representatives know each other well and understand the rules and procedures of participation in the meetings. The number of actors involved in these meetings is usually low (around five to eight participants). Meeting participants are aware that their decisions must be seen as transparent as possible, and this is a major incentive for aiming to reach decisions by consensus or at least explicit acceptance by the parties involved and to uphold the practice of framing decisions according to clear objectives and parameters. There must be regulatory frameworks (national or internationals), and the final result is formal and public. Officially, they seek to aid everyone in need of assistance. The final decision pertains to resource flows designated to agencies, plans and programmes.

In the shadow of these formal, consensus-driven and evidence-based processes, multiple, and not always openly recognised, actors are involved in the negotiations. For example, groups contesting the state may come into the picture because they are needed to secure safe access for UN agencies and NGOs, and these groups may insist on aid to certain groups in exchange. Agreements made during these shadow negotiations are kept off the record and do not appear in official documents. As one official of an international organisation said, ‘Everyone knows [that they negotiate with parties contesting the state]. In some meetings, we can talk about this, but of course we cannot say this on record, especially when there are government officials, because we have [to appear] to be neutral’.

Another example of everyday political action at the national level is some organisations’ non-attendance at coordination meetings, as observed and mentioned by multiple informants in South Sudan. Non-attendance at meetings can happen when an actor does not agree with the actions to be proposed by the government or other aid actors, but, to maintain good relationships, they do not want to say ‘no’ to them. By not going to the meeting, they avoid being part of the process, or they may be able to boycott some actions that require that a certain number of actors be involved in the decision. Other actors choose non-attendance because they have not achieved or done what was agreed, or they do not have the information or capacity to adequately participate in meeting discussions; there therefore do not attend to avoid being seen as lacking competence. This is an example of everyday resistance in which an organisation unofficially claims or rejects certain actions.

Level 2: Institutional triage. The second level concerns decision making inside an aid agency, government ministry or department. The negotiations are generally internal to the organisation or between the organisation and its (implementing) partners. At this level, efficiency and accountability are the key concepts in the narrative of the official politics. Decisions are based on an in-depth analysis of their own capacities, which is set against the objective to help the neediest or go where it is most urgent.

Decisions aim to aid a population that is usually broadly defined in the first level of decision making in a way that enables the highest efficiency and accountability possible in the situation. Hence, it is recognised that there is insufficient capacity to assist everyone; therefore, it is necessary to triage – to prioritise beyond and between the populations fitting the initial target criteria. Maximising efficiency and accountability is often achieved by partnering or coordinating with other organisations.

Beneath the decision-making processes, the interviews revealed everyday politics that are oriented towards creating and maintaining networks among aid agencies. It is well known and it was regularly mentioned in the interviews that casual gatherings are the settings where aid actors get together and strengthen their relationships. We found that many problems, agreements and collaboration practices are discussed at these informal gatherings. It often happens that decisions are pre-discussed in an informal setting and later formalised through the practices of official politics in each organisation or via partnership agreements. Rather than making decisions about when, how and whom to assist based on a set of criteria, such decisions thus came about through experience-based informal interaction. Maintaining favourable and trustworthy relations can thus be seen to underpin official decision making. This provides an example of the everyday politics of support and compliance (Kerkvliet, 2009).

Level 3: Local triage. At the local level, decisions with regard to humanitarian aid and disaster response are rooted in a narrative centring on the concepts of feasibility and efficacy. In South Sudan, at this level, the aim is to help those who need assistance and 'that *we* can help' – a sentiment commonly expressed during the interviews and field visits. Unlike the process at the first level, at this level, it appears legitimate to negotiate with local society actors, including parties contesting the state and affected communities, alongside consultations with other aid actors on the ground.

Decision making at this level involves a multitude of actors that may have very divergent styles of operating. In some places in South Sudan, the process included nine types of actors: field offices of international and local NGOs, UN agencies, governmental officials, private companies, churches, civic organisations, representatives from associations of aid recipients residing in nearby protection of civilians sites and security forces. Other areas saw less complexity, with decisions made only between INGO staff members, one UN representative and community leaders. In line with results presented by Young and Maxwell (2009) about

targeting in a complex emergency, the participation of the communities of affected people in South Sudan was limited in decision making processes.

The official politics of triage concerns who can effectively be assisted while safeguarding the security and resources of all actors involved. At this level, there is less of an (artificial) separation between official and everyday politics. All involved actors accept that working at the level of implementation is often messy and requires a great deal of creativity and flexibility. Negotiations are focused on maintaining the legitimacy of the actors providing aid or disaster response. As mentioned by all NGO representatives and four INGO staff members, aid actors can only decide to operate in places where they know they are accepted; otherwise, their actions could be seen as coercive and violent, resulting in insecurity and volatility.

Participants noted that acceptance is crucial to their capacity to implement programmes. Acceptance and legitimacy must be built up over time. A national NGO staff member mentioned that 'The most important thing is to be accepted, and the people see us as family or they know us'. In the case of South Sudan, building trust and maintaining favourable relations have two main components: The first is a cultural-community framework. Especially for actors coming from the national capital, it is considered crucial to share in the cultural, tribal and communal activities of the affected communities. The second component is less performative and is based on the *presence* of aid workers. Several times in interviews with beneficiaries and local people from affected places, it was mentioned that the presence of a particular NGO or UN agency was considered valuable, even if they could not do much.

At the local level, then, prioritisation is largely conditional on presence and acceptance. This has major implications for the agility of aid. Needs-based humanitarianism is supposed to be capable of shifting operations when required, for example when a sudden need arises because of a disaster, but the realities on the ground paint a different picture.

Interaction between the different levels. The three levels of decision making, to some extent, represent different realities, but there are interactions between these levels. At different moments, effective aid programming involves decisions at all three levels, and decisions at all levels largely centre on the questions of necessity, feasibility and the availability of funding. At each level of official and everyday politics described above, actors assess these questions within the parameters specific to that level.

The interviews also revealed flaws in the coordination and alignment between the politics of each level, even within individual organisations. Although this may be expected in any large-scale humanitarian response, the participants mentioned that the HIC in South Sudan made this more pronounced because every organisation at each level must assess their own risk, negotiate their resources, legitimate their actions and try to mesh as well as possible with the other levels.

Path dependency in programming

The decisions of how aid will be provided, when, to whom and where result from the interlocking processes of triage at the three decision-making levels. The outcomes of prioritisation reveal that humanitarian aid in South Sudan is path-dependent, meaning that decisions are largely informed by the history of interventions – not only by the analysis of current needs. This understanding is quite unlike the image of humanitarianism as needs-based, flexible and agile. Triage at all three levels is steered by (financial) feasibility. At the local level, in addition to questions of need, and this feasibility is highly intertwined with acceptance, which involves a process requiring long-term immersion and trust building in communities. As a result, most INGOs and their partner organisations decide to prioritise assisting communities where they are already working or places near these locations.

The main reasons to continue working in the same place are that security and access constraints make starting projects at new sites a difficult and lengthy enterprise; establishing rapport with local communities and recruiting and training local staff take time; and knowing the territories, people and needs provide the background needed to facilitate feasible new proposals. The constraints that HIC scenarios such as South Sudan impose on organisations lead them to rely on previous programmes and field presence as a springboard for new projects. As an INGO manager summarised, 'Implementing a programme in a new place in South Sudan requires much time, funds and logistics'. Ideally, triage aims to balance needs with feasibility; however, in reality, the feasibility aspect, which is strongly path-dependent, is assigned more weight.

The importance of path dependency for development interventions has previously been demonstrated. Koch (Koch 2009; Koch et al. 2009) described how, at both global and national levels, INGOs tend to have certain geographical concentrations. Development thus tends to be concentrated in certain countries and in certain regions within countries. In South Sudan, we found that this pattern of path dependency is also present in humanitarian aid.

Path dependency is particularly pronounced at lower levels of decision making. Actors and authorities operating at the national level are committed to universal, consensual and transparent action. At this level, decisions regarding where to assist are framed on the basis of objective parameters, including the number of people affected, the level of food insecurity, the level of physical security, the health situation and water access and use. Expanding operations to less-covered areas was discussed in multiple observed cluster meetings. Similarly, two research participants representing donors operating in the country emphasised that they encourage the institutions they fund to change or expand their operations to cover new areas. At the institutional level and especially at the local level, decisions of triage are more openly based on feasibility

and often result in decisions to continue focusing on the same areas for the abovementioned reasons. Box 1 presents an example of this path dependency based on the famine declaration in South Sudan.

Box 1 The example of path dependency in the famine response

The declaration of famine in South Sudan is a good example for studying the extent to which humanitarian action is agile and mobile or locked in a path-dependency cycle.

After famine was declared in two counties of South Sudan by United Nations in February 2017 (United Nations 2017), many international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) and United Nations agencies encountered a strong call to prioritise the needs of people affected by the famine over the needs of those affected by the conflict and considering the difficulties of acting in a high-intensity conflict setting. There was also a call for organisations to try to change their focus of action, counteracting the trend to keep working in places where programmes have already been implemented. However, despite these organisations' drive to respond and the new resources, incentives and objectives that the famine drew to South Sudan, many INGOs were unable to respond to the 'new' crisis, access was increasingly hindered (OCHA 2017c) and the dominant strategy was to prioritise the response based on available resources (OCHA 2017b).

The main reason for this given in the interviews in this study pointed to a lack of flexibility in terms of funds and changing project and programme objectives. As one INGO manager stated, 'We cannot just re-direct funds to cover the famine response'. Similarly, aid actors mentioned that responding to the famine meant working with 'new people, new plans, new everything' and noted that it is challenging to move people and funding from one project to another. It was also mentioned that responding to the famine meant giving less priority to existing projects or altering their implementation. An INGO staff member noted that 'Emergency programmes are short term, no more than one year: any detraction and you will not be on time'. Relatedly, even with the additional funds available, acting on the famine would require modifying existing projects and reaching new agreements with donors because the organisations did not have the capacity to work on multiple complex emergencies simultaneously. In interviews with donors, they said that they would allow more time or some level of flexibility to respond to the famine; however, only a few INGOs contacted their donors to discuss this possibility.

A final explanation presented for the limited capacity to respond to the famine is that the declaration of famine can be seen more as a political move aiming to unleash a set of humanitarian actions than as a real famine situation. All participants were careful to clarify that this statement should not be taken to diminish the severity of the situation or the level of malnutrition experienced; however, it should be made clear that for them, a famine defined as two of every 10,000 people dying each day and over than 30% of the population suffering acute malnutrition (FEWS 2016), is not precisely what was happening, even in the worst-affected areas of South Sudan. Therefore, although some level of response was urgently needed, the situation was not as urgent as it appeared, in the eyes of aid actors in the country.

In summary, from a triage point of view, when deciding to respond to the famine, only a few organisations were able to organise effective responses in a short period of time and were independent enough to implement in this high-intensity conflict setting.

The need for flexible programmes and adaptive management

While HIC dynamics are an important reason why humanitarian actors are not as agile as they would like to be in responding to newly arising or changing needs, the participants in this study also emphasised the lack of flexibility built into humanitarian programming, as is clearly illustrated in the example of the famine in Box 1. As an INGO manager explained, 'It is not that simple – being flexible when you have a fixed budget, timelines, deadlines, budget lines, all the lines'. Many participants mentioned the lack of room for manoeuvre in the aid regime as a major impediment to flexibility.

Most INGOs represented in this study found it challenging to negotiate with donors regarding programme modification. Modifications involving changing to a different village in the same state or adjusting the specifics of the response within the same humanitarian category were considered relatively easy. For example, changing activities within the water, sanitation and hygiene sector would be possible, but shifting activities to a different category such as non-food items would not be possible. For the types of changes considered more difficult, INGOs and NGOs had to resort to what they referred to as 'creativity'. This 'creativity' could entail stretching the conditions of their funding or seeking funding from different sources. The latter approach could mean raising funds from private donors to allow the organisation the flexibility needed to manoeuvre through unexpected challenges. For example, when the Government of South Sudan decided to increase the fees of the working permits for international staff, three actors (a donor and two INGO staff members) said that they dealt with this additional burden via private funding because these costs were beyond the project-planning budget.

A related impediment concerned the duration of programmes. In HIC scenarios, most funding is related to emergency and humanitarian aid actions and focuses on short or one-year funding schemes. This works against agencies that need to change the location of their interventions: such a change will prolong the existing projects because of the time needed to set up the new programme, recruit staff and foster relations with the community. Additionally, coping with the short funding time frames often entails 'creativity', whereby certain activities are postponed to the next funding cycle, which can only be done when continuing to work within the same project area.

Local actors and organisations

Creating a legitimate basis for humanitarian intervention is primarily done by working through locally embedded organisations. These organisations are seen as legitimate by the local community and aid recipients. In this research, their legitimacy was always explained by the interviewees as part of what can be broadly called a cultural-community framework, including religion as a legitimation factor.

In South Sudan, many humanitarian workers are local, have significant family and community ties, and share the same ethnic grouping or tribal group as the beneficiaries. Because of the conflict, many of these actors cannot work in places that are under the control of groups that are hostile to their tribal affiliation or political association. Compared with international actors, local and regional actors are able to obtain more information and interpret it better and to be seen as legitimate actors by affected communities and local authorities. INGOs therefore usually work in partnership with local and national NGOs. Local NGO representatives mentioned that INGOs and UN agencies operate as mini-donors and donors, respectively, hiring local NGOs to do certain jobs.

The reality observed on the ground in this study revealed several nuances. Local and national NGOs are the main actors involved in delivering assistance in areas directly affected by conflict or disaster and in remote areas. Coordinated regional operations and the provision of aid in protection of civilians sites, informal camps and secure areas are often done by international actors relying mainly on South Sudanese staff members but retaining some coordinating and managing positions for international actors from the same continental region. International actors mentioned that the insufficiency of human resources and capacities in the country to manage major operations is related to the level of education, language barriers and lack of knowledge of operational procedures and protocol by South Sudanese workers. However, the ensuing situation gives local and national NGOs the feeling that they are being used for the 'hard and dangerous tasks' without being given the space to obtain significant grants, notwithstanding their capacities to manage such grants.

Although much can be said about the division of labour between international and national actors, the most relevant implication here is that the reliance on embedded organisations further enhances the tendency of path dependence found in the organisation of aid delivery in South Sudan.

Private sector support

A final dynamic that reinforces path dependency is the use of the private sector. Most aid operations are strongly supported by the private sector, especially in terms of transportation and financial services. It was mentioned in the vast majority of the interviews and seen in observations during the field visits that private trucks and charter flights are used for the distribution of goods in South Sudan. Via the World Food Programme, the UN manages the UN Humanitarian Air Service, providing flights and transportation of goods services, but the cost or timing of these services cause many INGOs and national and local NGOs to opt for private solutions instead.

These private services are usually run by regional companies from neighbouring countries and include in their price insurance and what an interviewed truck owner called a 'full package'. This 'full package' includes the

fuel, driver, delivery of the goods, some sort of insurance, information about the roads, detours, food and water for the driver and assistance with loading tasks, as well as some items that agencies cannot include in their financial reports, such as informal payments at checkpoints. Charter flights offer similar solutions, including in their prices both official airport fees and 'less-known' fees. The private sector also plays a role in providing financial services, such as the transport of money needed for cash transfer programmes, salary and service payments, and the purchase of local goods. The private sector is also present in voucher and electronic card programmes, which are mainly run by UN agencies.

In general, these private services are a way of outsourcing risks and dealing legally with the irregularities and informalities found in HIC scenarios, as well as managing the insecurity and the logistics of operating in a HIC scenario such as South Sudan. The reliance on the private sector reinforces the path dependency of aid programming. Like aid agencies, private companies require deep knowledge and trusted local actors to operate; hence, these companies only offer their services in familiar territories, reinforcing the tendency for aid to be provided in the same places or near previous projects.

5.8. Discussion and conclusions

Providing humanitarian aid and disaster response in HIC scenarios is challenging for many reasons. Funding and the complex logistics necessary to overcome reduced access and insecurity emerge as the main challenges in South Sudan. However, as our study showed, aid actors are confident about their ability to operate under these daunting conditions, and there is no doubt that humanitarian assistance and disaster response can be carried out in these complex arenas of aid delivery.

This article focused on decision making and practices around the questions of who, where and how aid will be provided. The notions of targeting and triage acknowledge that prioritisation is necessary and that this comes about through both assessing the needs and evaluating the capacities, feasibility and scope of the response.

There are three main research findings. First, the reality of prioritisation is very complex. It concerns three levels of decision making, each of which has specific rationales. At each level of decision making, everyday politics plays a role and intertwines with the official politics. The research thus contributes to the evolving literature on the complexity of humanitarian governance (Dijkzeul and Sandvik 2019).

Second, the research confirms that prioritisation is a painful process, first and foremost for the affected communities, but also for the aid actors involved. Whereas the concept of targeting conveys a rational process to establish needs, here, we use the concept of triage, which has historically been more associated with the painful process of deciding whom to help and whom not to help. We found that aid actors deal with

this painful process by, for example, maintaining that decisions are not final (and hence aid may be reconsidered in the future) and by relying on community resilience. The latter finding tallies with the work of Jaspars (2018), who demonstrated that resilience is used as an excuse for withholding aid. We add a layer to her analysis by bringing out how aid workers use resilience to relieve the pain of decisions they are required to make. Regarding the famine in South Sudan, saying that the declaration of famine is political, although this is true (as every disaster-related action is political), is another way to alleviate the burden of deciding not to act. This result also relates to what Barnett and Snyder (2008:143) have termed the 'ethics of consequentialism', as humanitarians working in HIC scenarios are constantly 'asking whether they can achieve their most preferred outcome and, if not, whether they might settle for the second- or third- ranked outcome'. Triage confronts aid actors with ethical reflections on the consequences of their actions (Slim 2015). Our findings thus contribute to the literature on the coping mechanisms that aid workers develop to deal with the stresses of the challenging choices they have to make (Walkup 1997).

Third, we found that aid actors, especially INGOs, despite their capacity to act and their apparent flexibility, are locked into path-dependent programming. Agencies tend to stay and work in the same areas and sectors over time, rather than moving to locations where aid is needed the most. There are many factors that play into this tendency towards path dependency. These include the challenges of operating in HIC scenarios, the inflexibility of humanitarian financing, the roles of local actors and the roles of private companies involved in aid delivery. These factors all result in a tendency for agencies to continue working in the same area. The example of the famine in South Sudan further shows how each of these factors plays a role in the path-dependency cycle, even when extra funds are available, as is usually the case with famine declarations (De Waal 1997; Donini and Walker 2012; Keen 2008b).

Path dependency has previously been convincingly demonstrated in development programming (Koch et al. 2009). However, to our knowledge, this is the first time humanitarian assistance, which is strongly associated with agility, has been discussed in this way. A major contribution of this article, then, is to question this agility and to suggest that humanitarian assistance is much more path-dependent than has previously been assumed. This path dependency has major consequences for the ability to respond to sudden changes in needs, for example at the moment when a disaster develops in a conflict area.

Future work is needed to understand how aid is provided in other HIC scenarios, to what extent these scenarios are similar to the case of South Sudan, and how the triage of aid evolves and develops in other situations. Additional fieldwork research is also needed to better understand how humanitarian assistance and disaster response develop in practice as the layered outcome of complex decision making informed by multiple types of policy.

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6. THE CASE OF AFGHANISTAN

Mitigation wall as part of a disaster risk reduction project. Badakhshan Province, Afghanistan (R. Mena, 2017)

The (im)possibilities of disaster risk reduction in the context of high-intensity conflict: The case of Afghanistan[28]

6.1. Abstract

Conflict aggravates disaster risk and impact through increased vulnerability and weakened response capacities. Disaster risk reduction (DRR) and disaster governance are needed—but often deemed unfeasible—in conflict-affected areas. In Afghanistan, despite the high-intensity conflict (HIC), there is a growing body of practice on DRR. To provide insight on DRR in HIC contexts, this study used document analysis, stakeholder interviews, and participant observation to analyse the promotion, implementation, and challenges of DRR in Afghanistan. The findings show that DRR was promoted after international recognition of Afghanistan's high disaster risk, which coincided with expanding opportunities for development. Early Afghan DRR projects were hazard-oriented and focused on mitigation infrastructure, but some have shifted towards an integrated approach. DRR is challenging in HIC contexts because of complex logistical and funding needs required to overcome access and security issues. The Afghan experience shows that DRR is possible in HIC countries, provided that different levels of conflict are acknowledged, sufficient time and funding are available, and disaster governance arrangements are in place. Expectations regarding the possibilities for DRR in HIC areas should be tempered by the realities of limitations in terms of geographical coverage, real impact, and capacities to reduce vulnerability in an integrated way.

Keywords: disaster risk reduction (DRR), high-intensity conflict settings, disaster governance, Afghanistan, resilience humanitarianism

6.2. Introduction

The distinction between human-induced disasters (e.g. conflict) and natural disasters has long been obsolete (see Chmutina and von Meding 2019; Dynes and Quarantelli 1971; Quarantelli and Dynes 1977; Sorokin 1943; Stallings 1988). Recognizing the social dimensions of disasters, academic and policy literature avoid the phrase 'natural disasters', as disasters come about through the interplay of socially produced vulnerability and natural hazards, which are largely determined by land use, water management, human-induced climate

[28] Article published in journal 'Environmental Hazards': Mena, R., Hilhorst, D. (2020) The (im)possibilities of disaster risk reduction in the context of high-intensity conflict: the case of Afghanistan, Environmental Hazards, DOI: 10.1080/17477891.2020.1771250
*The first and main author is responsible for the initiation and design of the research, data collection, data analysis, and writing and revision of the manuscript. The second author substantially contributed to the initiation and design of the research, and the critical revision, improvement, and final approval of the manuscript.

change, and social mitigation measures, among others (Cannon 1994; Kelman 2010; Kelman et al. 2015; O'Keefe et al. 1976). Nonetheless, the distinction lives on in policies that separate the domains of disaster and conflict. This is seen in traditional disaster governance models, which assume or promote the presence of functional national or local governmental structures that can frame, regulate, promote, and coordinate disaster-related actions (Ahrens and Rudolph 2006; UNISDR 2015). This is problematic because increasing evidence demonstrates that disasters and conflicts often co-occur (see Dynes and Quarantelli 1971; Harris et al. 2013; Hilhorst, Mena, et al. 2019; Nel and Righarts 2008). Caso (2019) reported that, from 1960 to 2018, the average yearly percentage of countries affected by conflict that also faced a disaster was 67%. From 2009 to 2018, the average yearly co-occurrence of conflicts and disasters was 78%, meaning that the population of almost four out of every five countries affected by conflict in a given year also have to cope with at least one disaster in the same year. Most deaths caused by disasters occur in conflict-affected and fragile states (Peters 2017), and the impact of a disaster on people's livelihoods is greater in conflict-affected and fragile contexts (Hilhorst 2013b; Wisner 2012).

The overwhelming co-occurrence of disaster and conflict raises the question of whether it is possible to include conflict-affected areas in disaster risk reduction (DRR) programmes. Despite the compelling idea that DRR is needed in these areas, initial explorations into this question have consistently concluded that this is not feasible because of operational and institutional limitations and risks of playing into the dynamics of conflict (ECHO 2013; Feinstein International Center 2013; UNDP 2011; Wisner et al. 2004) The previous question about the feasibility of DRR is even larger in contexts affected by high-intensity conflict (HIC)[29], where work is usually very challenging because of violence, social and political instability, a lack of government control, and a generally unsafe environment (Twigg 2015; Mena 2018).

Nevertheless, there is a nascent trend to begin to explore possibilities for including HIC-affected areas in DRR strategies. Several actors have called for the introduction of DRR in conflict-affected places. The Chair's summary of the Global Platform for DRR in Geneva in 2019, for example, stated that 'The Global Platform underscored the security implications of climate change and disasters and encouraged more context-specific disaster risk reduction and resilience building strategies in conflict-affected countries and fragile contexts based on risk assessments that integrate disaster and climate risks' (GPDRR 2019:4). Increasing numbers of DRR programmes are testing these waters, although this is still limited. The rationale for these emerging policies and programmes draws on the frequent occurrence of disasters in conflict-affected areas and finds additional support in the idea that DRR can present opportunities to reduce conflict and contribute to

[29] As an analytical category, 'high-intensity conflict' refers to a conflict with more than 1000 casualties per year and high levels of population displacement. The provision of goods and basic services is irregular, and local authorities and governments have minimal or no effective control or influence over some regions of the country (Mena 2018). High-intensity conflict is usually a phase within a longer history of conflict and is often concentrated in particular parts of a country.

peacebuilding by addressing the root causes of violent conflicts, such as income and power disparities (Wisner 2012). It has also been suggested that promoting DRR in conflict-affected areas has tactical value because DRR is 'generally perceived as "neutral" and non-threatening politically' (ECHO 2013:44), which could present opportunities for the implementation of projects in highly politicized environments.

The history of conflict in Afghanistan has largely overshadowed the country's experience with disasters (Mohanty et al. 2019), and it is little known that, for example, in 2018, the number of Afghan residents in need of acute humanitarian assistance because of slow- and sudden-onset disasters (four million people) was *three times* the number in need because of conflict (OCHA 2018a:4). Afghanistan is one of the few HIC-affected contexts where DRR projects are being developed and disaster governance is evolving. This study aimed to explore these developments in Afghanistan as a case, analysing the governance and implementation of DRR policies and programmes at national and local levels, as well as the experiences that have accumulated over the past 15 years. This paper addresses the questions of why and how DRR policies have been introduced, what disaster governance arrangements have evolved at the national level and in programme sites, and how DRR has been implemented in the country.

The experience in Afghanistan offers valuable insight for DRR programmes in HIC areas. This is important because, as Peters (2017:10) asserted, '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'. The Afghan experience also gives some pause regarding the high expectations for the possibilities for DRR in conflict areas.

6.3. Disaster risk reduction and disaster governance in conflict-affected areas

Attempts to protect people's lives and assets from the vagaries of nature are as old as humankind and may be seen as built into the organization and culture of every community and society. DRR as we know it today, however, has a fairly recent origin. It can be traced back to a paper entitled 'Taking the naturalness out of natural disasters' by O'Keefe, Westgate, and Wisner (1976). The paper, which was published in *Nature*, argued that disasters are a consequence more of socio-economic than of natural factors and, therefore, the focus should be on precautionary planning to reduce people's vulnerability (O'Keefe et al. 1976). The understanding of vulnerability as a co-producer of disaster, often expressed with the pseudo-formula of Risk = Hazards x Vulnerability, has become a core notion in disaster studies (Aboagye 2012; Hewitt 2013; Todd and Todd 2011; Wisner 2010; Wisner et al. 2004). This idea has led to enquiry on how *capacities* to reduce hazards and vulnerabilities can be fostered to mitigate the largely social production of disaster risk.

DRR evolved as a comprehensive approach to disasters (in contrast to the more traditional paradigms of disaster governance), strongly geared towards local-level impact. The United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) (2017) defines DRR as 'the concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyse and reduce the causal factors of disasters. Reducing exposure to hazards, lessening the vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improving preparedness and early warning for adverse events are all examples of disaster risk reduction'. International commitment to DRR was systematized in the Hyogo (2005–2015) and Sendai (2015–2030) Frameworks for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR 2015), and the main United Nations (UN) organization addressing disasters was recently renamed as the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). This way of thinking about DRR is still evolving, and the funding for DRR continues to be relatively low compared with funding for post-disaster response (Kellet and Sparks 2012; Kellett and Caravani 2013; Watson et al. 2015), in contrast to the extent to which DRR resonates with global discourses and policies.

Disaster governance and resilience humanitarianism

Disaster governance is now also understood in increasingly broad terms, reflecting the fact that disaster-related processes are as much responsibility of societal actors and dynamics as of governmental and technical institutions and professionals on the topic (Cook et al. 2019; Tierney 2012). Consideration of social dynamics, including conflict, and the specifics of contexts and places has therefore grown in the field (Hilhorst, Mena, et al. 2019). The upsurge in attention to DRR has further expanded the concepts and organization of disaster governance. Disaster response, which is understood as acting after a disaster, was traditionally organized in a highly top-down fashion relative to other administrative domains. As attention shifted to pre-disaster activities such as preparedness, mitigation, and DRR, disaster governance likewise broadened in a way that was similar to other public domains, with the term 'governance' denoting that collective purposes are no longer solely the domain of the state (Colebatch 2009). Governance encompasses the roles of non-state actors in public endeavours, where the state may still coordinate and regulate but is no longer considered a sovereign actor with the exclusive ability to steer or regulate (Rhodes 1996). Disaster governance, then, incorporates the responsibilities and management of DRR, disaster response, disaster knowledge production, and related policies and normative frameworks by multiple actors (e.g. government, civil society, and private actors) at different levels (e.g. national, regional, and local) in its social, economic, and political dimensions (Field and Kelman, 2018; Hilhorst et al., 2019; Tierney, 2012; UNISDR, 2017).

This broadened notion of disaster governance can be recognized in international policy frameworks (i.e. the Hyogo and Sendai Frameworks of 2005 and 2015). The Hyogo Framework emphasized the importance of inclusive forms of disaster governance, which was understood to be shaped by different actors, including governmental actors, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector, and affected populations,

with international organizations playing a supportive role. This framework called on states to form DRR platforms where different actors were represented. In 2015, 187 UN Member States signed the Sendai Framework ratifying previous commitments (UNDRR 2015). However, questions of how disaster governance can be shaped in conflict areas remain largely unexplored, and the Hyogo and Sendai frameworks make no mention of how this can be done (Feinstein International Center, 2013).

The general acceptance of the idea of disaster governance does not say much about how disaster governance has evolved in practice or how the 'real governance' is shaped by ground-level implementation and practical norms, to use the terminology of de Herdt and Olivier de Sardan (2015). This is especially relevant in HIC scenarios, where the level of state fragility or weakness can be confused with a lack of governance, and focusing on 'real governance' encourages paying attention 'not only to state institutions but to the whole spectrum of formal and informal actors in the "field of power" around state institutions' (Titeca and de Herdt 2011:216). Understanding disaster governance from this perspective is primarily an empirical question, as the roles of and interactions between actors involved in DRR vary in different contexts and at different levels of implementation (Hilhorst, Mena, et al. 2019).

Areas affected by conflict—and especially HIC, as in the case of Afghanistan—are usually the remit of humanitarian response rather than disaster governance. It is therefore interesting to note that similar changes are occurring in humanitarian governance, in parallel to the changes in disaster governance. This opens up new spaces for the integration of humanitarian governance and disaster governance, especially for DRR. The protracted nature of many crises has increasingly compelled long-term responses by governments and other organizations (Harmer and Macrae, 2004). Humanitarianism was traditionally organized around international response capacities, short-term lifesaving, and relief, but we now see a shift towards emphasizing the humanitarian–development nexus, a focus on national and local response capacities, and attempts to enable the resilience of communities in conflict rather than merely providing relief. This new approach has been termed 'resilience humanitarianism' (Hilhorst, 2018), and its models and premises are compatible with current ideas in DRR (ECHO 2013; Hilhorst, Mena, et al. 2019).

The everyday politics of disaster risk reduction

In HIC scenarios like Afghanistan, it is obvious that, as Wisner (2012:71) argued, '[t]here are many ways in which violent conflict complicates, confuses and obstructs the efforts of DRR'. For two reasons, however, it would be a mistake to ascribe all complications in DRR in these cases to the conflict. First, conflicts are simultaneously shaped by local and overarching macro agendas that are interconnected by relationships between multiple actors at different levels (Kalyvas, 2003). How conflict is perceived and plays out at the

community level may be related to dynamics beyond the conflict dynamics at regional or national level. Second, there are conflict risks in DRR in many situations, including in countries that are not 'in conflict'.

DRR comprises interventions related to natural resources, which are often a source of local conflict, leading to physical or other forms of violence. As in other places, violence related to land and water resources is common in Afghanistan (Gleick 1993; Heijmans et al. 2009; Ide 2015; UNEP 2013). DRR programmes are a potential way of reducing the risk of conflict, but they can also become a new source of conflict or exacerbate pre-existing tensions (Feinstein International Center 2013; Mena et al. 2019; Peters and Peters 2018). For example, in Afghanistan, projects modifying the course of a river have been reported to create conflict between upstream and downstream communities (Heijmans 2012; Mena and ARC 2018b; Mena et al. 2019).

DRR also intervenes in the social organization of a community by bringing in resources and working with community actors. This can be a source of collaboration, but it can also lead to social tension, especially where local governance is weakly developed. Conflict sensitivity should therefore be an important aspect of DRR projects everywhere, and especially in conflict-affected areas, where local institutions may be less equipped for the peaceful resolution of social conflicts (Mena et al. 2019).

In analysing the working of DRR in conflict areas, it is important to pay attention to the everyday politics of DRR—how ideas, people, and materialities are generated and allocated—and how these evolve through implementation in specific contexts (Hilhorst 2013d). Questions of who profits from DRR interventions, what resistance these interventions face, and what impact DRR has should routinely be considered in both research and practice.

6.4. The case of Afghanistan

Afghanistan has been affected by recurring high levels of conflict for decades. The Soviet invasion of 1979 led to a 10-year war, and the 1990s witnessed a civil war between mujahidin factions, resulting in the Taliban taking power in 1996. Military intervention led by the United States in 2001 in response to the '9/11' attacks was followed by continuous fighting. At national level, the crisis continues to be marked by conflict between armed opposition groups (AOGs) and the Afghan government, and 40% to 70% of the country's territory is under the Taliban's influence (Jackson 2018). As Donini has noted (2012a), these conflicts have resulted in the continued presence of multiple humanitarian and development organizations and donors in the country, including UN agencies, international NGOs, and Afghan organizations.

Macro-national conflict between the Afghan government and AOGs manifests differently across localities and administrative levels, its dynamics intertwine with locally triggered conditions and tensions (Demmers 2012; Kalyvas 2003; Keen 2008a), and many localized tensions play out with no direct interaction with the

larger conflicts. At the provincial (meso) level, a different set of conflicts result from corruption, a lack of resources, and the presence of AOG systems of governance, warlords, and governmental institutions. At the community (micro) level, multiple conflicts occur within and between communities, as well as between communities and actors at the provincial or national level. These conflicts may concern power relations and factional disputes or relate to natural resource management and access (Mena and ARC 2018b; UNEP 2013).

The war and social conflicts at all levels have led to high poverty and food insecurity, a fragile system of governance, and reduced socio-economic development (The Fund for Peace 2018; The World Bank 2018; The World Bank and GFDRR 2017). Afghanistan's protracted conflict has eroded people's coping mechanisms, making them more prone to hazards, and 'nearly all of the country's 34 provinces have been affected by at least one natural disaster' over the last three decades (NEPA and UNEP 2015:34). This includes floods, flash floods, earthquakes, landslides, and droughts (ARC 2016; Mohanty et al. 2019; The World Bank and GFDRR 2017). These disasters have claimed more than 20,000 lives since 1980 and affected an average of over 200,000 people each year, and the economic damage from earthquakes, floods, and droughts in 2017 was estimated to be more than USD 400 million (OCHA 2018a; The World Bank and GFDRR 2017). Consequently, Afghanistan ranks first in the world in terms of the impact of disasters on its population.

6.5. Research questions and methods

This article uses the lenses of disaster governance and everyday politics to explore how DRR interventions are promoted, initiated, and implemented in Afghanistan. We examine why, when, and how DRR was introduced and implemented, analysing the roles of and interactions between different actors—namely, international donors, international NGOs, the Afghan government, Afghan NGOs, and communities. To enable this analysis, qualitative case study research was conducted in two phases. After six months of document review and remote interviews (Phase 1), the first author conducted fieldwork in regions of Afghanistan with DRR projects from February to June 2017 (Phase 2).

Data collection and analysis

Fourteen policy-related documents and eight reports on DRR and disaster risk management and governance were analysed. The analysed policy documents were dated from 1991 to 2017 and written in Dari or English. Most of the reports were written by UN agencies, international NGOs, or international consultancies.

The fieldwork included 60 semi-structured interviews, observation of over 20 meetings, and seven visits to DRR projects (some of them part of the same DRR programme). The sample of interviewees was selected with the aim of balance in terms of gender, region, and the types of actors and organizations represented. This balance was only partially achieved because of security constraints, low female participation in the

labour market, and disparity in the numbers of international versus local and national actors. Table 11 provides detailed information about the research participants.

Table 11 Afghanistan: summary of research participants

Type of actor	Interviews	Description
International and local staff of UN agencies	7	Programme managers of five different agencies
International NGOs	16	Managers, country directors, and staff members of 11 different organizations
Local and national NGOs	9	Managers, country directors, and staff members of five different organizations
National-level governmental actors	7	Minister, advisors, managers, and staff members of four different governmental institutions
Local government/authorities	3	Director and staff members of two different local governmental institutions
Affected people and communities	7	Three individual interviews with community leaders and four group interviews with community members and representatives
Donors	3	Two national donors and one intergovernmental donor
Academics researchers	5	Two Afghan researchers and three academics working on the topic and/or the country
Opposition party officials	2	Two commanders or leaders of one opposition party officials
Private sector actors	3	A provider of transportation services, a provider of telecommunication services, and a supplier of construction materials
Total	**60**	

***Notes*:** NGO: nongovernmental organization; UN: United Nations

Thematic analysis was used to analyse all collected information (Braun and Clarke 2006:96). The initial themes were theoretically informed to address the research objectives, and we incorporated flexibility in the study design, considering inductive themes if they proved relevant during the analysis. Four initial theoretical themes informed the analysis: 1) DRR history, promotion, and implementation; 2) disaster governance arrangement; 3) DRR adaptation to HIC/national/local contexts; and 4) DRR vis-à-vis national conflict. All individual and group interviews, and field notes were anonymized and transcribed. QSR NVivo 11 qualitative data analysis software was used for the coding and thematic analysis.

Fieldwork considerations

For security reasons or on the request of individual interviewees, multiple interviews and meetings were not recorded, and in some cases it was not even possible to take handwritten notes. In these cases, with the consent of those involved, post-meeting notes were taken. Recording, taking pictures, or taking notes was also restricted during the participatory observations and field visits.

Several techniques were used to address these limitations, including memorizing the information collected (e.g. by re-stating aloud the main ideas expressed by the research participants or establishing mnemonic

patterns in the discourse), taking notes as soon as possible after an observation or interaction, and double-checking during a subsequent meeting that the ideas had been understood correctly. The presentation of the results in this article includes instances of paraphrasing individuals' words as accurately as possible.

Security (of the researcher, assistants, and informants) and weather-related constraints limited the number of projects visited. For projects that could not be visited, we used remote research techniques, including interviews by telephone and self-administered structured questionnaires considering of closed-ended questions sent by email to NGO representatives and UN staff members.

6.6. Findings

Disaster risk reduction in Afghanistan: how, why, and by who?

Although Afghanistan is considered a HIC country, the long years of 'neither peace nor war' in some regions, especially in Kabul and a number of the provincial capitals, have enabled 'normal' policy processes in many domains, including disasters. Multiple DRR and disaster risk management policies have been developed in recent years (ARC 2016; UNEP 2013, 2016), and the country has introduced laws and bodies to regulate and promote the development of DRR. The main relevant institutions are the Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA) and the National High Commission of Disaster Management. The key policy documents on this topic are the Afghanistan Disaster Risk Reduction National Strategy of 2018 (SMDM and ANDMA 2018), the Afghanistan Law on Combating Disasters in the Republic of Afghanistan (1991), and the National Disaster Management Plan (2010).[30] Open questions related to these policies involve how they came to be developed and implemented in the country, considering its level of conflict, and to what extent and by whom the policies are translated into programmes and projects.

DRR and general disaster governance have become a policy focus in Afghanistan, chiefly because of recognition of the country's vulnerability to disasters and climate change. Both the document analysis and interviews with two managers from international NGOs located the starting point for DRR work in Afghanistan in the early 2000s. We identified six documents dating from 2004—a year before the Hyogo Framework for Action—that mentioned Afghanistan as a country highly vulnerable to disasters and in need of DRR strategies and programmes. Interest grew rapidly after this. Significantly, Afghanistan signed the Hyogo Framework for Action, and multiple international stakeholders spoke of Afghanistan as the country most in need of DRR work. Multiple projects were then developed, and we were able to gather more than

[30] Other relevant policy document includes: The 'Natural Disaster Mitigation Policy in Afghanistan' (ANDMA (2018a), the 'Strategic Framework 2018–2028' ANDMA (2018b), the 'Afghanistan Strategic National Action Plan (SNAP) for Disaster Risk Reduction: towards peace and stable development' (ANDMA 2011), and 'The Afghanistan National Disaster Plan' (Government of Afghanistan 2003).

200 reports and official documents from the UN and international NGOs about their relevant projects and initiatives in the country.

We observed a noticeable gap between approaches of international actors and those of Afghan government officials. The interviews brought out that central government bureaucrats had not entirely internalized the policies, which were drafted with the help of the international community, maintained a strong orientation towards disaster response and reconstruction. DRR discourses had strongly taken root among international actors, especially international NGOs and UN agencies, which were the main actors behind DRR implementation in Afghanistan.

Our interviews explored how the early projects were developed, finding additional confirmation of the central role of international players in bringing in DRR as a development issue. The vast majority of research participants mentioned that most people managing or implementing DRR projects in the country were first exposed to the possibility of DRR when multiple experts and consultants started to visit Afghanistan to train NGOs in DRR on behalf of donors or international NGOs. An international NGO manager recounted this kind of experience: 'First, I didn't have any information about DRR, but then a specialist came here and offered a training for staff'. In other words, those who have been involved in humanitarian assistance or other programmes need training to comprehensively understand DRR, including risk-mapping, identifying vulnerability, and community-based DRR programming. Staff members, thus, knew little about DRR but were very experienced in working under conditions of social tension and conflict.

International development funding to Afghanistan increased beginning at the end of 2014, when Afghanistan elected a new president and the United States declared the end of their combat operations in the country. As an international NGO manager said, 'the money then came to rebuild the country—a lot, and this was allocated by the big players to the government and the NGOs. We had to do something with that money'. DRR was among the interests of some donors, and several international NGO interviewees indicated that the presence of extra funding motivated them to develop DRR projects. However, despite the available funds, DRR activities remained very limited in number and scope. In their 2013–2015 national progress report on the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action, Afghanistan reported that the main challenges were the 'lack of political will to integrate DRR into development, insufficient budget allocation for DRR, inadequate human and technical resources in the [disaster management] field, and limited donor's interest in funding DRR projects in Afghanistan' (ANDMA, 2015).

Currently, the DRR landscape in Afghanistan is changing. There are even fewer DRR programmes—only five could be identified as active at the time of the research—but these programmes appeared to be stronger and more stable, compared with previous efforts, and some of the programmes were based on more

integrated approaches to disaster risks. An example is the Strengthening the Resilience of Afghanistan's Vulnerable Communities against Natural Disasters project, which began in March 2015 and is managed by the Afghanistan Resilience Consortium (ARC).

When asked about their reasons for supporting DRR programmes in Afghanistan, most donors mentioned that these programmes and its projects align with international commitments such as the Hyogo and Sendai frameworks or the Paris Agreement on climate change. They also saw DRR as a kind of transitional field that enabled them 'to start working in development', in the words of one participant.

Afghan and international NGO participants judged DRR to be necessary for Afghanistan because of the country's vulnerability to hazards and disasters. Some noted that they had built up experience and expertise in DRR, and some said that they could not close their operations because that would mean unemployment for their staff. A business-continuity rationale was thus among the reasons given for why DRR continues to be implemented.

When the communities and recipients of DRR projects were asked why these projects were necessary, most people mentioned that the projects protected their families and houses. However, when the question was asked comparatively—why DRR instead of other projects—the answer was that DRR was what they were offered. A group discussion with community leaders about the priority needs of the community identified electricity, health, and better road access to other areas. DRR was never mentioned as a priority need by community participants. These findings should not be interpreted as suggesting DRR projects are not needed, but this information does invite reflection on how to develop these projects in a way that is more integrated with people's everyday needs and vulnerabilities, especially in HIC settings, where dire needs for services and goods are usually not met.

Overall, these findings show that DRR was introduced in Afghanistan at the instigation of international actors because of the country's high vulnerability to disasters during a window of opportunity after the Hyogo Framework for Action, which coincided with growing space for development work. Over time, DRR approaches matured and became more specialized, creating demand for DRR projects among NGOs, in part because of 'business-continuity' considerations. Affected communities experienced the DRR projects as positive but as not responding to priority needs. Despite the compelling statistics on disasters, local communities have many immediate day-to-day needs to consider. A new generation of DRR projects (discussed in more detail in Section 5.4) is beginning to make advances in integrating DRR with these everyday needs.

Disaster risk reduction implementation and disaster governance in Afghanistan

Despite the policies in place and a basic institutional infrastructure at national and provincial levels, the Afghan government does not implement DRR programmes or projects on the ground. The existing programmes are both initiated and implemented by international donors, UN bodies, and international and Afghan NGOs. The work by national and international NGOs represents the body of practice studied in this paper. This includes DRR work financed by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, the United States Agency for International Development, the Dutch and German governments, and European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations office[31].

A number of DRR projects have been implemented in Afghanistan over the last 15 years. The accounts of implementing NGOs describe overwhelming challenges. Among the multiple challenges, research participants found logistics the most daunting. Obtaining supplies and materials is difficult in some areas. Many roads are unsafe or are seasonally flooded or impassable because of snow. The topography of the country means that air travel to some cities must be by helicopter, which is very expensive. Insecurity in the country adds to inaccessibility in many areas. An NGO manager said: 'the government says "Don't go because it is unsafe", but the commander of the Taliban invited you to help their people. […] In other places, no one stops you, but if you go, they take your things or attack you'. Because many areas are thus inaccessible, a large number of people are excluded from assistance efforts.

Despite these challenges, a number of projects have been realized, but implementation difficulties have strongly restricted the scope of activities in several ways. First, and most obviously, the logistical challenges meant that the number of projects was restricted, with five ongoing DRR projects and others recently completed at the time of the research, although some of these did not directly focus on DRR but included a DRR component or orientation.

Second, the projects developed were usually oriented towards the mitigation of a specific hazard, and they were infrastructural in nature. Although there were some variations and exceptions, a typical project developed a plan of activities after making a hazard map with the community. These plans usually focused on DRR's mitigation aspects. The projects were hazard-centred and mainly geared towards building small pieces of infrastructure, for instance a wall to hold back floods. These projects were supervised by Afghan NGOs who sent representatives to visit the communities at least once per month. After determining the location of the infrastructure to be built, funds (in amounts that varied by project type and location) were made available for construction. The analysis of the budgets of three programmes, led by three different

[31] Formerly known as the European Community Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO).

organizations, showed that 60% to 75% of the programme budgets were allocated to direct costs (materials, equipment, general supplies, services, and labour by local people). The rest of the funds went to projects and programmes support costs (programme management salaries and transportation) and institutional overheads and operating costs (many times paid by the funding international NGO or UN organization). The completion of the infrastructure construction was the end of the DRR project.

This second implementation restriction contradicts the comprehensive approach associated with DRR, which requires an integrated approach combining specific measures with fostering local resilience through institutional development (see e.g. Ahrens and Rudolph 2006; Kelman et al. 2015; Twigg 2015; Wisner et al. 2004). In many ways, the bias towards developing infrastructure was driven by the remoteness of the implementation areas from the capital, where the international NGOs and donors were based. International consultants could only occasionally visit the implementation areas, and donors needed evidence of projects for accountability purposes. A picture of a wall, for instance, would serve this purpose better than a report about a training or another 'soft' activity.

The third implementation restriction involved a pattern that developed whereby DRR was implemented in areas where organizations already had projects. Given the importance of social relations for overcoming multiple challenges common to HIC settings, like gaining access and acceptance, the NGOs had a strong tendency to stay where they had made the necessary investments and had a proven ability to work. In many cases, DRR activities were appended to other projects, such as poverty reduction efforts. This approach also allowed programming and reporting based on validated information that was already available about the population, their needs, and the socio-cultural context. Furthermore, implementing multiple projects in the same area was also a strategy for dealing with the short funding cycles. Although donors expect to receive follow-up requests and to provide additional funding, short funding cycles (common in HIC places) continue to present challenges that can be mitigated by repeat allocations. Thus, programmes were able to overcome the overwhelming challenges associated with DRR in HIC settings, and the strategy to continue working in a particular location was logical. However, a consequence of these path-dependent cycles is that DRR project implementation may not be based on an analysis of where disaster risks are most urgent. It also leads to pockets of development where projects are concentrated in the same area, leaving other areas without assistance.

As mentioned above, although DRR in Afghanistan is mainly initiated by the international community and policies are adopted by the government, the implementation is conducted largely by Afghan organizations or the Afghan staff of international NGOs. Afghan nationals' access to communities is perceived as more secure, and they find it easier to build trust with the communities and adapt the programmes to local needs. Most studied DRR projects did not have a specific approach for adapting their activities to account for local-

level social tensions and conflicts. Programmes worked around conflicts (i.e. selecting locations that were removed from known macro conflict areas, chiefly between AOGs and the Afghan government). Within the studied communities, it was common to hear that the programmes relied on staff familiarity with the communities, using their experience and intuition to avoid doing harm. From the point of view of the NGO staff members, they needed flexibility to ensure that projects were adapted to local realities and that community members remained strongly engaged in the development of the projects. Programming was usually based on log frames, but in practice more flexibility was often allowed. International NGOs found it easy to renegotiate plans and budgets with their donors because, as one manager put it, 'we have good communication with them. I know them; we can get together and talk about it'. Afghan NGOs, in contrast, felt more restricted and found that donors did not afford them the same degree of flexibility, but they nonetheless sought the room for manoeuvre necessary to adapt projects on the ground. It may be recognized that the successes of the DRR projects in Afghanistan, notwithstanding their small scope and numbers, can be attributed to the commitment and experience of the Afghan staff.

How do disaster risk reduction projects and conflict affect each other?

The relationship between conflict and DRR differs for macro-national conflict (between AOGs and the government) versus micro- and meso-level social conflicts at the local and provincial levels. At national and provincial levels, the relationship is indirect: DRR programmes are implemented only in government-controlled parts of the country and are not drawn into the conflict dynamics, but many issues related to the weak and competitive institutional landscape cause bureaucratic difficulties and corruption, which were strongly hinted at by many participants, although none offered specific details. International NGO and UN staff working in Kabul spend much of their time negotiating access and organizing logistics, and this situation causes many delays in implementation.

For most of the communities visited, despite, leaving in a general HIC setting, their main experience of conflict involved everyday conflict at the local (micro) level: with other communities, inside the same community, or with local or provincial authorities. Many micro-level conflicts concern control over natural resources. Because natural resources are often also implicated in disasters and are thus highly relevant for DRR strategies, there is a risk that DRR programmes will become politicized.

As an example of this, in the north-eastern provinces of the country, which are prone to river-related floods and flash floods, one DRR project visited in the province of Badakhshan had the aim of reducing the risk of floods by building retention walls and protection walls on river banks. In recent years, the river had overflowed its banks, destroying houses and injuring a number of people. In this example and others, internal disputes were observed between different groups concerning the location of the project work (mainly

mitigation infrastructure), who would be hired, who would benefit, and how the project might affect other communities. Questions regarding on whose land the flood-prevention walls will be constructed and who will be hired for the construction can create tensions.

Another example from northern Afghanistan is a reforestation DRR project that sought to reduce the flow of water from rain and snowmelt, thereby reducing the river flow and preventing floods. The reforestation project also aimed to reduce the risk of landslides in case of earthquakes. The project also included alternative ways of heating houses to avoid further deforestation and of developing new economic opportunities for those working in the timber industry. The project, however, was terminated because of conflicts associated with land use and ownership and because of tensions associated with the prospect of job opportunities.

Our findings revealed that Afghan staff working on DRR are usually highly experienced in dealing with local tensions and in preventing these tensions from turning into conflicts. In addition to having mediation skills, these staff members spend a significant amount of time working on the consultation process in the preparation stages. This means, however, that projects—even small ones—take a long time to deliver.

Regarding the question of whether DRR projects can help to prevent small-scale social conflict among communities, the findings are inconclusive. During DRR project implementation, collaborative efforts may indeed enhance social cohesion in communities. However, rather than asking whether DRR can prevent conflict, it may be more relevant to ask whether there is a long-term impact on the communities at all, given the limited scope of most DRR activities in this type of context, like HIC settings.

A new generation of disaster risk reduction projects

The above analysis mainly concerns projects that have been implemented in previous years. However, the nature of the five DRR programmes and some of their projects in development during the fieldwork indicate that a more mature approach to DRR may be evolving. These DRR projects, some of which are currently being implemented, are more integrated than the previous projects, simultaneously addressing hazards and vulnerabilities to disasters. Adopting an ecosystem-based DRR angle is an example of this integration, with projects working towards reforestation, supporting alternative agriculture practices, and/or including natural resource management strategies. The aim of such projects is an integrated focus on addressing hazards risk, mitigating communities' vulnerability, and reducing the general risk of disasters.

This new generation of DRR has also become more systematic in developing 'do-no-harm' or conflict-sensitive approaches, something seen as essential by many participants to be able to operate in HIC contexts. For example, the abovementioned ARC project began to train its staff members on conflict analysis tools

after developing a manual (Mena and ARC 2018a).[32] Likewise, the interviewed representatives of two Afghan NGOs and one international NGO provided examples of how conflict prevention or risk reduction has been included in their DRR projects. These efforts began in a somewhat unsystematic way, but organizations then worked towards developing more formal strategies and mechanisms, including this conflict-sensitive approach in their log-frames. Although a conflict-sensitive approach is not yet required by donors, they have also started to promote such approaches in the DRR projects they fund because this will 'improve the sustainability' of the projects, as a donor manager mentioned in an interview.

These examples illustrate the evolving new generation of DRR programmes and projects, but this approach has not yet been integrated in the general disaster governance strategy and arrangement in Afghanistan, and it is important to realize that not every programme (or every project in the same programme) has adopted this approach. Comprehensive approaches are generally still seen as experimental by the implementing organizations, and the formal inclusion of these elements remains tentative. The main questions, again, concern the long-term impact of this new approach, how communities will value the approach, and whether and how the country will manage to advance through these efforts, including the development of a disaster governance that addresses DRR in a comprehensive way, both in discourse and in practice.

6.7. Discussion and conclusion

A disproportionately large share of disaster-related deaths occur in conflict-affected or fragile contexts. Nonetheless, DRR has traditionally not been considered feasible in these areas and has therefore not received systematic attention. The main international framework for DRR, the Sendai framework, does not mention conflict. Only in recent years has the discursive space to consider DRR in conflict-affected areas emerged, partly because of shifts in humanitarian aid to become locally oriented and geared towards fostering resilience and to link up with development instead of concentrating only on life-saving assistance. For HIC contexts, this discursive space for considering DRR is even more reduced than in other conflict affected scenarios. Nonetheless, there is a nascent practice of introducing DRR in conflict-affected areas, enabling this paper's focus on how, in the case of Afghanistan, DRR policy evolves and everyday politics of implementation develop.

Afghanistan is one of the few HIC-affected countries that has built up a body of practice on DRR, albeit with a scope and resources that are very minimal compared with the flows of classic humanitarian aid. This study analysed how DRR has become a serious issue in Afghanistan—evidenced by, for example, the 200 reports on DRR in the country identified in this study—and how DRR is implemented.

[32] The first author was involved in the development of this manual.

Our findings largely corroborated the expectations raised by previous authors that DRR projects are largely restricted by the conditions of conflict, especially in HIC contexts. DRR projects can only be carried out in areas with a certain level of stability or control by the internationally recognized government, but 40% to 70% of the territory of Afghanistan is not controlled or influenced by the government, but rather by AOGs (Jackson 2018; Qazi and Ritzen 2017). The conditions of conflict also create major challenges regarding the logistics of DRR projects, which results in these projects being small in number, hazard-oriented, and concentrated in geographical pockets where NGOs are already active. The DRR programmes and projects in our study were mainly geared towards the creation of small infrastructure (e.g. walls to protect against floods). DRR project implementation chiefly occurs in or around areas where organizations already have programme experience. This result aligns with more general previous findings that international NGOs tend to stay in the same areas to avoid the costs and time requirements associated with gaining access, overcoming insecurity, building legitimacy, and learning how to navigate through bureaucratic processes (2009; Koch et al. 2009). In a conflict-ridden country such as Afghanistan, these factors seem to be multiplied, creating pockets of development and a situation where the development of DRR projects is not based on an analysis of which areas are the most disaster-prone.

We found that DRR projects are appreciated at the community level, but it is difficult to make a general assessment of their impact in terms of their effects on protection against hazards and disasters, social tensions, and local conflicts. Community members seemed appreciative of the projects but did not see the traditional implementation of DRR (focusing only on mitigation infrastructure) as a priority need. Similar findings have been reported for DRR programmes elsewhere and suggested that, for DRR to be more successful, it must be tied into approaches that have an immediate impact on poverty reduction and livelihoods (Hilhorst et al., 2018).

One of the objectives of DRR is capacity development (CaDRI 2011; UNDP 2010), and on this aspect findings are mixed. Because of the time and resources needed to implement even small-scale DRR projects, projects have sometimes not gone beyond the pilot stage and have largely served as a learning ground for a select number of NGO staff members. The development of a small but growing pool of experts who work on DRR, initiate projects, and advocate its importance may be seen as a significant capacity development outcome of the brief history of DRR in Afghanistan. Another significant outcome involves the development of new approaches. At the time of the research, five DRR programmes with a more integrated approach to DRR and a more systematic approach to conflict sensitivity had been initiated.

The question of how conflict and DRR affect each other invites further debate. Our findings identified several instances where DRR projects became politicized and even had to be suspended. However, there were also many examples of experienced and dedicated staff succeeding in mediating social conflicts and fostering

community-level collaboration. This suggests that expectations regarding the possible peace dividend of DRR are conditional upon careful strategies and experienced staff.

Beyond the project level, it can be concluded that disaster governance in conflict-affected areas risks to become disparate between international and national actors. In a context of weak government institutions, DRR was initiated by the international community, and donors and international NGOs continue to be the agenda-setters and main advisors on DRR. With international assistance, the Afghan government has developed policy, but the government does not allocate resources for DRR implementation, and does not seem to have internalized the broader concept, although new documents and policies may be slowly changing this situation. Implementation is carried out mainly by Afghan actors employed by international or Afghan NGOs. In the words of an interviewed international NGO manager, DRR policies and strategies in the country happen in 'two or more parallel worlds', explained by this manager as 'the world of policies and the world of implementation, with little connection between them'.

Implications

Our analysis of the Afghan experience shows that there is some space for DRR in HIC scenarios. Efforts over the past 15 years have resulted in a small and dedicated set of DRR initiatives in Afghanistan that is ready to advance the field when political conditions improve. Nonetheless, the findings on Afghanistan raise some pertinent questions regarding the feasibility of DRR in high-intensity conflict areas. There are compelling arguments to advance DRR in conflict situations, yet our findings suggest that conflict resolution or reduction, and the development of effective national governance may seem to be pre-conditions for DRR to be fully developed, with functioning disaster governance arrangements and on a scale allowing DRR to become a meaningful endeavour with community-level impact.

It is especially challenging to introduce the kind of integrated approach that simultaneously addresses hazards and vulnerability, which has become a main strategy for successful DRR. While it seems imperative that DRR aligns with developmental efforts present in HIC contexts towards reducing general and everyday-life people's vulnerability, this reinforces the tendency to concentrate efforts in a small area, and contributing to creating pockets of development.

To a large extent, DRR projects in Afghanistan were seen to be subject to everyday politics of development that have been observed elsewhere. These include a tendency to be donor-driven, and full of inter-institutional competition and small-scale (political) rivalry. In a conflict-affected country, these everyday politics can have consequences for the likelihood of conflict. There has so far been very little attention paid to how DRR can be done in a conflict-sensitive way (Hyndman 2011), and it will be important to develop such approaches and monitoring the implementation for their positive and negative consequences on the conflict

dynamics. All in all, our conclusions should temper some of the expectations regarding the possibilities for DRR in conflict areas, especially considering the projects' limited geographical coverage (because of challenges linked to insecurity, logistics, and politics related to HIC contexts) and actual capacity to address people's vulnerabilities in an integrated manner.

7. THE CASE OF YEMEN

People collecting water from UNICEF containers. Algabal, Yemen (UNICEF, 2017 - Accessed 10 of March, 2020)

Linking development and disaster risk reduction with relief in a context of high-intensity conflict: The case of Yemen[33]

7.1. Abstract

Discussions on how humanitarian aid and disaster response can better link with development and disaster risk reduction (DRR) have existed for decades. However, the reverse transition from development and DRR to relief is still poorly understood. Using the case of Yemen, this study analysed the transition from development to humanitarian aid projects, including DRR strategies. The study focused on governance strategies, actors, challenges, and opportunities in the nexus between development, disaster, and humanitarian responses. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with various aid and societal actors were conducted remotely and in Jordan. The findings show lacking knowledge and coordination in the transition from development and DRR to relief, but also reveal spaces and opportunities to advance toward a better integration of the two types of assistance. This article contributes to the literature on this nexus and critically argues for the need for a more cyclical approach to conflicts and disasters.

Keywords: Humanitarian aid; development; disaster risk reduction; disaster response; high-intensity conflict; Yemen

7.2. Introduction

Places affected by high-intensity levels of conflict are complex scenarios. In addition to low levels of effective governance in these locations, the provision of goods and services is scattered, and territorial governance is usually divided between multiple factions, of which the government is only one (Hilhorst, Mena, et al. 2019; Mena 2018). These types of conflicts generate significant humanitarian crises, resulting in the presence of a variety of actors providing relief. Drifting between periods of higher and lower levels of conflict, these contexts have usually seen development-related programmes before the crisis spiked. Strikingly, natural hazard-related disasters such as earthquakes, floods, and droughts are also common in high-intensity conflict (HIC)[34] scenarios. From 1960 to 2018, an annual average of 67% of countries affected by armed conflict also

[33] Article submitted to journal 'Disasters'. Authors: Mena, R; Hilhorst, D.

*The first and main author is responsible for the initiation and design of the research, data collection, data analysis, and writing and revision of the manuscript. The second author substantially contributed to the initiation and design of the research, and the critical revision, improvement, and final approval of the manuscript.

[34] HIC scenarios are usually defined as moments in protracted crises when general violence occurs and casualties from violent conflict surpass 1000 (Mena 2018).

experienced these types of disasters (Caso 2019). HIC also can foster disasters by 'divert[ing] national and international financial and human resources that could be used for development and for mitigation of natural hazard risk' that may turn into a disaster (Wisner 2012:69).

The idea that places move from needing humanitarian aid to requiring development programmes for rehabilitation and reconstruction has been en vogue for more than 30 years. Discussions have often focused on how to achieve a harmonious and efficient transition between these processes. Ideas about linking relief, rehabilitation, and development (LRRD), the continuum, or about the nexus between them have dominated the discussions. Accordingly, the literature generally presents a movement *from* humanitarian aid and disaster response *to* development, rehabilitation, and reconstruction. Surprisingly, very little work has explored the movement *from* development *to* humanitarian aid or how disaster response and rehabilitation can build on and incorporate lessons learned from past development efforts. Those deploying humanitarian aid and relief tend to ignore the prior history of development, many times adopting a *tabula rasa* approach (Cramer 2006; Hilhorst 2007). These observations lead us to ask to what extent previous development programmes relate to, inform, or are considered by those providing humanitarian aid.

Transitioning from development to relief and creating a better link to previous development efforts are especially relevant ideas in the context of disasters. For several decades, the dominant way of modelling disaster response has been with reference to the disaster cycle, viewing the period after disaster reconstruction and the resumption of 'normal' activities as a time to dedicate attention to disaster risk reduction (DRR) and to preventing future hazards from turning into disasters. While some forms of development creates or exacerbates disasters' risk, other forms reduce this risk. For example, if a town in an area prone to high-intensity earthquakes is developed with buildings with a low level of seismic resistance, that development increases the risk of a disaster. Conversely, development periods can be seen as windows of opportunity for reducing disaster risk. This article draws on this second perception, considering how periods of crisis relief can better build on previous periods of development.

The present study sought to increase understanding of the transition from development to humanitarian aid projects using the case of Yemen, with a focus on DRR strategies and water crisis responses, paying attention to humanitarian aid and disaster governance strategies. This research, therefore, is not an evaluation of the crisis response in Yemen or of the transition from development to humanitarian relief; rather, we use the experience of this case to learn about the development–humanitarian nexus more broadly.

In Yemen, a large number of development-related projects existed before the crisis, many of which were related to reducing the risk of droughts and floods. However, in 2015, most of these interventions shifted from development to humanitarian and emergency aid, including peacebuilding. Today, the ongoing conflict,

compounded by droughts and floods, dominates the assistance agenda. Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), historically among the most critical sectors of the response in Yemen, is now seen as only one component of the broader humanitarian response in Yemen (CARE International 2020; OCHA 2018e). Water issues are not new in Yemen, where 'years of underdevelopment, extensive damage from conflict, unstable fuel imports and natural disasters have left water and sanitation systems struggling to uphold minimum services' (OCHA 2018e:35). Our focus on DRR and WASH allowed an in-depth exploration of the transitions between development, prevention, and relief. However, despite our focus on water issues, the leading case is Yemen and therefore also examined broader learning and experiences, when relevant.

The study's relevance extends beyond the theoretical understanding of the process of transitioning from development and DRR to relief. We seek to inform policymakers and practitioners regarding an important but often overlooked moment in the general aid and assistance cycle: the transition from development and DRR to humanitarian aid and relief efforts.

7.3. Development, humanitarian aid, and disaster risk reduction

Development, humanitarian aid, peacebuilding, and disaster-related actions are commonly treated as separate processes, and a great deal of attention has been focused on the differences between them. Whereas humanitarian aid is traditionally concerned with saving lives and alleviating the suffering of crisis-affected populations (ReliefWeb 2008), development focuses on medium- to long-term systemic change, seeking improvements in quality of life and well-being (Gasper 1996). Humanitarian aid and development also differ in terms of coordination strategies, different budget lines, the types of needs they seek to address, and the approaches taken to address those needs (see Table 12). The perception that humanitarian and development aid connect sequentially, in which the moment of crisis invariably starts with humanitarian aid and finishes with development, also contributes to seeing them as separate processes.

Table 12 separates relief and development for analytical purposes, although, again, these two bodies of practice are actually intertwined (Apthorpe 1997; Hilhorst and Pereboom 2015). Humanitarian actions have relevant development components and, conversely, many development-related interventions include elements traditionally seen as humanitarian aid (Frerks, Hilhorst, and Moreyra 1999; Wood et al. 2001a). Similarly, there is a vast evolution of approaches starting from the awareness that conflict and peace are not entirely separate realities; in many countries that are neither in conflict nor at peace, violent conflict regularly spikes, creating a pool of relevant operational capacities, personnel, and local knowledge.

Table 12 Ideal-typical comparison between relief and development

	Relief/immediate disaster response	*Development/disaster risk reduction, preparedness*
Objectives	Meeting immediate basic needs	Improvement of standard of living
Nature of needs	Physical, psychological	Economic, social, political
Types of interventions	Delivery of materials, provisions, and construction	Quantitative and qualitative changes in ongoing socioeconomic processes
Aid characteristics	Short-term, temporary (external)	Long-term (embedded)
	Incident-related	Structural
	Relief of acute needs	Changes in vulnerability and entitlements
Management characteristics	Donor-driven	Recipient-focused
	Top-down, directing	Bottom-up, participation
Main foci	Delivery, speed, logistics, and output	Underlying processes, causalities, long-term impact
Key context variables	Lack of infrastructure and counterparts (failed states)	Infrastructure and counterparts available
	Lack of knowledge and documentation	Knowledge and documentation available
	Media attention, fundraising	Less public attention

Source: Adapted from Frerks, Hilhorst, and Moreyra (1999, p. 32).

The literature on humanitarian aid and development does not usually incorporate disaster response and prevention; these actions are often treated as a separate intervention domain. In reality, these processes intertwine, and disaster actions can be positioned and occur embedded with both development and humanitarian interventions (Table 12).

Disaster policy and research, conversely to humanitarian aid and development that still seem to operate as silos, present a more comprehensive approach. For example, DRR has been described as a strategy to prevent disasters *and* as part of the response to them (Blaikie et al. 1994; UNDRR 2019). Disaster governance incorporates the management of and responsibilities for disasters, including DRR, disaster response, disaster knowledge production, and related policies and normative frameworks, by multiple actors focusing on social, economic, and political dimensions (Field and Kelman 2018; Hilhorst, Mena, et al. 2019; Tierney 2012; UNISDR website 2017). Disaster governance and actions, hence, integrate efforts to reduce vulnerability (development) with efforts to save lives (relief). In a similar vein to disaster governance, resilience humanitarianism (Hilhorst, 2018) considers the humanitarian–development relationship as 'a continuous cycle where populations are constantly moving from relief to development or from development to relief in

chaotic and unexpected progressions' (The Humanitarian Coalition 2015, online). However, and although discourses on both development and humanitarian aid have moved away from the idea of a linear progression from relief (with disaster response and humanitarian aid) to reconstruction and rehabilitation (including development), the transition from development to relief remains underexplored.

From development to humanitarian aid?

Initial attempts to systematize ideas on how to improve the transition from humanitarian aid to development emerged in the late 1980s as LRRD, seeking to identify strategies for providing humanitarian relief in a way that links well with sustainable medium- and long-term development initiatives (Mosel and Levine 2014; Otto and Weingärtner 2013; Stevens et al. 2018).

The initial idea of LRRD has been criticized for presenting a linear progression between phases (Gómez and Kawaguchi 2016; Harmer and Macrae 2004; Hinds 2015). First, some, viewing humanitarian projects as disconnected and lacking capacity to progress to long-term development, have argued that there is a gap between humanitarian aid and development that prevents a proper transition between the two domains (Otto and Weingärtner 2013). The second criticism is that the long-term and protracted crises seen in recent decades mean that humanitarian aid will also become protracted and that the boundaries between humanitarianism and development will blur (Hilhorst 2007; Mosel and Levine 2014). A third argument says that the notion of LRRD views humanitarian aid as top-down and external, although such aid could be delivered much 'smarter' (Richards, 1996) and more in sync with development, for example by building on local capacities and reinforcing people's coping abilities (Hilhorst 2018b; Otto and Weingärtner 2013).

This third argument is grounded in the idea of 'smart relief' (Richards, 1996), introduced in the 1990s to promote ways for humanitarian aid to be more development-oriented. Supporters of this idea also called attention to the fact that countries are rarely totally immersed in war. Pronk[35] (1996), for example, appealed to the donor community to finance development using areas that were 'pockets of development' within larger conflict-affected contexts. Hilhorst (2007) presented a more systematic approach to smart relief with the distinction between classic and developmental relief. Developmental relief entails a preference for working through local partners and has the aim of overcoming the distinction between relief and development, seeking to protect livelihoods instead of only saving lives. These ideas later evolved into resilience humanitarianism. Another relevant contribution was the 'contiguum' model, reflecting the idea that 'operations in relief, rehabilitation and development may all be ongoing simultaneously within any given country' (Commission of the European Communities 1996:ii).

[35] Politician and Minister for Development Cooperation (1989–1998) in the Netherlands

The previous ideas has been translated into many programmes implemented in countries experiencing 'chronic crises'. For example, Cordaid's[36] 'drought cycle management' model aims to move interventions 'away from [the] traditional approach of separating relief activities from development work', establishing that development agencies need to include possible stages of emergency, and plan relief measures to respond to those stages (IIRR, Cordaid, and Acacia Consultants 2004:41). The model has been described as the 'accordion model' (Hilhorst and Pereboom 2015), as it depicts development and relief as needing to expand and contract depending on the context, 'doing the right thing, at the right time' (IIRR et al. 2004:44). This means that interventions in these areas are as development as possible and as relief-oriented as necessary (Hilhorst 2005:365).

More recently, efforts to bridge the two domains have been revived, as seen, for example, in the idea of the nexus and the 'new way of working' (NWOW), a United Nations (UN) call for humanitarian and development actors to work together (Gómez and Kawaguchi 2018; Harmer and Macrae 2004; ICVA 2017; OCHA 2017a, 2019b; Poole and Culbert 2019) and to integrate humanitarian and development efforts with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (OCHA 2017a, 2018c).

The approaches discussed above consider the humanitarian aid–development link in four main ways. First, they discuss how to link separate activities and phases through time, as seen in the LRRD approach. Second, the approaches address coordination across different types of agencies and activities, with new agendas like the SDGs fostering further discussion on common goals. Third, these approaches see development as a benchmark of the organization of relief—as smart relief, developmental aid, or the assistance described in the accordion model. Fourth, these approaches consider geographical elements of the humanitarian aid–development link, focusing on how some parts of a country continue development, whereas others require relief-oriented interventions, as seen in the idea of 'pockets of development' and the 'smart relief' approach.

Despite these efforts to advance the integration of humanitarian aid and development, literature, policies, and frameworks on the transition *from* development *to* humanitarian aid are lacking. However, related areas of study can shed some light on the process. One such body of work involves the triple nexus between peace/peacebuilding, humanitarian aid, and development. This work explores how peacebuilding, which is found in both types of assistance, can inform or bridge the transition from development to humanitarian aid (Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken 1993; Slim 2017), seeking to advance early warning mechanisms to enable early crisis responses (van de Goor and Verstegen 1999). A human security approach can also provide relevant insight. In a variety of scenarios, paying attention to 'vulnerabilities, risks, and forces of disruption

[36] Catholic Organization for Relief and Development Aid

and destruction' (Gasper and Gómez 2014a:2) allows for the study of the evolution of crises and how they are (or are not) addressed in terms of the development–humanitarian continuum.

From disaster risk reduction to disaster response

The above-mentioned disaster management cycle presents a comprehensive approach to address disasters, as includes the 'sum total of all activities, programmes and measures which can be taken up before, during and after a disaster with the purpose to avoid a disaster, reduce its impact or recover from its losses' (Vasilescu et al. 2008:44). However, this cycle seems to have a blind spot. Similar to the shift from development to humanitarian aid, limited policies, frameworks, and academic work guide the transition from DRR to disaster response. Although DRR efforts are expected to prevent disasters or to prepare societies to better respond to them, these expectations are often treated as assumptions, with little technical or specific knowledge on how the process occurs.

Two aspects are an exception here. The first is early warning mechanisms, which are implemented during the prevention stages and can significantly reduce the impact and risk of disasters. For example, in the 'seamless' approach of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA, 2015), is presented that a more prepared response comes from early-stage prediction of disaster occurrence, timely dissemination of warnings, effective alerting or evacuating of residents, and immediate relief provision to affected areas when disaster strikes. The second DRR strategy that informs and supports disaster response is capacity strengthening—specifically non-structural capacity development, such as training community-level first responders to help people living in disaster-prone areas to respond adequately in the aftermath of a disaster.

One problem with capacity development and early warning mechanisms, particularly in places affected by HIC, is that both assume the presence of governmental structures that can initiate and coordinate these efforts. The Sendai Framework for Action states that 'disaster risk reduction requires that responsibilities be shared by central Governments and relevant national authorities, sectors and stakeholders, as appropriate to their national circumstances and systems of governance' (UNISDR 2015:13). However, in HIC scenarios, national and local governance structures are significantly fractured, creating dependency on international actors' promotion and coordination of disaster-related actions (Mena et al. 2019; Mena and Hilhorst 2020).

Despite the idea that disaster governance can guide the management of the entire disaster cycle, little published work has explored how this occurs in conflict-affected areas beside the examples presented before. In that sense, the lack of knowledge regarding the movement from DRR to response and rehabilitation is analogous to the gap in knowledge regarding the development–humanitarian transition. Moreover, DRR is commonly integrated into development strategies before conflict reaches HIC levels, and disaster response is analogous to or embedded in other relief actions seeking to save lives and respond to

emergencies in HIC scenarios (Mena and Hilhorst 2020). The transition from development to relief, therefore, can be seen as similar to the transition from DRR to disaster response.

7.4. Research questions and methods

On the basis of the above arguments, we used the case of Yemen to explore the transition from development to humanitarian aid and the link between DRR and disaster response in an HIC context also affected by disasters. Several relevant questions guided the research process: What happened to the development and DRR actors working in this context and to their programmes after the conflict erupted? More specifically, were these actors able to remain in Yemen, and have they found alternative ways of working in the country? Were the programmes able to continue with modifications, or were they cancelled, paused, or completely overhauled? What scenarios did humanitarian actors find when they responded to the crisis and disaster? To answer these questions, we designed a qualitative case study comprising both remote research and fieldwork phases.

After an extensive literature review, the first author conducted fieldwork in Jordan in November and December 2019. The impossibility of gaining access to Yemen drove the decision to use remote research techniques, mostly from Amman, the main city used for flying to and from Yemen by international and Yemeni aid, development, and societal actors. This made it possible to interview people during flight layovers and between meetings. Jordan also hosts offices of multiple nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), donors, UN agencies, and other organizations working in or on Yemen. In cases where it was not possible to reach an interviewee by other means, interviews were conducted using video conferencing software. These remote interviews lasted one hour, on average. Table 13 provides an overview of the research participants.

For the data analysis, we used thematic analysis techniques informed by three predetermined main themes: (1) development and DRR initiatives before and during the crisis, (2) transition strategies and processes, and (3) individual actors and organizations before and during the crises.

Table 13 Yemen: in-depth interview and focus group participants

Participant type	Number	Description
Yemeni NGO representatives	7	Managers, country directors, and staff members of local and national NGOs
International NGO representatives	6	Managers, country directors, and staff members
UN managers and staff	5	Programme managers and directors in Yemen and at the international level
Internationally recognized government representatives d	2	Yemen's internationally recognized government
Donors	5	Interviews with representatives of two national donors and one intergovernmental donor
Academics	3	Academics conducting research about and in Yemen
Private sector actors	2	Private sector actors related to aid provision
Total	**30**	

7.5. The case of Yemen: Conflict, disaster and humanitarian crisis

In the second half of 2014, civil war broke out between the Houthis, members of an Islamic political movement, and Yemen's internationally recognized government (Edwards 2019), plunging Yemen into a crisis that has resulted in the collapse of essential services and institutions, leaving the country with a fragile system of governance and socioeconomic crisis (OCHA 2018e; World Bank, UNCT, and European Union 2015). More than 24 million people (three-quarters of the population) are in need of humanitarian assistance and 3.4 million people are internally displaced (IMDC 2019; OCHA 2018e; UNHCR 2019). The crisis in Yemen was described as the largest humanitarian crisis worldwide in 2017 and 2018 (Al Jazeera 2017; UN News 2018), and an appeal for over US$4.1 billion was made by aid agencies in 2019.

The *National Report on Disaster Risk Reduction* for Yemen notes that the country is vulnerable to hazards such as 'flash floods, earthquakes, technological hazards, civil conflict, population growth, urban migration, extreme climate events, desertification, soil erosion, landslide, mudflow, locust invasions, depletion of groundwater aquifers and disease epidemics' (Ministry of Water and Environment 2005:2). Yemen was previously ranked among the most disaster-prone countries in the Middle East and North Africa region (World Bank, 2014). However, specific up-to-date information about disasters affecting the country and detailed historical data are scattered. The Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT) provides one of the few statistical accounts of Yemen's disaster history, but these statistics lack information on droughts in 2018 and 2019 (see Table 14).

Table 14 Numbers of casualties and people affected by disasters in Yemen (1900–2019)

Disaster type	*Total deaths*	*Total people affected*
Bacterial disease	759	462,020
Riverine flood	596	347,839
Tropical cyclone	75	140,939
Flash flood	274	137,678
Earthquake	10	40,039
Flood	64	23,458
Viral disease	35	3,494
Landslide	96	31
Volcanic ash fall	6	15
Storm	30	0
Drought*	-	-

Source: Prepared by the authors using information from the Emergency Events Database (EM-DAT), downloaded December 2019

* The EM-DAT does not provides statistical accounts on droughts during 2018 and 2019 from Yemen.

Water-related disasters (i.e. floods, landslides, and droughts) have caused the most impact in Yemen in terms of casualties and economic losses (PreventionWeb, 2014; World Bank, 2014), including in them water-borne (bacterial) diseases like cholera. The causes of drought in Yemen, such as rampant groundwater exploitation and 'a framework that has promoted expansion rather than efficient use and sustainable management' are

shared with other Middle Eastern countries, but Yemen, in particular, is considered 'one of the most water-scarce countries in the world' (Varisco 2019:1). Additionally, as noted by Weiss, 'the depletion of Yemen's aquifers is especially problematic since Yemen has no perennial rivers and is forced to rely for its daily water needs on groundwater and other sources of water that ebb and flow according to the season' (2015:252).

Drought also induces conflict in the country, particularly over the control of groundwater sources (Weiss 2015), and plays a role in internal migration (Ismail 2009). As a result of the water crisis, including lack of access to drinkable water, reduced or failed crop production, and land degradation, food insecurity in Yemen has reached severe levels, intensifying the risk of famine (FAO 2018; IPC 2019; OCHA 2018e). Heavy rains and flash floods have also affected humanitarian aid and relief provision, as these conditions have 'damaged shelters, clinics, child friendly spaces and classrooms, and spoiled stocks of food rations and hygiene kits, and flooded WASH facilities' (OCHA 2019c:2). As stated by a UN Yemen specialist, not only the war has affected the country, 'but climate change and disasters have been an important "threat multiplier" over many years, exacerbating food insecurity, decimating water reserves, expanding drylands and creating underlying levels of social vulnerability' (Walid 2017:1).

7.6. Findings

To understand the transition from development to humanitarian aid through a disaster lens is necessary to clarify how, and by whom, disaster issues were addressed before and during the crisis. We found that, before the crisis, most programmes in Yemen working to reduce the risk of water-related disasters were part of general WASH projects focusing on access to sanitation services in urban areas (Abu-Lohom et al. 2018; Moore and Fisher 2012; World Bank 2017). These development programmes were actively organized or funded by the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP), the World Bank, and NGOs, working in partnership with the government of Yemen, local organizations, and private companies.

The few DRR and management actions that have been implemented also aligned with development schemes and included rural areas and the agricultural sector. For instance, in 2009, multiple projects seeking to address drought and floods were developed by FAO and WFP in partnership with Yemen's Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation and local authorities. The programmes included the delivery of subsidized seeds, educational components, and initiatives to introduce integrated water resources management practices. As noted by the World Food Programme Deputy Director, these programmes were 'designed to support a developmental process rather than a dependency on food aid' (Ismail 2009).

Since mid-2014, as presented in a World Bank report (2017:ix), 'not only have advances in WASH provisions made over the last decade been halted but also the country has experienced wholesale physical destruction,

institutional degradation, and movement of internally displaced people (IDPs) that have contributed to an alarming deterioration in WASH services'. Consequently, since 2014, water issues have transitioned from being seen as part of long-term development to being addressed and framed as part of the general humanitarian response. Regarding drought and water scarcity, since the onset of the crisis, the main solution applied is the delivery of water by tanker trucks. A former Yemeni government official working on water-related programmes mentioned in an interview that water scarcity measures revealed a problematic emergency mentality, as 'they [UN and international NGOs] just give water to people without thinking that there might [be] better solutions. This can create more problems'.

Given this situation, if water problems were addressed before the crisis with organizations carrying out development and humanitarian aid actions, it is valid to ask what happened to these programmes and the implementing actors. Most interviewees responded to this question by saying 'the crisis happened' and pointing out that Yemen is now a conflict-affected place. To better understand the changes before and during the conflict, we first explore which actors were involved.

Which actors were present before, during, and after the transition from relief to development?

In 2013 and 2014, a similar number of international NGOs (INGOs) and Yemeni NGOs (YNGOs) were working in the country, supported by multiple UN agencies, and a growing number of governmental institutions were acting as partners and implementers (Figure 9). However, in June 2015, because of the ongoing conflict, the scenario changed radically, and the number of YNGOs started to grow, doubling over between 2017 and 2019.[37]

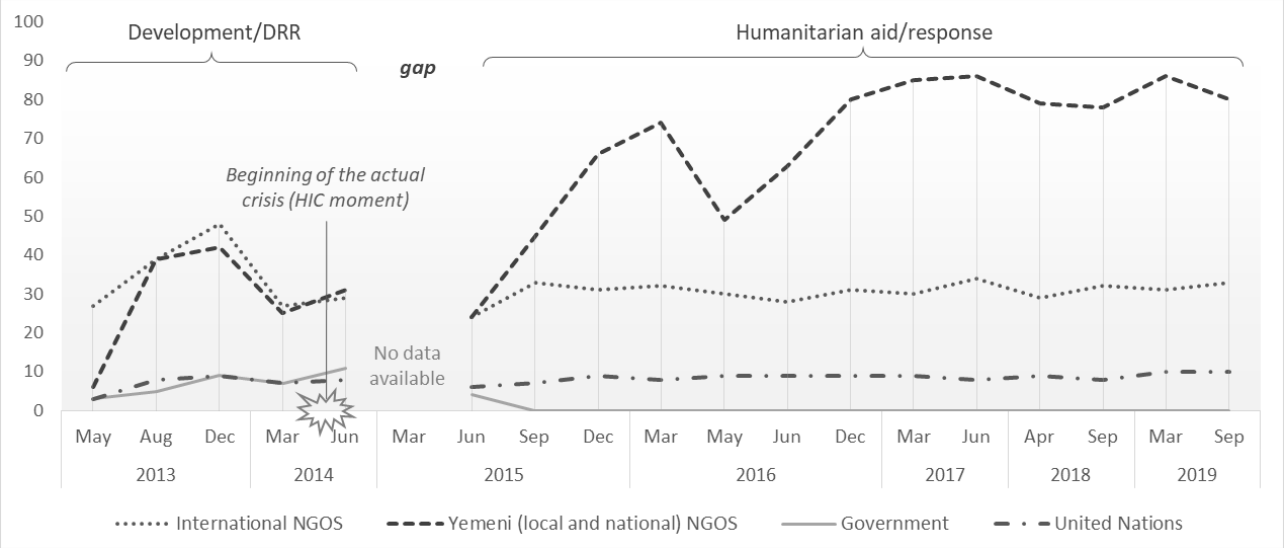
There are two main explanations for the growing number of YNGOs: First, during the transition from development to humanitarian aid from late 2014 to early 2015, many INGOs continued to work in the country but with minimal staff, implementing projects via partnerships with YNGOs. Second, the crisis offered a business opportunity for local and national actors in the sense that it created new needs and left some demands with no development actors or INGOs responding to them, as mentioned in a focus group with YNGOs representatives and several interviews with diverse actors.

Figure 9 also illustrates a gap in information in terms of which organizations were present and working in Yemen from August 2014 to June 2015; this means it is scantily known which activities and programmes were implemented in Yemen during these months. In explaining this situation, the interviewed actors from all sectors mentioned that, when the civil war started, many organizations stopped or paused their

[37] These data do not represent the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Médecins Sans Frontières, or development-related actors such as the World Bank.

interventions, only re-starting certain activities in July 2015. A Yemeni staff member of an INGO stated, 'Almost everyone left; the foreigners out of the country and most of us to our houses. There was no job; the projects stopped'. A UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) report noted that, since the crisis, 'international humanitarian staff have been temporarily relocated outside of Yemen due to growing insecurity. Humanitarian operations continue to be implemented and coordinated in-country with remaining international and national staff' (OCHA 2015b:6). Activities were thus carried out on a smaller scale, with many programmes assuming a 'skeleton operation', maintaining core programme activities and minimizing staff presence.

Figure 9 Numbers of organizations operating in Yemen (2013–2019)



Source: Prepared by the authors using information from the 3W Operational Presence reports published by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (www.humanitarianresponse.info [2013 to 2018]; www.reliefweb.int [2018 and 2019]). All reports downloaded December 2019.

Development-related organizations, including donors, worked remotely to continue operations in Yemen. These continued operations were called 'resilience programmes' by donors and UN actors: They aimed not to transition fully to humanitarian relief, instead carrying out interim projects to, in the words of a UN development manager, 'try to help beyond just saving lives, but it is not sustainable as we would like them to be'.

This gap in knowledge is also illustrated by the UN Information Centre, which had published a monthly newsletter detailing UN activities in Yemen since 2014, stopping all news production from May 2015 to May 2018 (see https://sanaa.sites.unicnetwork.org) and by the interruption of OCHA's country reports from October 2014 to March 2015. Additionally, OCHA's reports were generally monthly before the crisis, but, since resuming in March 2015, OCHA has issued less regular situational reports, demonstrating the shift to a humanitarian operation, even from an information and communication point of view.

Lack of coordination and information on the development–relief transition

According to the research participants, the transition from more developmental WASH activities to those aimed at relief was uncoordinated and uninformed. Likewise, the report of a 2015 technical meeting of humanitarian and development organizations working in Yemen concluded that 'there is a need for better coordination across all actors' (World Bank et al. 2015:13). Before the crisis, development activities were mainly coordinated by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), as the UN Resident Coordinator was also UNDP Resident Representative (United Nations, 2015b). General aid governance was organized under the cluster system; however, as one interviewee mentioned, 'Before 2015, the clusters were there, but there was no coordination between them. The main activity for [the] clusters was to avoid any duplication of projects'.

Working closely with the Resident Coordinator was the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) for Yemen, 'who coordinates the urgent and lifesaving assistance in the country […and] collaborate[s] closely with the Yemeni people, the Government and other International and Yemeni partners, to ensure that the support of the United Nations in Yemen best serves to realize the future Yemenis want' (United Nations 2014:2). This statement exhibits a more developmental orientation compared with the traditional approach to humanitarian action. Additionally, OCHA has been present in Yemen since 2010, with the main role of supporting the HC. The governance of the response changed in 2016, when a newly appointed UN Resident Coordinator also took on the HC role, strengthening humanitarian aid as the main assistance agenda in the country.

During the crisis, the humanitarian response became more prominent in the first half of 2015, and development actions were deemed possible only after the level of conflict decreased. The 2015 technical meeting report cited above stressed the continuing priority of 'humanitarian needs and finding a political solution to the conflict', concluding that responding to these needs was required before interventions supporting sustainable development could be implemented in Yemen (World Bank et al. 2015:64). Most aid actions shifted to the humanitarian domain, coordinated by emergency task forces in Aden and Sana'a, recognizing both the Houthi government, which controlled most of the North of the country, and the internationally recognized government, which controlled the South.

From a societal coordination and governance perspective, although all interviewees mentioned the authority of the Houthis and the internationally recognized government in their territories, and noted the impossibility of operating without the relevant entity's authorization, they also described this duality of authority as a significant challenge. The two authorities had limited governance capacity and differing (and sometimes

unknown) agendas and procedures. This added a North/South geographical divide to the division between development and humanitarian aid.

Objectives, foci, and types of interventions

Two crucial dimensions shown in Table 12 are the assistance foci and objectives. Although some NGOs and other organizations working on water scarcity and drought before the crisis were able to continue working on the same topics as part of WASH schemes during the HIC, they mentioned having to change their focus when funding and support from donors and other organizations were no longer available. As a YNGO manager mentioned, 'We tried to keep doing it [development-related WASH programmes], but the problem is that donors do not support us anymore, so we had to change to emergency'—for example, food assistance.

An in-depth analysis of the 3W Operational Presence reports published by OCHA[38] (see Figure 9) confirmed this situation: In May and June 2016, 14 YNGOs working on early recovery, protection, WASH, or education ceased operations, and 14 new YNGOs emerged in the following month, working on shelter, non-food items, and camp coordination and management. Similarly, about half of the development actors interviewed cited funding and donors' agendas as the main reasons for cancelling development programmes. Whereas YNGOs described how funds were cancelled or money 'stopped flowing', INGOs and UN agencies reported having to return donor funding. Most donors mentioned that the priority in Yemen was responding to the humanitarian crisis and that insufficient resources and capacities made it unfeasible and unsustainable to pursue other non-emergency agendas.

An important nuance here is that, although there were reduced programmes with development aims during the crisis, many YNGOs continued to conduct development-like activities, adapting or disguising these projects. For instance, a WASH project financed by humanitarian aid funds from the UN's country-based pooled funds scheme[39] aimed to improve water treatment to reduce cholera and other water-related diseases. Although this part of the project was not included in the formal log-frame or officially reported by the implementing NGOs, some project funds were used for educational activities associated with personal hygiene and reproductive health. An aid actor involved in the project explained why they carried out these activities without support from donors or government authorities: 'We had experience working on these topics in the past, and we know they are important for long-term and forever problems'. When asked about

[38] '3W' stands for what, who, where. These OCHA reports provide information on the organizational presence and activities in a particular place. This information is usually presented by cluster and type of actor: INGO, national NGO, UN, and government.

[39] The country-based pooled funds system is a mechanism allowing 'donors to pool their contributions into single, unearmarked funds to support local humanitarian efforts. This enables humanitarian partners in crisis-affected countries to deliver timely, coordinated and principled assistance' (OCHA 2019a:1).

projects on water scarcity and drought, the research participants said that the vast majority of these projects are based on emergency solutions (e.g. delivering water by truck).

Limited knowledge to guide the transition and to manage different interventions

Transitioning from development to relief meant a change in the type of interventions conducted, requiring managerial knowledge and capacities to carry out the new activities. Despite development organizations remaining in Yemen with minimal capacity, the humanitarian actors newly active in the country were unable to manage their actions in a way that reflected learning from or connecting with development projects. A UN manager noted, 'It would be great to arrive and that someone informs me about all that is happening on the ground and how we connect with those efforts. UNDP and some people I know here help me a lot, but there is a lot left out of what they do or managed'. Besides the UNDP, the other actor expected to know about development initiatives is the Government of Yemen and the HC. However, the research participants were notably silent regarding their knowledge of the roles of the HC and OCHA before the crisis. In combination with Yemen's fractured governance, this lack of knowledge indicates a failure to connect with previous projects, as well as insufficient awareness regarding the continuation of projects and the implementation of new ones.

Another relevant gap, mostly mentioned by YNGO and government representatives, involved the lack of knowledge about managing large-scale humanitarian aid interventions and the loss of on-the-ground development expertise. In the interviews, local and national NGO representatives expressed two main ideas. First, although they lacked capacity and knowledge on how to run the large-scale humanitarian projects required by the crisis, no other work was available for them. Second, these actors had expertise in development-related interventions in times of crisis, but their experience in these programmes was lost because they were usually not allowed by their donors to integrate this approach or lacked the necessary resources (both time and money). A Yemeni INGO manager explained, 'We didn't know what to do. It's similar to what I was doing, so I could improvise, but it was not the same'. This kind of improvisation was mentioned multiple times by different actors, who explained that they had to respond using their experience in development.

The claim regarding the underutilization of development-related expertise has two caveats. First, many aid actors mentioned including some development elements in their emergency interventions. They drew on their past experience, knowing 'that implementing the project as it is mandated will only bring short-term solutions', as mentioned by a YNGO manager. These changes were sometimes discussed with and approved by donors, but this was usually not formalized, as was the case in the example of the informal education element of the WASH project presented above. Implementing projects in this way was also seen as a strategy

for working in conflict-affected scenarios because many development actions were seen as in line with the agenda of one party in the conflict. Second, multiple interviewees working in the country mentioned that development interventions started before the re-starting of 'official development': 'Development starts earlier in the country than from outside'. One reason for this is that, in many places, the main macro conflict did not directly affect Yemen's local population, leaving several spaces ('pockets of development') for the implementation of development projects. Conversely, before the conflict intensified, 'pockets of emergency' in Yemen were already receiving humanitarian aid.

The previous paragraphs should not be taken to romanticize resilience, as there are very high levels of suffering and need in Yemen. However, this second caveat allows us to explore other relevant situation. Every research participant interviewed believed that more development-related interventions were possible in the country.

Challenges and ways of moving forward

The development–humanitarian transition present multiple challenges and opportunities, many of which are similar to the challenges of the transition from humanitarian aid to development (see Hinds 2015; Macrae et al. 1997; Otto and Weingärtner 2013). For instance, for both humanitarian aid and development actors, naming organizations with the expertise or knowledge to work in both domains was difficult, meaning not having organizations that can act as bridges during these transitions. Similarly, these organizations often work with different mandates and even different funding schemes, presenting the challenge of finding a mechanism for evaluating programmes during protracted transitions, which has been recognized as a challenge in LRRD (Buchanan-Smith and Fabbri 2005; Otto and Weingärtner 2013).

The case of Yemen shows the complexity of linking interventions across different regions and different needs. This is related to the LRRD literature on the challenge of implementing long-term development projects with populations that may return to their hometowns during the recovery phase (Buchanan-Smith and Fabbri 2005; Mosel and Levine 2014; Otto and Weingärtner 2013). Some research participants expressed the opposite concern—that trying to better link development and humanitarian aid might lead to investing in programmes and projects that would have to be cancelled because of the conflict. LRRD and the development–humanitarian nexus also share 'the two-world challenge' of finding commonalities and coordinating across different mandates, principles, partner strategies, imperatives, languages, speeds, time frames, and funding mechanisms.

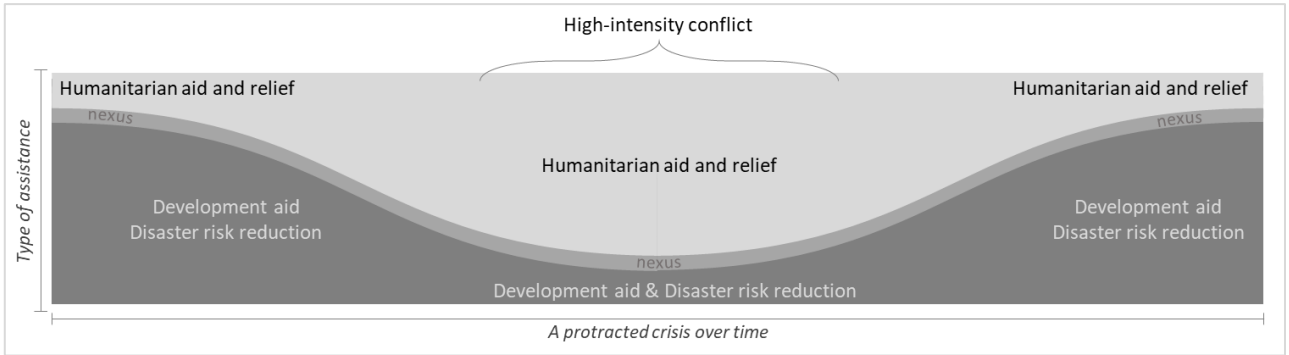
Another major challenge relates to the fractured governance systems presented in HIC, which result in the absence of bodies to manage the transition from development to humanitarian aid. Many of the interviewed also pointed to the lack of coordination between departments with different mandates within a single

organization. Also, the budget and funds for humanitarian aid in Yemen were perceived to be, in the words of one INGO representative, 'too much and unmanageable', which in relation to the transition from development to relief presents challenges associated with dealing with a larger amount of funding coming from multiple sources; and accountability-related challenges.

The shared challenges between LRRD and the development–humanitarian nexus also suggest opportunities. For example, learning on how to overcome 'the two-worlds' problem will benefit both approaches, as well as providing an opportunity to join efforts in this task. The continued presence of many organizations working on development in Yemen during the crisis can be seen as an opportunity for better transition strategies within each organization, which some interviewees described as easier than such efforts between organizations. The existence of 'pockets of development' suggest the possibility for the development–humanitarian nexus to be a process in which the two domains of assistance complement each other during various moments of the crisis (see Figure 10). At times, development will be more significant, and more humanitarian aid will be needed at other times, but both types of assistance are equally essential in dealing with disasters and conflicts and in supporting peace and stability.

The case of Yemen, aligning with the research participants' statements, also suggests that the existence of 'pockets of (conflict-related) emergency' may play an important role in moving the development–humanitarian nexus forward. First, this situation may serve as an indicator that a more significant crisis might arise, allowing preparations to be made in advance. Our literature review revealed that this strategy is already used by peacebuilding actors (Frerks 2013; Vivekananda 2011), who see such events as early warning signs to prepare early responses or as part of the cycle described by the 'accordion model'. This also links to the second point: These 'pockets' of crisis can be seen as instances in which the development–humanitarian nexus can begin to be put into action in advance on a relatively small and manageable scale, preparing the arrangements, negotiations among actors, and procedures to better support the transition when the crisis grows.

Figure 10 Integration of development, prevention, and relief



Source: Prepared by the authors

The research participants from INGOs and YNGOs mentioned that this preparation and pre-transition work would require interventions and programmes to have a certain level of flexibility so that they could change their projects, actions, and responses. Support from the organizational headquarters and from donors is essential for aid actors to achieve this flexibility, which might involve temporarily combining programmes. It will also require the continued availability of funding during times of crisis. As described above, the ability to make this transition and to allow programmes to adapt requires commitment from the donor community to continue providing funding and to find a way for those funds to reach implementing actors. All the efforts described here require consistent preparation and coordination work beginning well in advance of crises.

7.7. Discussion and conclusion

Disasters related to hazards such as droughts, floods, and earthquakes frequently occur in conflict-affected areas. Considering the movement between levels of conflict, a large body of literature and policies have promoted the relevance of examining how humanitarian aid and disaster response can be linked with future development and DRR initiatives, and how the responses can be better integrated with the following stages. However, previous discussions on how development and DRR can be linked with future relief efforts are very limited, presenting a challenge in knowledge and policy.

Yemen is a country beset by conflict and disaster. After more than a decade of crises and multiple development-related programmes, at the end of 2014, Yemen saw its conflict reach high levels of violence and intensity, resulting in a humanitarian crisis. This study analysed the transition from development and DRR to humanitarian aid and disaster response in Yemen. Special attention was given to drought, as water scarcity is a severe problem in the country. Before the actual crisis, programmes addressing water problems in Yemen were part of general WASH and development initiatives, and actions aiming to reduce the risk of drought were not always framed as DRR strategies. These programmes had commonly been developed in partnership with the government of Yemen and sought long-term solutions. Since the crisis occurred in 2015, water-related problems have been addressed as part of the general humanitarian response, focusing on delivering water by tanker trucks.

Studying the general transition from development to humanitarian aid projects provided relevant results. Regarding actors and agencies, many international organizations (i.e. INGOs, UN agencies, and other developmental organizations) downscaled their operations, and most international staff left the country. These organizations' presence continued in Yemen with reduced operating capacity, resulting in the exponential growth of YNGOs, which implemented specific aspects of the projects. Most development-related programmes shut down, leaving their Yemeni staff members unemployed or relocating them to humanitarian aid activities. Our findings also indicate that, during the HIC period, most formal responses

were actively carried out by YNGOs; however, many of these organizations were not well prepared and did not know how to lead a large-scale humanitarian crisis response. Although some development projects continued in a modified form, the lack of financial support from donors was highlighted as the main reason forcing a shift to emergency aid. When development-like aspects of projects were implemented during the HIC period, this was usually done on the initiative of local actors who had worked in development and saw the need to continue this work. Identifying such needs was closely related to the idea that, in many areas in Yemen ('pockets of development'), the conflict would not directly impede interventions, making development-related, long-term initiatives possible. These opportunities also emerged from the development project expertise that existed in Yemen before the crisis.

This situation resulted in almost every research participant indicating the relevance of working towards a better integration of pre-crisis development projects and humanitarian aid interventions, as well continuing, as much as possible, to conduct development work during the crisis. A similar idea was acknowledged by humanitarian and development actors in an October 2015 meeting: 'Humanitarian assistance is critical but it is not the only need. Yemen requires a broader and a comprehensive approach that allows for support for people to cope and build resilience to recover from the crisis' (World Bank et al. 2015:18). The participants in our study asserted that this is not happening yet because conflict de-escalation is seen as a prerequisite for development. Likewise, there are still open questions regarding what level of government stability is required to successfully and sustainably link development, humanitarian, and disaster interventions. Without some level of peace and stability, these efforts are at risk of failure. The localization agenda can also play a role to support these efforts, by linking development actors in key humanitarian sectors, better equipping them to transition between assistance domains and respond to the needs found when the conflict intensified.

Recognizing reduced knowledge regarding the development–humanitarian transition allows us to identify spaces and opportunities to better integrate and improve the transition from DRR to disaster response. The long-standing debates over LRRD suggest the level of complexity involved in integrating humanitarian aid and development, but they also make it clear that such integration is important. In terms of understanding the transition from development to humanitarian aid, acknowledging the existence of a knowledge gap and working to close this gap are currently the main challenges. Actors involved in DRR and development should consider the continuity of their actions during times of HIC and avoid adopting an emergency mentality. Humanitarian aid actors should take a more flexible approach, building in opportunities for development-related and DRR actions, even during acute emergencies.

This study, based on the case of Yemen, has contributed to identifying and addressing challenges in knowledge. We hope that further debate, research, and policy will build on our work, moving towards a

transition strategy to better inform the shift from development to humanitarian aid when the conflict intensified. These advancements are crucial because, despite the usefulness of the humanitarian–development distinction for crisis management and analysis, ‘for those affected by crisis, the difference between humanitarian and developmental aid makes no sense’ (Gómez and Kawaguchi 2016:4).

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8. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS AND CROSS-CUTTING FINDINGS

Previous chapters have shown in detail different aspects of disaster response and risk reductions in HIC contexts, concentrating on the foci of each case: South Sudan focused on decision-making processes, Afghanistan on DRR, and Yemen on linking development and prevention to relief. In this chapter, the focus is twofold: 1) to review the main findings of each case and analyse them in relation to the other two cases, and 2) to answer the research sub-questions reflectively, highlighting cross-cutting findings from the cases and the literature.

The act of analysing information from different cases, though, is not as straightforward as just identifying contrasting answers between the cases for each research objective (Moore 2005). As presented by Lund (2014) and George and Bennett (2005), the analytical movement of generalisation needs to be guided by a conscious reflection of what are our cases are a case *of*. That understanding is what allows us to go beyond comparing information and start looking for *resonance*, as the process of understanding that 'different elements, dynamics, and relations could be recognised from one case to another. Such cases are not necessarily similar. Indeed, they might be quite different, yet there are some elements that resonate between them' (Ibid. 2014:226). In that sense, Afghanistan, Yemen, and South Sudan are quite different countries in multiple different ways; hence, any attempt to compare and explain disaster dynamics between them will require an in-depth study of the complex history, politics, social, economic, and cultural aspects, among others, of each of them. However, that does not prevent me from finding resonance between them as cases of HIC and disaster response and risk reduction, as those are the particular elements of observation to which this research paid attention. The context and reality of each case cannot be ruled out in the analysis of the results; however, the focus is not on the analysis between those contexts, but to use them to understand disaster-related dynamics.

The aim is not to reach a generalisation in the sense of a universal claim, but rather to develop general and informed arguments that allow an abstraction from every single case. This aim seeks to translate resonance between the cases and the existing literature into theorisation (Lund 2014; Weick 2014). In other words, to inform about 'inherent qualities and dynamics' (see Lund 2014:229) of disaster response and risk reduction in HIC scenarios. The cases of South Sudan, Afghanistan, and Yemen are therefore a starting point on understanding the dynamics that the research questions sought to explore.

Each case contributed with data from the field as well as relevant results from previous cases and literature. Before I move to answer the research sub-questions, let me review the main findings of each case studied, pondering these findings with the other two cases.

8.1. Comparative resonance analysis

South Sudan: the triage of aid, multilevel decision-making processes, and path dependency

The case of South Sudan presents two initial findings that guided the main topics studied in that country. Firstly, most of the attention by aid actors is on the conflict and its impacts, leaving disaster as a secondary concern. Many times, it was not even considered. The same situation occurred in Afghanistan and Yemen. The attention given to disasters in Afghanistan can be explained by the international attention given to disasters in the country in the past. Secondly, the level of crisis in South Sudan and how costly it is to respond to it, has created a scenario where the needs usually surpass the national available resources and capacities to respond to them. Exactly the same occurred in Yemen and Afghanistan and, therefore, in all three cases there is a significant presence of international humanitarian aid agencies seeking to assist people to meet their basic needs and reduce the impact of the crisis.

Based on these premises, the case of South Sudan explored the decision-making process of responding to crises in HIC. In particular, how and by which processes do actors decide to respond to disasters in HIC scenarios, what are the main challenges of responding, and how do aid and society actors overcome these difficulties? The case of South Sudan showed that deciding where and how to respond is a continuous and political process that goes beyond the more technical exercise of defining targets of aid. Using the old medical term of 'triage', I studied the political system of prioritisation and how the target of aid is redefined from the international to the national, the regional/provincial, and to the local levels via official and everyday politics. In Afghanistan, although the focus was on disaster risk reduction (DRR) actions rather than on disaster response, this triage of aid was also present and operates in almost the same ways even though DRR is less reactive than disaster response. Deciding where to intervene comes from a longer assessment of communities who might need to prevent disasters or reduce the risk that a hazard would turn into a disaster. Like in South Sudan, Afghanistan-based organisations define broad targets of aid but from there they start triaging at national, provincial, and local levels until they finally decide which groups will have a DRR project. The communities who eventually host the projects are usually close to other groups or communities where the same organisations have implemented other projects or programs. This connects us to the second main results from South Sudan which were also observed in Afghanistan and in Yemen: path dependent programming.

Aid agencies are largely locked into path-dependent areas of intervention, despite the idea that humanitarian aid needs to be agile and flexible in responding to disasters, conflict-related crisis, or flexible in assessing and choosing places that need DRR. The reasons to stay working in the same areas were the same in all three cases: due to the challenges of working in HIC scenarios, staying in the same areas secures access and, over

long periods of legitimation, allows for building rapport and knowledge of the communities and their territories. Building these capacities from scratch in new areas will take a long time and needs more significant financing and involves major risks. The inflexibility of financing to shift areas of intervention detract from working in new places affected by disasters or other crises. The only exception to this comes when a disaster turns into a catastrophe of such proportions that it reaches international media attention and the number of casualties reaches several hundreds. This was the case during the South Sudan famine in 2017 and the Afghanistan drought in 2018, which involved the mobilisation of extra resources and efforts. In Yemen this path dependency was clearer before the present war according to interviewed research participants, who indicated that water scarcity prevention programs tended to be in the same areas of the country. Since the war, however, the mobilisation of people, especially to urban areas, has shifted attention so that the response concentrates in these places.

This dissertation finally suggests that considering the difficulties and the complexity of responding in HIC settings, the ideal scenario is to work proactively towards reducing the risk of disaster. This idea, however, was greatly considered unfeasible in South Sudan despite the existence of a few DRR initiatives. In Yemen, DRR was considered and implemented as part of general development-related programs present in the country before the war that started in 2015. Since Yemen reached HIC levels, DRR has been largely disregarded. The exception to this is Afghanistan, where a body of practice in DRR has been developing during the last decades - a situation that informed the decision to make Afghanistan the second case study in order to delve into the possibilities of reducing the risk of disasters in HIC.

Afghanistan: disaster risk reduction, conflict sensitivity and governance arrangements

The Afghanistan case contributed with the understanding of DRR in a HIC scenario and provided me with insights of how disaster governance agendas are driven. This case also informed further on the relevance of including conflict-sensitive practices in disaster risk reduction and responses.

International recognition that a country is at risk of being affected by disasters showed to be essential for the promotion of DRR and the mobilisation of resources in Afghanistan. South Sudan and Yemen have not been recognised as countries under significant risk of disaster despite the knowledge that they have a significant presence of hazards such as droughts, therefore, there is a lack of attention and resources for DRR. The decision of what to finance is in general associated with donors' agendas in all the cases. These interests are associated with country agendas when the donor represents a nation or group of nations, as well as with international agendas on disaster or relative issues, such as the Sendai Framework, the Paris Agreement, or the Sustainable Development Goals.

Afghanistan also presented the importance for disaster-related actions to have a conflict-sensitivity approach in HIC scenarios, as any project and programme has the potential to create, trigger, or exacerbate conflict. These projects and programmes can also help old conflicts to resurface. Having a conflict-sensitive approach was one of the main reasons used in South Sudan and Yemen to justify how projects are mainly implemented by national aid actors. In this sense, the cultural-community framework described in the literature review explain how local actors bring with them localised language and heritage, family, religious, and tribal bonds deemed as essential to work in conflict-affected places, as they legitimise the presence of those local and national actors in specific territories. It also provides more robust social networks that facilitate security and manoeuvre through the challenges of HIC scenarios. The downside may be that local actors are involved in or affected by the conflict too, which can intensify conflict dynamics or bring biases in the processes. In South Sudan, the presence of foreigners was seen as essential from a conflict-sensitive point of view, as they *appear* to carry more easily the notion of being neutral in the conflict.

The case of Afghanistan also shows that DRR projects tend to be hazard-oriented, with a focus on mitigation infrastructures, which was exactly the same as South Sudan and Yemen during HIC times. The exception in Yemen, as presented before, comes with the projects implemented before HIC times that tend to align more with development-like interventions. Paradoxically, as the literature warned and the cases presented, the reason to see disaster intervention as unfeasible or unsustainable in HIC was exactly the possibility that disaster prevention infrastructure would be destroyed by or in conflict dynamics; however, these are the very same infrastructures that are being chiefly implemented. The reason in Afghanistan and explaining the almost non-existence of DRR projects in South Sudan is that non-hazard-oriented interventions take more time and commitment to implement. However, in HIC scenarios all funding and project timelines have a short time span, usually of no more than one year.

This hazard-oriented focus also results in limitations in terms of the capacities to address people's vulnerability comprehensively in all the cases. The Afghanistan case presents this result more clearly, but in South Sudan drought affected people also mentioned that flood protection walls are good, but they do not help with the hunger. In Afghanistan, some projects started to have a more comprehensive approach to multiple hazards that goes beyond the construction of mitigation structures, highlighting the need for better integration with development initiatives. In Yemen, this is also the perception of most national aid actors, especially based on the fact that Yemen had a large number of development interventions before 2015 when the crisis reached HIC levels. This opened an opportunity to study in that case these processes and how they connect with relief actions during HIC.

Yemen: disaster governance, development and humanitarian aid during high-intensity conflict

The case of Yemen looked at previous knowledge and disaster governance in a more integrated way, understanding how DRR interventions link with disaster response in HIC as well as the relationship between disaster, development, and humanitarian efforts.

This case draws on two relevant results from the cases of South Sudan and Afghanistan: that the process of responding to a disaster in HIC does not differ from any other humanitarian relief action (the difference lies in how or when the triage of aid is used to make the decision to respond to a particular natural hazard-related disaster and not just to conflict-related crises); and that DRR strategies align strongly with development aid strategies.

One of the main results is the recognition of the existence of a gap between the transition and coordination of actions before and during HIC levels, in particular on how to link development with humanitarian aid, or how DRR efforts before HIC levels inform disaster response and rehabilitation. This gap represents a lack of information on the transition process, a lack of knowledge about how to coordinate and manage the transition and the actors involved in it, and a disconnection between prevention and relief actions.

A similar gap was found in Afghanistan when studying DRR interventions. As seen in Chapter 5, DRR in Afghanistan started in the early 2000s after the country signed a peace agreement the Taliban. Extra funds and international attention promoted the implementation of new programs and projects to prevent the occurrence of disasters in relation with development strategies in the country. Only a couple of years later, the conflict in the country regained violent characteristics and turned a HIC scenario. Most of the programs or initiatives associated with reducing disaster risk closed and only a few programs are still active today. During field work it was very difficult to find information about the first DRR projects, including the people who knew about them. The information and experience or learning that may have been gained, no matter how great or how little, seem to have been lost. New DRR programs were mentioned not to have learned or be linked with previous DRR or development related strategies in the country. Interesting to notice is that a few active DRR programs started recently to have a more mature approach, addressing hazards and vulnerabilities to disasters in a more integrated way. However, this learning is maturing now and does not link or grow out of the previous versions of DRR that were implemented in parallel with development-related strategies.

In terms of governance, Yemen and Afghanistan informed how disaster management (and governance arrangements) in conflict-affected HIC scenarios is disparate between international and national actors, with donors, UN agencies, and INGOs working as agenda-setters and national NGOs working as implementors. In all the three cases the internationally recognised government played a role (even if limited) in developing

regulations and translating and legitimating the agendas and actions promoted by international actors but lacked the capacities for the implementation of programs or projects. The resources allocated by national authorities for disaster-related action is minimum in all the cases (partly because of the lack of resources, partly because of priorities is to finance other activities or agendas), depending instead on international financing.

8.2. Crosscutting findings: responding to the research sub-questions

This section presents further answers to the research sub-questions. Rather than summarising results from case studies or the literature, these responses are provided to highlight crosscutting findings.

Understanding disaster vs conflict in HIC

The first research sub-question sought to understand how disasters and conflict happen together in HIC scenarios and highlighted the necessity in recognising conflict, its implications, challenges and main impact in connection to disaster-related actions.

Beyond the results presented in section 4.4 'Disasters and conflict interaction', fieldwork and information gathered in this research presents that the relationships between disaster and HIC, or disaster and conflict in general, is commonly based on multiple speculations. First, due to the significant and growing co-occurrence of disasters and armed conflict, it is easy to speculate a direct correlation between both: the higher the presence or intensity of one of them, the higher presence or similar intensity of the other. However, there is no consensus in the literature that one might necessarily trigger the other and no precise description of how they relate. Second, conflict and disaster are homogenous categories and, therefore, not many studies or policies pay attention to the difference between the different types of conflict or disaster and the multiple and complex ways in which each type of them might relate with the other. Multiple combinations can be found in the disaster(s)-conflict(s) relationship. Third, and in the context of my previous points, conflict is seen as totalitarian situation which affects different places homogenously and constantly. However, HIC is just a moment in a protracted crisis, where a conflict spans beyond the beginning and end of HIC periods, and differently affects the different areas of a territory. This research took the approach of recognising the above: that the relationship between disaster and conflict is not that clear.

My method was to study three specific HICs and while studying each country case, I simultaneously delved into particular disasters or types of programmes relevant to each case. More importantly, the study of disaster response as well as prevention impact and implications requires the understanding that HIC can affect places only indirectly. HIC can be present at the macro-national level, but many places in those countries can still be accessible and have interventions in place. Additionally, a relevant finding is the

recognition that many countries facing a HIC are often also affected by other conflicts, micro (community and local) and meso (provincial) level ones, that might or might not relate to the macro-national level conflict. HIC scenarios are, therefore, a composite of multiple conflicts, happening at different levels, with different degrees of impact. Consequently, using Goodhand's (1999) approach, understanding disaster interventions versus conflict in HIC needs to consider the difference between working in, on, and around areas of conflict.

Keeping in mind my previous points, the ways in which HIC-affected disaster actions can be seen are twofold: (1) Conflict increases or strengthens people's vulnerability to disasters and erodes people's resilience, and (2) HIC creates scenarios with multiple challenges hindering disaster-related actions.

Conflict further erodes resilience or increases vulnerability to disaster in multiple ways in HIC, as presented in all three cases. Conflict-affected scenarios are generally dangerous and hinder access to places affected by or at risk of disasters for aid actors seeking to reduce or prevent disaster from happening such as the cases of famine-affected areas in South Sudan or flood-prone places in Afghanistan. Also, it reduces people's possibilities to move, seek help, or in other ways avoid their exposure to disaster (Bankoff et al. 2004; Marktanner et al. 2015; Mena et al. 2019). Similarly, conflict-scenarios can erode the presence or functionality of institutions and agendas working towards the prevention or reduction of conflict, (Desportes 2019; Field and Kelman 2018; Heijmans 2012; Hilhorst, van der Haar, et al. 2017; Kenny 2012), as seen in the limited capacity of governmental institutions to implement disaster programmes and projects in South Sudan and Afghanistan. HIC scenarios, as presented, also negatively affect local economies and limits access to services and goods in general, which subsequently hinders disaster prevention or relief and leave people in further impoverished conditions which reduce their coping mechanisms when natural hazards strike (Grigorian and Kock 2010; Hilhorst 2013d; Jones 2010; Kelman 2020; Mena et al. 2019; Spiegel et al. 2007b).

Conflict scenarios of high intensity also hinder disaster-related actions, thus creating a challenging environment in which to act. The literature on the topic, however, fails to recognise what seems to be the main challenge by all actors in HIC scenarios: complex logistics. The literature tends to focus on detractors for actions such as lack of security, access, or reduced supply of services and goods (see Figure 7 Challenges for disaster response in HIC). It rarely explores how the multiple challenges of HIC interact in a compounded way. Multiple specific challenges can be addressed individually based on the long-term hands-on experience of the humanitarian aid providers who are coping with them, but HIC scenarios seem to be a magnifier of these individual challenges and their effects. The effects of one challenge cannot be just added to the other; together they often grow exponentially and create another level of challenges more significant or more complex than each individual one. Addressing this compounded challenge requires extensive and sophisticated planning, seen in HIC scenarios as the complex logistics which were presented in all three cases. Complex logistics as the main barrier in HIC scenarios is a compounded challenge which includes large and

expensive solutions, plus reduced access to services and goods, during short periods of time in a volatile context.

Another challenge, not addressed in the literature but present across many others as well, is timing. How to sort out the above logistics in a short period of time or with the sense of urgency present in HIC scenarios is a big stress factor - not only during the occurrence of rapid-onset disasters. In HIC settings, due to the conflict and general humanitarian crises, there is always an urgency to respond and any new stress factor can have a critical impact on the whole system. Even a slow-onset disaster can have an enormous effect in a short period, requiring the development and arrangement of complex logistics for response. Furthermore, coordinating these complex logistics, especially in short periods of time, requires expertise and resources that not all organisations have. Even in cases where the resources are available, as in the cases of Yemen and South Sudan, the reduced access to services and goods in HIC scenarios requires them to be mobilised from abroad, which again prolongs response times.

These challenges, however, do not affect every actor in HIC in the same way, nor are the capacities to cope or respond to challenges the same between the actors - not even when facing the same challenges. The capacities and organisational structures to sort out these complex logistics differed among different aid actors and the different countries I studied. When it comes to disaster response or providing emergency humanitarian aid, UN agencies and big INGOs (like Save the Children, Médecins Sans Frontières [MSF], Oxfam, or the Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere [CARE]) have demonstrated that they have more capacities to coordinate these efforts but they nevertheless see complex logistics as one of their main challenges. On the other hand, these complex logistics prevent small to medium aid agencies from acting rapidly, as these smaller agencies require more time and effort to operate. I found that in order to overcome this challenge, a perceived longer time-span of these projects proved to be an important assessment factor.

Regarding the impact of disaster on HIC or conflict dynamics in general there are no clear answers, although this question has been studied for half a century (Dynes and Quarantelli 1971; Homer-Dixon 1994; Stallings 1988). As mentioned above, reflecting the tendency of having a macro approach, most studies on this question tend to look at how disaster affects or can (or not) trigger conflict on a national or macro level (Billon and Waizenegger 2007; Eastin 2016; Nel and Righarts 2008; Nelson 2010; Omelicheva 2011). Research on how disaster-related *interventions,* such as disaster response and DRR, impact conflict dynamics have been a smaller amount (e.g. Mena and ARC 2018b; Walch 2018) . One relevant exception to this is the body of literature on disaster diplomacy, where disaster-related activities have opened opportunities for diplomacy and cooperation that have been demonstrated to help reduce conflict (Kelman 2006, 2016).

In this research, findings contribute more to the understanding of disasters' implication on conflict at meso-provincial/regional and micro-local levels. In Afghanistan, DRR intervention were documented to produce or exacerbate conflict between and inside different communities. In response to this, some DRR projects in Afghanistan started to have (formally or informally) a conflict-sensitivity approach, expecting to reduce their possible negative effect over conflict situations. The cases from South Sudan, Yemen and Afghanistan also demonstrated how having local staff members during disaster response or DRR is vital in order to be able to act as well as to avoid further conflict. Perhaps most importantly, this research shows that more research is needed on the implications and impact of disaster-related interventions and conflict at meso and micro levels.

Disaster governance and actors in HIC

The second research sub-question refers to aid and society actors in disaster governance in HIC and the disaster governance arrangements in place. While all different actors identified in Chapter 3 are present in HIC scenarios in all three cases, the way they relate to each other differ in the different HIC settings or countries. There are two crosscutting findings I want to highlight here regarding how governance arrangements are built in HIC. First, the governance of disaster relates to general governance arrangements in HIC that aid actors help to build based on how they perceive and judge the governance of the places under HIC, particularly how the very same aid actors relate with national and local authorities. Second, there are assumptions on which disaster-related actions are more appropriate for HIC scenarios, for example disaster response versus prevention, and how those strategies have to link with humanitarian aid and development.

Aid actors develop different ways of perceiving and defining their interactions with the state in HIC settings. Based on their individual paradigms, different actions and governance arrangements are developed. For instance, the relationship between international aid actors such as donors, the UN, INGOs, and the respective states varies between the three cases. South Sudan is a new country and international actors are still busy with processes of state building and facilitating a peace deal between a number of opposition parties and AOGs, leaving other agendas behind. Afghanistan, in contrast, has a government which is recognised as legitimate by the international community and contesting parties such as the Taliban are portrayed as terrorists or similar. These definitions create a framework that enables international actors to work in partnership with the government of Afghanistan and thereby obtains more room for the advancement of disaster-agendas. Working on DRR can also be seen as a signal of 'stability' in the country, which again plays a role in bigger geopolitical agendas. In Yemen, however, the legitimacy of the state is contested and international actors are much more reluctant to engage with the government despite its internationally recognised status. The international community has also recognised the authority of the Houthis in the north of the country, which means that disaster agendas (if there are any during periods of HIC) would need to be

negotiated on at least two different fronts of the country. Even when international aid actors promote the so-called humanitarian principles like neutrality, they still adapt to the geopolitical frameworks of the states and places where they operate. Consequently, neutrality is not played in the same way in Afghanistan as in Yemen given their own contexts and situations.

In other words, disaster governance adjusts as it takes into account the real and official governance of the places where agendas are being pushed. As presented by Tierney, '[g]overnance arrangements are also influenced by societal transitions; as overarching governance arrangements realign, disaster governance regimes also shift' (2012:347). When the conflict is unheeded by the Sendai framework and other 'big policies', it is not enough to just include and recognise the relevance of conflict considerations in disaster agendas, disaster management, and interventions. It also needs a reflection on how disaster governance adapts to different conflict scenarios and the varied governance structure in place, including the different cultural and historical baggage that each place presents. Therefore, there is no one way of governing disasters in HIC scenarios as disaster governance emerges from people's interactions, but there are ways in which disaster can be promoted to be conflict-sensitive, and by knowing more about HIC settings, disaster management (DRR and response) can be proactive and prepare strategies in advance which will help them manoeuvre through these complex arenas.

Moreover, real governance also allows us to see that governance is not only a function of the governments, and many times important decisions on the policies, regulations and actions are highly influenced by people in positions of power, for example, economic, religious or even military people, as is common in HIC scenarios. As presented by Mascarenhas and Wisner (2012), disaster governance needs to see the links between power, state power, and disasters. Thereof, studying the 'real governance' of disasters in HIC requires us to ask who is in power with regards to the disaster agenda and its implementation, and what is the real role of the state. The three cases here allow us to see how disaster governance power is held by international actors (INGOs, the UN, and donors). Disaster agenda and governance is led by and dependent on international actors. Second, these international actors present in HIC are usually humanitarian aid actors. Therefore, disaster governance embeds within humanitarian governance. While DRR and disaster action are better aligned in other settings, the case of Yemen showed how the development-humanitarian transition gap also existed in disaster moments, with disconnection between DRR and pre-HIC moment disaster actions and those occurring during HIC times (see Chapter 6).

That disaster governance is embedded in and intertwined with humanitarian actions in HIC also offers opportunities and presents challenges. The main opportunity relates to the presence of humanitarian actors in HIC settings when a disaster manifests. This means that there is already actors, knowledge, and networks ready to respond. This also facilitates the transference of funds, coordination of actions, and assessment of

the situations. The challenge is two-fold: as seen before in the case of South Sudan (and ratified in the others), through the triage of aid, disaster is not always seen as a priority by aid actors, as their mentality is on acting on *present* emergencies and many times, conflict (human)-related actions. Disasters are not seen as part of the conflict, nor as an emergency to act upon now, especially in the case of droughts or even floods that might take some time for the hazards to turn into disaster. The second fold is that usually, many humanitarian actors do not know much about disasters, and therefore their DRR efforts and even their responses do not align properly with the general cycle of disaster management.

Regarding governance, it is also relevant to consider the role of local governments. As presented by O'Brien et al. (2012) the role of local governments is essential as bridges between national and macro disaster governance arrangements and local implementation. They adapt DRR strategies to local contexts, develop community capacities, and even offer better accountability for disaster-related actions (O'Brien et al. 2012). However, local governance of disaster is almost non-existent in HIC scenarios as seen in the three cases, leaving a gap in who will perform all those relevant tasks.

The second crosscutting finding relates to the question of which disaster policy framework such as response, prevention, or reconstruction, is the more appropriate one in HIC scenarios. Taking the main phases of the disaster management cycle - pre-disaster, responses, and post-disaster - as a reference, all three cases presented the general assumption that pre- and post-disaster actions are not feasible in HIC scenarios, leaving response as the only possible option. This idea mimics the perspectives present in the linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) model, also seen as the humanitarian-development nexus, in which during HIC scenarios only relief is possible, and rehabilitation and development are phases that can only be tended to once conflict levels decreases. Findings in this study align with literature which indicate that both disasters and the humanitarian-development nexus are cyclical. In Chapter 6, for instance, it is discussed in more detail how humanitarian aid and development actions are also a cycle, and therefore the LRRD model should add development at the beginning, turning it into a DLRRD cycle. Also, the phases of these cycles overlap, have blurred borders, and the movement between them is not always linear.

More importantly, another finding is the prevalent assumption on how these cycles are integrated or coordinated: disaster response is associated with humanitarian aid, while the prevention, reconstruction, and rehabilitation processes are coupled to post- or pre-HIC development moments. However, these two cycles do not always present clear boundaries between them but are often intertwined and mutually reinforced in HIC scenarios.

Finally, together with present weaker governance capacities, countries affected by conflict require extra funds and support in terms of capacity building to develop alternative *governance* agendas (Barnett and

Adger 2007; Titeca and de Herdt 2011), for example disaster governance. Usually the efforts go to the management of hazards and disaster, 'the development of legislation, policies, plans, and procedures', but effort into developing governance are much skimmer (Tierney 2012:358).

Settings agendas and decision-making

The third research sub-question addresses the agenda-setting and decision-making processes in DRR and response. While decision-making processes are strongly defined by what I call the triage of aid and presented in detail in the case of South Sudan and reinforced in the other cases, agenda-setting processes were more clearly explored in Afghanistan and Yemen. In deciding disaster actions and agendas, continuous negotiations occur between multiple aid and society actors, at multiple global, national, and local levels, as presented in the crosscutting findings. These negotiations are far from well-defined and organised. They occur between official and everyday policies, delving into a humanitarian arena which is as messy and dynamic as these processes are.

A crosscutting finding across the three cases (between DRR and disaster response, as well as between development and humanitarian aid in a HIC context) is how international aid actors play an essential role in setting disaster agendas. Donors, UN agencies, and INGOs who promote their own ideas of how disasters need to be addressed align with international agendas in the matter, like the Sendai Framework for Action or Agenda 2030, and to a much lesser extent with the national agendas of the countries where they act. International aid actors, hence, often bridge global interests and international and national agendas, many times acting as brokers and translators of policies and strategies. However, national and local governments have limited space to change or shape the agenda when it does not align with their own.

The main concerns of these international agendas when promoting disaster response and DRR in HIC contexts are the mobilisation of funds or fostering the political will to invest in disaster-related action in a context where it is usually deemed as unfeasible to do so. Examples of this are how DRR in Yemen was funded before HIC in alignment with development-related actions (which, in turn, align with the Sustainable Development Goals) or how in Afghanistan, the international attention to disaster risk led to the mobilisation of funds and the promotion of DRR initiatives in the country. In the cases of Yemen and Afghanistan this international recognition of the risks and effects of disasters in the country was key to developing disaster-related programmes (in South Sudan there is still no corresponding recognition of disaster risk by international humanitarian aid actors). Unfortunately, it became clear from the research that these international agendas and protocols fall short in terms of guiding the processes and overcoming the challenges of HIC, especially since they assume the presence of active governance structures that would lead the efforts, which as has been presented, is not the case in HIC scenarios.

It is important to recognise how agenda-setting does not only echo international geopolitics and interests. Although the agenda itself is more oriented towards international interests than national and local needs, once it is translated and implemented it will try to adapt to the national context, where it will be subject to negotiations and reviews at multiple levels. Therefore, it will become a reflection of what is happening nationally and locally, as was presented before in these crosscutting findings regarding disaster governance in HIC.

Disaster agenda-setting in HIC is, then, a top-down process as seen in all the cases, that starts with the international donor governments. Despite their adaptation to local realities, they tend to reflect international agendas above disaster agendas in general. Prioritizing acting on *the effects of the conflict* over *the prevention of disasters* is a decision that is made time and again at the international level based on geopolitics and the interests of individual countries (donors most of the time) and less on the needs of the affected places (for example, to reduce risk or respond to disasters). Despite this, disasters of significant magnitude have shown to have the capacity to redirect these agendas and put disaster on the relevant international political agendas (Birkland 1997; Sylves 2015). However, in a HIC context this seems to be a short-term agenda adjustment rather than a new long-term focus. The drought in Afghanistan, for example, has mobilised relevant response to people affected by the drought and some drought prevention actions, but the DRR agenda of the country and the priority given to disaster is still reduced compared with the focus on the conflict. The same scenario occurred in Yemen regarding water issues: although mobilising relevant resources and efforts or reducing the effect of lack of water, these initiatives did not change the water or disaster agenda. The drought in South Sudan is another example. While the famine in South Sudan relates more to political and war-related strategies than the drought, it mobilised the agenda to reduce food insecurity in the country. However, it was done by only focusing on the areas declared under famine, while many other areas of the country are affected by drought but were not considered as priorities for action.

Lessons from practice: Understanding how it is possible to address disasters in HIC

The fourth research sub-question explores how disaster response can be implemented in conflict-affected areas and communities. Multiple lessons and examples have been presented along the cases on how disasters have been addressed in HIC scenarios. Here I would like to highlight three crosscutting findings based on practitioners' experience: the need for a conflict-sensitive approach, the relevance of legitimacy, and path-dependent programming.

As presented before, HIC scenarios are a mosaic of multiple conflicts at multiple levels, with one particular conflict of such intensity and amplitude that it produces impacts at the macro level. In this context, it was essential to the practitioners to recognise that the whole country is never directly affected by the main and

more intense aspects of the conflict. The spaces that are less affected by the macro conflict are seen as opportunities to implement medium- to long-term projects such as development-related programmes. Nevertheless, these spaces are also affected by conflict dynamics at the local and community levels, normal in any society (Cárcamo and Mena 2017; Collier and World Bank 2003; Demmers 2012). These meso and micro conflicts can hinder disaster-related efforts as much as the macro conflict and also trigger, create, or exacerbate conflict (Mena and ARC 2018b; Mena et al. 2019).

As learned along this study, effective implementation of projects in HIC therefore requires levels of conflict-sensitivity that would help overcome the challenges of operating in these volatile spaces. 'Conflict-sensitivity' is not the same as peacebuilding or conflict resolution, which are specific fields with their own expertise (Barnett et al. 2007; Cousens et al. 2001; Woodrow and Chigas 2009). A do-no-harm approach refers to how aid actors recognise that their work can create, trigger or exacerbate conflict, how their actions will interact with the conflict and subsequently adapt their programmes accordingly in order to avoid having a negative impact on possible or identified conflicts (Mena and ARC 2018b; Woodrow and Chigas 2009). Conflict-sensitivity considers this do-no-harm approach and outcomes to be peace conducive and supports those efforts even if they are outside the log-frame or the main objectives of the projects (Vivekananda 2011).

Disaster response and risk reduction are political and based on people's relations, depending on the outcome of the interaction of multiple individuals as well as organisations in the humanitarian arena. To be able to keep or stay working in HIC scenarios, humanitarian, disaster, and development actors need to have the capacity (power), authority, and mandate to do so. Additionally, their actions need to be seen as legitimate. However, HIC scenarios present problems of corruption, misappropriation of funds, embezzlement, deception, theft, and lack of transparency. HIC scenarios are also beset by high levels of violence and multiple conflicts at different levels. In these tense circumstances, any (perceived) wrong-doing can have negative consequences and can destroy years of work in project implementation or even create or escalate conflict. Therefore, legitimacy, acceptance, and trust are so essential to aid agencies that much of their managerial and governance arrangements develop plans to build their legitimacy. Without legitimacy, aid actors can face resistance, which would obstruct their capacity to work. What is more, the cases of South Sudan, Afghanistan and Yemen also showed that this legitimacy is not only accepted or denied but is built over time through many negotiations.

So, how does this legitimacy work? Before the HIC, most programmes and projects would have been developed in partnership or agreement with the main governments of the country. Under normal circumstances, the national government grants the first level of legitimacy and authorisation to operate. However, since in HIC the government is usually a party in the conflict, international actors like UN agencies and NGOs commonly have to abandon this rule as it would otherwise infringe on their need to be seen as

neutral and legitimate actors. This does not deny the fact that they have their own agendas, that they might play an advocacy role, or that they need to interact and negotiate with local authorities. However, they do need to build a different type of governance arrangement, including new parameters for legitimacy. Additionally, HIC scenarios present complex governance systems, including the presence of multiple, parallel and sometimes even unknown systems of governance and authorities in a territory or country. Aid actors therefore need to be perceived as legitimate actors by each figure of authority in each territory and at different levels: national, regional, or local.

International humanitarian aid actors find legitimacy in two main realms: political and economical. Politically, by acting from international spheres and international frameworks (policies and agreements) and usually adhering to the humanitarian principles. This political legitimation provides acceptance for international actors by national authorities as well as by authorities and the local level. During interviews in all the three cases, many disaster-related actions and policies by local and national actors were justified by mentioning that they were supported or working in partnership with a UN agency or INGO. The simple fact that they are outsiders and adhere to the humanitarian principles also helps to be perceived as neutral in the conflict.

We must not forget that NGO and UN legitimacy is also economical. Their actions mobilise millions of dollars in economic activities such as thousands of jobs, which in turn give them a strong negotiation position with all authorities. The non-profit ideal of their economic activity also plays an important role in their legitimacy, especially in HIC scenarios, where financial resources are usually - in one way or another - associated with causes of the conflict or associated with corruption and embezzlement of funds. However, this last point also proves to be problematic, especially considering the ways and standards of life that international humanitarian actors have with respect to the local population in the places where they work.

While international aid actors' legitimacy is more external and is based on their resources, policies, and frameworks, the legitimacy of national actors providing aid tends to be based much more on interpersonal relationships. As already presented above, national aid actors usually find legitimacy in what can be called a cultural-community framework. This legitimacy is what allows them to manoeuvre through the challenges of HIC and enable them to act. As a result, most aid provision is delivered directly by national actors from local NGOs or national staff of UN agencies and INGOs. The role of international humanitarian aid actors (INGOs, the UN, and donors) is, therefore, key in terms of coordinating efforts, setting agendas, and mobilising resources for disaster governance.

Legitimacy therefore is vital in practice. Here, legitimacy moves away from being an academic term used to understand political arrangements and people's actions; it becomes an (implicit) operational prerequisite for working in HIC scenarios.

Legitimacy and the need for a conflict-sensitive approach, however, contribute to another essential lesson: humanitarian aid and disaster-related actions are, in each of the three cases, typically locked in a path-dependent programming cycle. This means that aid actors, particularly aid organisations, tend to work in the same areas and sectors where they already have projects. This also applies to DRR projects. Working in the same places over time allows aid agencies to deal with multiple challenges related to HIC scenarios. By building on the knowledge and experience from previous projects and known places, they are already accepted and legitimated actors. They will also have enough local knowledge to develop an effective conflict-sensitive plan. This, in turn, provides more security, facilitates access, and provides already-known sources to obtain good and services that are usually scarce in HIC places.

The exception to the above are the so-called 'big crises' that result in hundreds of victims and generally generate media attention and a presence on international news (see De Waal 1997). In the case of disasters, they are usually fast-onset ones like earthquakes or flash floods. In these cases, disaster response takes place much faster and actions are usually highly centralised, framed as general complex emergency or humanitarian crisis response. Interestingly, in the case of South Sudan and Afghanistan, my research presents examples of how these emergency interventions (which are understood as exceptional), led to the remaining presence of INGOs, NGOs, and the UN in those territories even after the main crisis was under control. They tended to stay in the area and from there expand their areas and topics of work, creating a new *node* of the path-dependent programming cycle. The main reason for this process is, as presented in the cases, that a protracted crisis usually creates protracted needs which in turn result in protracted responses.

Linking disaster, development and relief

The final research sub-question addresses how disaster-related agendas connect with the wider context of humanitarian aid and development normally present in HIC scenarios.

As seen previously, international actors performing development actions (rather than humanitarian ones) are also present in HIC scenarios. Their role is important in setting agendas and developing projects before HIC levels are reached. They then tend to leave the country as seen in the cases of South Sudan and Yemen and to some extent also in Afghanistan. They also return when things settle down again, as was the case in South Sudan. During this development period, DRR strategies were promoted or implemented and, in most cases, they either stopped or drastically reduced their activities during periods of HIC. The case of Yemen studied this process in more detail, highlighting the gap that existed between development actors and actions happening in the country *before* HIC levels, and the humanitarian actors and actions that came into place to respond *during* HIC times. One of the main consequences of this disconnection is the lack of transference of experience and capacities in these circumstances. In the case of Yemen and South Sudan, donors or funders

were the main drivers to produce agendas focusing on emergency relief. With a few exceptions, these agendas provided very little consideration towards long-term and development-related planning.

One relevant crosscutting finding relates to the before mentioned (mis)alignment between the disaster cycle and the humanitarian and development cycle. The static, linear, and phased ways of seeing these two cycles relate to the assumption that HIC scenarios are a homogeneous blanket covering all affected territories. However, findings in this study have demonstrated how development and disaster response have co-occurred in Yemen, South and Afghanistan: DRR is implemented in parallel with humanitarian aid and relief actions in every country; and, while HIC is still ongoing, development agendas are feasible and needed as much as humanitarian and relief actions during non-HIC times. Therefore, by failing to see how dynamic these cycles are and how they inter-relate, aid actors will keep developing agendas, policies, and governance arrangements that fall short of providing adequate solutions to respond and prevent disaster in HIC.

In other words, maintaining the wrong ideas about the relationships between disaster and HIC, assuming a direct correlation between disaster and conflict in HIC, seeing conflict and disaster as homogenous categories and perceiving HIC as a homogenous and constant concept which behaves in the same way and has the same affects everywhere, reflects on the way international agendas, actors, and policies see disaster and conflict. When these views are translated and promoted in HIC scenarios along with a sequential and phased understanding of how development and humanitarian aid work, this in turn forces disaster-related agendas onto develop governance arrangements and promote frameworks of action, they mimic the wrongdoings of aid and development instead of following the real advances that disaster governance has gained during the last decades. Development and humanitarian aid work is still managed in silos within silos. Even when specialized expert work is necessary, this should not prevent better integration or collaboration. The efforts for the nexus between relief and development are still in progress, but the gap from development to humanitarian aid is still very rarely explored and resolved.

Disaster agendas and policies have been better at acknowledging the cycle in which disaster management phases can overlap and reinforce each other (Hilhorst 2013d; Wisner, Gaillard, and Kelman 2012b). Therefore, disaster governance in HIC scenarios, including generating comprehensive knowledge about people's vulnerability and its root causes, dynamic pressures and unsafe conditions (Bankoff et al. 2004; Blaikie et al. 1994), has the potential to become an important, yet still unheeded, contribution to better humanitarian and development actions in HIC.

Finally, it is necessary to remember that despite our best efforts to reduce the risk of disaster or the risk of conflict, we will never be able to reduce totally the risks present in HIC and any other social space. There will

be always residual[40] risk due to high interdependencies and complexities of the modern life and, therefore, some impacts will occur (Beck 1999; Blaikie et al. 1994; Luhmann 2017). Vulnerability reduction to tackle disaster risk, in this sense, can be seen more as a system for the *continuous* work of reducing vulnerabilities, able to recognize new vulnerabilities as they emerge, transform, and manifest. The complexity of doing this in HIC scenarios entails investing extra effort from both development and humanitarian systems, particularly considering the low level of governance in general (and disaster governance in particular) in HIC settings..

[40] Residual risk refers to 'the disaster risk that remains in unmanaged form, even when effective disaster risk reduction measures are in place, and for which emergency response and recovery capacities must be maintained' (UNDRR 2020)

9. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

9.1. Introduction

This study is born from a larger research project that seeks to understand the relationship between disasters and different types of conflict. In my case I delved into high-intensity conflict (HIC) scenarios, which to my own surprise are constantly affected by disasters, much more than I expected when starting this research. The reason why HIC and disaster correlation is so high has logical grounds, but the specifics of that relationship is still subject to debate. As presented in this study, disasters related to natural hazards such as droughts, floods, or earthquakes are not natural - they are socially and politically constructed. Disasters are the results of a human population that has either not known or has not been able to prepare for or prevent these natural phenomena from turning into hazards and then from affecting them, destroying their livelihoods over time, or destroying buildings and lives in a few seconds. The fact that people are vulnerable or susceptible to being affected by these hazards is essentially a result of social conditions. Inequality, wrong policies, inadequate political decisions and systemic poverty are some of the many factors that create vulnerability. Violent conflicts of high intensity do too. HIC scenarios create, exacerbate or trigger conditions of vulnerability that can cause natural hazards. In another context these hazards could have been managed or coped with, but in a HIC context they are more likely to become disasters.

HIC scenarios do not seek to represent a particular place, but rather describe a moment within a protracted conflict: a moment characterized by the presence of high levels of violence, widespread social conflict, social and political instability and fractured governance of the territories involved. These types of high intensity conflict result in hundreds of deaths per year. They are generally dangerous places where the supply of basic services is generally reduced or non-existent. As a result of all of this, many people end up moving, either within the same territory or to other regions, countries and even continents. The situation in general results in humanitarian crises which, as mentioned, include the presence of disasters. However, responding to these crises and emergencies or working to reduce the risk of disaster in places affected by HIC is not easy.

Specialized literature, policies on disaster management and prevention, and general knowledge of how disasters and conflict are related in HIC settings have historically been lacking. Similarly, regarding knowledge of how disaster interventions influence violent conflicts and vice versa, how different actors manage to act in these complex scenarios, or how these efforts are coordinated, decided upon and governed.

This study sought to address this complexity through a set of questions asking how disaster governance is shaped, and how disaster response and risk reduction are promoted and implemented in an HIC context. To

achieve this, a qualitative case study was designed. The case studies were: 1) South Sudan and its drought and conflict during 2017, 2) Afghanistan during 2018 and the drought and floods affecting the country in parallel to multiple social conflicts, including those between the Taliban and the government of Afghanistan, and 3) the case of Yemen in 2019, which studied how disasters such as drought were responded to and prevented during and before times of civil war. A theoretical framework including the notions of 'real' governance, legitimacy, everyday politics, actor-oriented perspective, humanitarian arena and social (power) relationships guided the research process.

The research strategy included different foci in each case: South Sudan focused on decision-making processes, Afghanistan on DRR, and Yemen on linking development and DRR to relief. Having different foci enabled me to delve into different questions, engage with different bodies of literature, and to write different journal articles. As a result of this foci strategy, each case contributed with data from the field. As this piece of research progressed, each case also studied and qualified relevant results from previous cases and pre-existing literature. Alongside these different foci, in all three countries core research questions were also addressed, allowing me to build a robust set of knowledge to address the main research questions that guided this study.

Previous chapters have shown in detail the different findings and aspects of disaster response and risk reduction in HIC contexts. These findings aim to answer the described foci of each case. Chapter 8 presented a comparative analysis of the cases, informing about decision-making processes amidst power relations in a humanitarian arena. It also informed about managerial and legitimation strategies undertaken by aid and society actors to be able to work and manoeuvre in HIC scenarios. Lastly, Chapter 8 described the possibilities for working towards disaster prevention and strengthening disaster governance considering the everyday and real politics of disasters and humanitarian aid. The research sub-questions were further answered via cross-cutting findings also in Chapter 8.

This final chapter presents my conclusions to the main research question and some reflections on the role of violence and HIC in shaping disaster governance. The final sections address limitations and ethical concerns, discuss my position as a researcher, and challenges related to this study and how the expected contributions were met. The chapter closes presenting intersecting topics of study and opportunities for future research.

9.2. Answering the research question: preventing and responding to disasters in HIC

The main question in this research project was: How is disaster governance shaped and how are disaster response and disaster risk reduction promoted and implemented by aid and societal actors (state and non-state ones) in a context of high-intensity conflict, based on the cases of South Sudan (2017), Afghanistan (2018) and Yemen (2019)?

Due to the lack of (capable) governance structures, disaster risk reduction and disaster response promotion and implementation during HIC moments rely on top-down international agendas and resources. In each different HIC scenario, these agendas are adapted and politically negotiated by multiple aid and society actors at different levels. The negotiation of these agendas is a balancing act between international disaster-related agendas and policies, national and local contexts, challenges and capacities on one side, and humanitarian aid and development strategies on the other.

Based on these negotiations and agendas, DRR and disaster governance in HIC are possible if there is the will to do it, if different levels of conflict are acknowledged, if funds and time are available and if disaster governance arrangements are in place. Once disaster-related actions are implemented, aid agencies commonly become locked in a path-dependent cycle of operations. Having a conflict-sensitive approach is a main strategy for aid agencies to be able to operate. These efforts need to be systematic before, during and after the HIC scenarios. However, most of the time disaster governance is not treated as a priority during HIC moments because it perceived as not urgent, not feasible and as external to social realities. Finally, there are people in power benefiting from it.

Let me unpack the argument above in more detail.

High-intensity conflict (HIC) represents a moment during a protracted crisis characterized by high levels of violence and fractured governance structures, and usually result in a humanitarian crisis. Needs usually surpass national capacities to respond or prevent disasters; hence, international assistance is commonly present. Disaster-related action in this context usually is embedded in humanitarian or development ones. However, in HIC scenarios many places are not directly affected by this macro (national) conflict, but instead by multiple meso (provincial) and micro (local and community) levels of conflict. This gives room to work *in* places affected by meso and micro conflict but *around* the macro conflict, without the necessity to work *on* conflict dynamics. Places affected by HIC will also at some point transition to moments of post- or low-level conflict.

Places under HIC levels are also commonly and regularly affected by natural hazard-related disasters. The levels of vulnerability that HIC creates contributes to putting people at risk of disasters, explaining in part the relevant co-occurrence of both phenomena. Additionally, disaster intervention can create, exacerbate or trigger conflict just as well as conflict can create, exacerbate or trigger conditions that turn hazards into disasters. Disaster intervention can also be an opportunity to build peace and reduce conflict.

The process of deciding to reduce the risk or to respond to disaster in HIC is always negotiated between multiple aid and society actors at different levels and moments in time. Disaster-related actions are designed around top-down agendas that are defined at international levels and promoted by external donors, United

Nations agencies, international non-governmental organisations, and development organisations. The implementation and funding of these actions are also led by international actors but relies on and is operated by local and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local aid organisation staff. Weak governance hinders national authorities from directly leading and implementing disaster agendas.

HIC scenarios are complex places that require complex and expensive logistical solutions to overcome multiple challenges such as safety and access. Depending on the level of conflict, it is also vital for every actor to be conflict-aware, to develop conflict-sensitive strategies beyond do-no-harm approaches, and to be recognised as legitimate by all the other actors involved in disaster prevention and response. Legitimation and conflict sensitivity depend highly on knowledge of the local context. Because recruiting staff with these very specific and complex sets of skills is limited (plus other challenges of working in HIC), aid agencies can easily become locked in a path-dependent cycle of operations where they always work in the same or nearby locations despite their supposed agility in responding to crises.

In HIC scenarios, humanitarian aid is more present than development-related programmes. Based on this fact, disaster governance in HIC is perceived as divided into two areas: Disaster Response, aligns with relief and is required in HIC moments, while Disaster Prevention and Post-Disaster Actions both align themselves with development and therefore are not feasible or extremely reduced during times of HIC.

However, providing that different levels of conflict are acknowledged, that funds and time are available and that disaster governance arrangements are in place, disaster response and risk reduction are possible. It is also necessary that these efforts are systematic before, during and after the HIC scenarios. This, in turn, calls for a better alignment between humanitarian and development actions.

Such alignments between disaster, humanitarian aid and development need to be cyclical and dynamic, understanding that at different moments and levels of conflict, different actions are needed. These alignments also need to recognise that by addressing the root causes of vulnerability and disaster, conflict would also be addressed. Therefore, attention by aid actors towards the triple nexus disaster, conflict and peacebuilding are fundamental in HIC scenarios.

However, based on the negotiations and agendas mentioned above, most of the time disaster governance is not decided to be seen as a priority during HIC. The following section will reflect upon reasons and consequences of choosing not to address disasters during HIC.

9.3. Choosing not to address disasters during HIC

Previous findings have shown that aid actors consider it more feasible to reduce the risk and respond to disasters before protracted conflict reaches HIC levels. However, during HIC moments, conflict and power struggles overshadow disaster-related agendas and many aid actors and authorities become blind to the presence of natural hazards, the risk of disasters or the effects of disaster in people's everyday life. With HIC, many actors become disaster blind; nonetheless, for people affected by the conflict disaster continue to be visible and continue to affect them. Moreover, disaster governance is not decided to be or seen as a priority because is perceived as not urgent, not feasible, as external to social realities. Also and maybe more importantly, behind these decisions that produce risk and cause people's suffering, there are people in power benefiting from those decisions (Hilhorst 2013c; Kelman 2020; Slim 2008; Wisner et al. 2004).

First, the sense of urgency is related to assessments of future and present risks. The idea of urgency in HIC is pervasive in disaster governance. Crisis requires immediate action, with little time to assess the best strategies, the (negative) impacts of the interventions, and the composite nature of each crisis. In comparison, disasters are not seen as immediate threats. 'Slow onset' disasters are crises with which we can deal later. 'Rapid onset' ones are a probability that might have drastic impacts, but they are still seen as that: a probability, not a certainty. The sense of urgency placed in immediate adverse effects impedes deeper reflection on the effects that future risk may bring.

The lack of sense of urgency and not choosing to address disaster also relates with seeing disasters as external to society. Discussions around why disasters are not natural can shed some light on this matter. Previous research has shown that disasters are not natural – they are socially and politically constructed. Despite this, in many circles including HIC, disasters are still seen as natural and unrelated to the conflict, as Akong's story in the introduction shows. This has led to the idea that no one is responsible for disasters and that they are not a product of our decisions, although we know that they are. If actors like donors and agencies consciously decide not to pay attention to disasters (or see disaster prevention as unfeasible) and as a consequence people die or are otherwise affected, that can very well also be seen as a violent act, similar to the conflict-related violence that donors and agencies are paying attention to now when deciding what to finance and act upon. As Kelman (2020) presents, we choose to be at risk of disasters. In HIC, a choice to not consider disasters is a decision to be at risk from disasters.

The combination of a lack of a sense of urgency when it comes to disasters, the idea that disasters are not political, and a bias toward physical violence creates a perfect recipe for a real catastrophe that combines social, natural, and political hazards. To keep justifying the disregard for disasters because they *are* not urgent, is in fact an endorsement of a distorted reality because urgency is politically and socially constructed

and not empirical fact. There is no absolute truth to why something is more urgent than something else. This sense of urgency of the humanitarian sector is, as presented by Žižek (2009), mediated and determined by political reasons.

This lack of urgency and consideration of disaster may be pointing to the fact that many disasters are like the *black swan* of HIC scenarios, according to Taleb's (2010) description of a black swan incident: an unpredictable event with massive impact, that, once it occurs, we can learn from it and make it less unpredictable, for example, by conducting a research project. However, I prefer to see disasters in HIC more like a *grey rhino* in Wucker's terms: 'a highly probable, high impact threat' yet regularly neglected (2017:7). As she asserts,

> you would think that something so enormous would get the attention that it deserves. To the contrary, the very obviousness of these problematic pachyderms is part of what makes us so bad at responding to them. We consistently fail to recognize the obvious, and so prevent highly probable, high-impact crises: the ones we have the power to do something about (Wucker 2017:7).

Conflict tends to be highly volatile but, to some extent, disasters tend to be much more consistent. In places like HIC settings, where we might not know what will happen with the conflict or even what will happen with the weather, there are still many aspects and spaces from where disasters can be predicted and prevented. In all the three cases studied, droughts, floods and earthquakes were not a surprise. People, particularly those affected by disaster, knew of the presence of these hazards and most of the time they also knew of the high probability that these hazards would turn into disasters. Yet, in HIC places these known hazards are a neglected grey rhino by aid actors.

The decision not to pay attention to disasters in HIC needs to be reflected upon, considering what high-intensity conflict and its levels of violence entail for aid and society actors, and how these actors, particularly aid ones, perceive and assess conflict and violence. As stated by Peters and Kelman (2020:8): '[w]hen exploring the linkages between disaster and conflict, scholars should dig deeper to engage with the nuances of constructive and destructive conflict strategies and how they manifest through direct, structural, and cultural forms of violence.' Similarly, as Slim (2001:326) reflects on violence and humanitarianism, many paradox unveiled once we start reflecting on what it means to save life under violent context without the use of violence, especially considering that humanitarianism has, 'wittingly or unwittingly, to alternately and even simultaneously deplore, restrain, enable and embrace violence'.

Killing for reasons of political conflict seems to be condemnable, but death as a result of (wrong) policies is judged differently. The humanitarian aid sector acts politically when it makes decisions through what I call triage of aid: which 'victims' or affected people are more deserving of aid or which risks are considered

higher. In his book *Killing Civilians*, Slim (2008) presents reflections regarding the idea that there are people that deserve to be protected from war and conflict and others less so, if at all. He unpacks the notion of 'civilians' as the modern label for the category of protected people and describes how oftentimes when these protected ones suffer during war times from famine, rape, impoverishment or diseases, it is a deliberate act (see Slim 2003 as well). People in position of power decide who deserves to suffer and who do not even if they are civilians. Similarly, this research has shown that deciding to address the risk of disasters or the risk conflict is also a way of deciding which suffering can be spared and which people deserve to be protected..

These decisions of inaction towards disasters may be seen as unconscious ones or as the result of many other smaller decisions. Nonetheless, they are decisions that have been taken or constructed; it has been a choice to address or not to address disasters in a particular way. As Slim (2015:171) would name it, choosing not to address disaster can be an 'act of omission': '[a]s direct actions of not-doing, the people concerned are responsible for their omissions and would need to justify why they did not act in these particular cases.' These choices, more importantly, have consequences on people's lives and livelihoods.

This research has shown the importance and possibly the necessity of having lower levels of conflict in each country for effective disaster governance and DRR. Choosing to wait for post-conflict or low-intensity levels of conflict before acting on disasters is a decision that the aid and development sectors takes at different times in the process. Donors do it when deciding what to fund and for how long. UN agencies and NGOs make this decision when designing projects or how they consider (or not) disasters in their programs. Governments and authorities in places under HIC levels of conflict decide in the policies and agendas they promote, support or legitimate.

Violence, as a fundamental component of HIC, also needs to be reviewed. The humanitarian aid sector seems to have a sense of urgency to respond to acts of violence and their consequences. However, the definition of violence and its characteristics are debatable. Violence that is political, graphic, and person-to-person seems to be more relevant. When people in South Sudan are affected by a drought that leads to starvation, or when three times more people in Afghanistan receives aid because of drought than by the conflict, those situations are not being seen as violent. Not all acts and decisions that lead to death, people's displacement or suffering are considered violent. In HIC there is a blindness with regards to seeing the violence of disasters. In that sense, HIC moments are violent and affected by the violence of the conflict as well as the violence of systematically and profoundly ignoring disasters, their effects on people's livelihoods, and their role in perpetuating vulnerability.

Flawed perceptions of urgency, violence, what constitutes a disaster, and the blindness towards disasters are at the core of the humanitarian crisis affecting millions of people today on the planet. It also creates a much

more protracted crisis than an immediately visible one. HIC levels may decline, the affected geographical areas might move into post or low-intensity levels of conflict, but disasters and the violence of deciding not to act on them will persist. Protracted crises create protracted responses. In turn, protracted responses that are blind to disasters create protracted risks and vulnerabilities.

With these reflections, I am not advocating necessarily for more DRR or disaster related actions in HIC, but shining a light on the fact that not addressing, seeing, or considering disasters in HIC has consequences. One of the main drivers of the humanitarian aid and development sector is to reduce people's suffering. This research shows that disaster contributes to the creation of that suffering. Deciding not to act on disasters is the same as choosing to continue to create and be affected by them. The focus can be on the factors that prevent disaster governance, as the general scenario that HIC provides, but the focus can also be on the factors creating or facilitating disaster, with one of those factors being the decision not to act on them. As Ball (1975:369) stated 45 years ago '[p]rogrammes designed to prevent disaster must concentrate on the conditions for disaster'. Therefore, deciding not to act is possible, but we need to take that decision seriously and consciously, considering what we are showing here: disasters in HIC are present, they affect people's everyday life, and they are created politically. Not responding to them is not a constraint of HIC scenarios; it is a politically and socially crafted decision.

While this dissertation has elaborated extensively on factors preventing disaster governance such as HIC context, future research can delve into the factors that create or facilitate disaster and choices to not address disasters, particularly the role of national and international governance arrangements and agendas. The following section discusses further the relevance of governance for addressing disasters.

9.4. The relevance of governance, international agendas and dependency

This research has shown the fluidity of the notion of disaster governance. Governance of disaster and humanitarian aid is subject to multiple negotiations that re-shape formal and traditional governance (see section 1.1 and Titeca and de Herdt 2011; Twijnstra and Titeca 2016). My research shows how governance echoes and adapts to the governance systems of the places where it is developed. In HIC this means how disaster-related actions adapt to fragmented governmental systems and to state fragility as well as how they are embedded in humanitarian organizational/logistical and decision-making systems.

Three crucial problems for DRR and disaster governance in HIC scenarios are (1) fragmented governance systems with state fragility, (2) insufficient number of regulations or systems to guide disaster governance, (3) dependency on international actors and funds, and (4) lack of recognition of conflict in international disaster frameworks. With regards to the first problem, formal international disaster frameworks, like the Sendai Framework for Action, always envision the presence of functional governance systems that can lead

and coordinate the disaster agenda, the response and the reduction of the risk of disaster. However, HIC governance structures either fall short or do not prioritize carrying out the disaster agenda. The almost non-existent presence of local governments in disaster governance during HIC times invites us to see disaster governance in different ways. For example, considering the discussion regarding state fragility (see section 4.3), disaster governance bodies can start thinking about the role that armed groups can play in reducing the risk of disasters (especially because engaging with them is also key for conflict resolution and peacebuilding) or the real role of community level organisations in leading the agendas on disaster, as suggested by Walch (2018) as well.

In relation to the above, the second problem is the lack of regulations and policies (or reduced capacities to implement or monitor them) that would further disaster governance in HIC. This problem is compounded with a lack of resources that would have further developed the national capacities in place so that they can lead and shaped disaster governance. HIC moments also present corruption and a lack of valid, functional or knowledgeable interlocutors between international, national, regional and local actors for disaster governance.

The third problem, dependency on international actors and funds, can be exemplified with the current COVID-19 pandemic situation, which shows how sensitive this dependency is. Many countries acting as donors are now cutting down funds as they need to prioritize supporting their own citizens. Most humanitarian aid agencies are seeing their operations hampered by travel restrictions, which prevents aid actors from travelling to countries under HIC scenarios or restricts their movement inside of these countries (The Lancet 2020). Also, as revealed in personal communications with several aid actors during March and June 2020, many international actors were evacuated from South Sudan, Afghanistan and Yemen, leaving many projects on standby or operating at reduced capacity. When these aid actors were asked about disaster risk reduction or disaster-related projects, the answer was that the priorities are now COVID-19 and acute emergencies like acute malnutrition. Therefore, all funds and efforts have been diverted to those endeavours. Such decisions can be seen as an example of triage of aid documented in this research. In many places, COVID-19 is a new emergency that adds to crises from conflicts or natural hazard events, yet the capacity to respond is limited due to budget cuts or a lack of access to extra funds in addition to the pre-existing chronic problem of the high level of need in HIC compounded by disaster.

The fourth problem concerns the lack of recognition of conflict in international disaster frameworks, which can have relevant consequences for disaster governance. As we presented in Chapter 7 one of the achievements of the LRRD strategy was the mobilisation of resources and strategies to implement *recovery*, seeing it as the link between relief and development. Including conflict in the Sendai or in future frameworks might also mobilise resources for those efforts and open important discussions and collaborations for better

disaster governance in conflict-affected places, as advocated by the Africa Union Commission (2016). However, this is not just a matter of recognising the relevance of conflict and including it in all relevant frameworks. In the following section this problem is addressed in more details.

Recognising conflict is not enough

In addition to the recognition of conflict by policy makers, systemic and structural change is also needed. A study of the struggles of the 'sustainability' agenda shows that adding new relevant words is not enough. *Sustainability* was a marginal objective in the Millennial Development Goals, but after fifteen years it turned into the spearhead of the Sustainable Development Goals (2020). Similarly, adding conflict to the Sendai or following frameworks would not be the main point. This is not about semantics, but about comprehending how violent contexts affect people's vulnerability and can result in or exacerbate disasters.

The recognition of the disaster and conflicts relationship is not enough for this as well. As the disaster framework systematised by Wisner, Gaillard and Kelman (see 2012a:32) shows, 'the progression of safety', as a way to address dynamic pressures and root causes of vulnerability, requires structural changes at the base of our societies. This including changing legislation, public actions, addressing macro forces, or securing safe and sustainable livelihoods (see in more details in Wisner et al. 2004, Chapter 6).

Similarly, Arsel (2020:1) argues that in the case of the sustainability agenda, 'the SDGs are unlikely to bring about the necessary transformations as long as the primacy of economic growth is not challenged'. Disaster and humanitarian studies may also need to start defining the main elements of our societies that need to be challenged, namely the elements at the core of the power imbalances explaining conflict and disasters. The different variations of the framework explaining disasters (see Wisner, Gaillard and Kelman, 2012) summarise some of these core social and economic structures, including ideologies, history and culture. Maybe, behind them is also the primacy of economic growth[41].

Concrete steps to take

Operationalising conflict in DRR, disaster response, and disaster governance arrangements will require concrete steps.

In terms of policy, regulations, and tools, the fact that disasters in conflict are embedded with humanitarian aid actions also opens the door to using actual humanitarian frameworks that can support the process of

[41] And together with economic growth multiple dynamic pressures and root causes of disasters (Oliver-Smith et al. 2017). Addressing all of them, however, can produce conflict. Perhaps there is no way out of conflict and disasters without conflict and disaster, as the process of uprooting their main causes will stir the pots that brew the power relationships that explain both.

operationalising conflict in disaster governance. The Sphere Handbook, a set of principles and standards for humanitarian response, aims 'to improve the quality of humanitarian response in situations of disaster and conflict' (Sphere Association 2018:ii). This handbook provides concrete advice on how to deal with conflict scenarios, such as not sharing information that gives one party conflict advantages or being extremely careful in vetting service providers. It also conceptualises relevant regulations regarding armed conflict and humanitarian actions.

Actions to address climate change are essential to disaster governance in conflict scenarios, especially in relation to extreme weather events, migration, displacement, and resource scarcity, all of which are interrelated with disaster and conflict (see section 4.4).

Advocacy is also necessary. As revealed in my research, the perception of donors, practitioners and other stakeholders that is not possible to have DRR in conflict settings was a main challenge for disaster governance and disaster risk reduction in these contexts. Therefore, DRR (and the general strengthening of disaster governance) in conflict needs to be promoted among donors, practitioners and all disaster-related stakeholders. To do this adequately, it will be necessary to have sufficient information and cases that can shed light on how it is possible to integrate DRR into humanitarian response to HICs despite the limitations. Disaster prevention in HIC not only saves lives; it also facilitates educational continuity, connections between communities and between communities and markets, and addresses resource-related struggles that often cause conflict and also contribute to disaster creation and climate change.

In terms of concrete practices, DRR can be promoted as the missing link between disaster and conflict. As seen in section 4.4 and shown also in the three cases, conflict affects disaster occurrence and impact, chiefly because it relates to and affects people's vulnerability. Working on reducing the risk of disasters and conflict is, in the end, an agenda to reduce vulnerability and address marginalisation (Gaillard and Cadag 2009; Wisner et al. 2012a). However, aligning with the call for a localisation agenda for disaster governance in conflict, DRR needs to be developed from below, for example, based on community-based DRR (Mascarenhas and Wisner 2012) as presented in the case of Afghanistan (Mena and ARC 2018a, 2018c; Mena et al. 2019). Disaster governance via DRR from below can also play a role in peacebuilding or conflict resolution (Mena and ARC 2018c). The case of Afghanistan, and the additional work I have done on developing a conflict-sensitive approach to DRR in conflict scenarios, have shown its importance and possibilities (see Garred 2007; Hyndman 2011 and; Vivekananda 2011 as well). Disaster diplomacy is another field that has shown how post-disaster actions can link to conflict resolution. The role of DRR, particularly in HIC, can be key for disaster diplomacy.

Although DRR likely to be limited in HIC scenarios, it can present a stable springboard that helps people improve their actual livelihoods and at the same time prepares the terrain for future DRR when HIC moments pass. Achieving this will require more critical and reflective (not only spontaneous and automatic) alignment between humanitarian and disaster actions. While disaster and humanitarian actions operate together during HIC moments, theoretically and politically the disaster and conflict 'worlds' are more like two different silos, with different fields of knowledge and different policies. Researchers and theoretical knowledge need to evolve in order to support and inform the disaster and humanitarian action relationships present in violent conflict-affected places.

Developing a strong disaster governance agenda in conflict-affected places requires including a strong localisation agenda within it. In the end, disasters begin and end at the local level. Embedding disaster action into humanitarian aid brings with it the transference of the goods and the ills of the aid and development sector, including those leading to the localisation agenda. Disaster response and DRR in conflict is led and shaped by international actors but implemented by local ones. This usually takes the shape of international experts working to reduce the vulnerabilities of others (or worse, working to save vulnerable others), rather than supporting or working with, by, or for people in places affected by and prone to conflict and disasters. As presented in previous chapters, working with local actors carries many unethical or at least debatable mindsets, including outsourcing security risks or reducing accountability processes. All of them are well-known by the humanitarian aid sector too (see section 4.5).

The need for critical and reflective change

Considering the above-mentioned steps, developing disaster governance in conflict settings requires a reflective and critical approach. Disaster and humanitarian studies, thankfully, are already kindling the process of critically rethinking their fields. As Hilhorst states,

> [a]ddressing racism and decolonizing humanitarian studies is urgent, and as scholars we need to step up our efforts. Partnerships between scholars and conflict-affected communities are as unequal as ever, and the disparities between humanitarian studies in the global North and global South remain large. (2020:online)

Similarly, disaster studies scholars published the 'Power, Prestige & Forgotten Values: A Disaster Studies Manifesto', with close to 400 signatories by August 2020 (Gaillard 2019b). As the Manifesto opens: 'We want to inspire and inform more respectful, reciprocal and genuine relationships between "local" and "external" researchers in disaster studies. This Manifesto calls for rethinking our research agendas, our methods and our allocation of resources' (Gaillard 2019b:online). However, while disaster studies is not foreign to being critical and reflective of these practices and the political role that it can play (O'Keefe et al. 1976; Waddell

1977), still, 'ultimately, disaster studies continues to be dominated by Western scholars, whatever the location of the disaster or study area' (Gaillard 2019a:10).

All in all, disaster governance in HIC scenarios opens spaces and opportunities for a bottom up, from below approach, which can be a way to leapfrog the challenges of state fragility and governmental fragility. Doing so requires a localisation agenda for disaster action and being conscious of the long-term positive changes of this agenda. In this way, disaster governance in HIC can also be an agenda for disaster that also addresses vulnerability, marginalisation and power imbalances.

9.5. Limitations, positionality and methodology: researching high-intensity conflict contexts

Multiple limitations were present during the development of this research project. Most of the time, proper adjustments of the research questions and methods helped to overcome the limits, but at other times extra mitigation measures were needed.

The findings of this study must be seen in light of some limitations related to time constraints and access. The research design included having three cases studies. While this allowed for more depth with each of the cases at the same time and allowed comparison and enrichment of results between one case and other, a four year timespan for the project ended up being just enough. A large-N or approach would have been other option, as many studies addressing conflict and disaster have done before. However, with a large-N design the path dependency finding about South Sudan, the analysis of DRR governance structures in Afghanistan, or the traceability of disasters project before and after the war in Yemen would not have been possible. Despite this challenge, it was possible to conduct the research project on schedule, working with cases of high-intensity conflict and facing disaster imposed a series of restrictions that constantly threatened to delay the entire project. These challenges include bureaucratic processes such as getting visas and permits, but they also relate to the difficulties in moving and gaining access to different areas in each of the researched countries. Much time had to be devoted to planning and organising each fieldwork stage.

In relation with the above, working in places with the level of violence and insecurity of HIC scenarios was also a limitation to gaining physical access to more territories, to visiting more projects developing DRR and disaster response, and to reaching relevant actors, chiefly local first responders. As a mitigation strategy, the decision was made to visit less DRR projects or disaster management events in more depth. Sadly, not reaching local first responders was a limitation that was very difficult to overcome. Multiple strategies were implemented. One strategy was to visit places affected by disaster without external (national and international) assistance to see how people were responding and coping. Most of the time I would arrive late due to either a lack of access or other security reasons. Disaster-affected people was not always clear who

was responding or they felt concern to share that information. Another constraint relates with displacement, which made it difficult to 'follow' and find first responders (usually the same affected people).

The level of state fragility and fractured systems of governance was a significant challenge, not just in terms of obtaining permits, but also in terms of the need to deal with corruption, harassment, and requests for special permits and payment of extra costs. Although these situations were managed properly, doing so took time and effort that limited time and space for better immersion in fieldwork. The governments demonstrated difficulties in keeping information on disasters up to date and well-organised. Most of the time, historical data was not available or had been lost. This limitation meant spending a lot of time finding and validating information, at times even in other countries, like finding information in Uganda about South Sudan or in Jordan about Yemen.

Similarly, while the field of conflict and disaster is developing a relevant body of knowledge, information and previous case studies particularly on disasters governance in relationship with HIC scenarios was highly reduced. This lack of previous knowledge limited the capacities to compare results with other studies or to use previous knowledge to operationalise my variables and research questions.

Another limitation is related to the process of conducting research with an inter- and transdisciplinary focus. As with the majority of large inter- or transdisciplinary studies, this research presents limitations in the level of engagement with or contribution to some of its core fields. The main focus of the research was disaster and humanitarian studies, and conflict was treated as the context. Although the research time was four years, one and a half of them was dedicated to conducting fieldwork, leaving less time to fully engage with conflict studies theories, debates and analyses. Also, studying conflicts (plural, as they manifest at different levels and moments in each country or conflict-affected area) in HIC scenarios entails opening a Pandora's box of large and diverse policies, funds, actors, and processes. In HIC scenarios, engaging fully in the understanding of HIC in each case would mean studying civil-military relations, the role of military and armed actors in aid and disasters, geopolitical motivations, causes and effects of the conflicts, the role of armed groups contesting the legitimacy of the government, among many other factors (Bellamy 2004; Dijkzeul 2004; Matlary 2004; RPN 1997; Seybolt 2008). While I recognise the relevance and usefulness that such knowledge would provide, with the time and resources availability as a limitation, the decision was made to not engage in full depth with the conflicts beyond their direct role as a context constraining, shaping or facilitating humanitarian aid and disaster governance.

Regarding positionality limitations, being a white man with only basic command of the local languages could pose a challenge. However, I feel that it did not negatively affect the development of the research. On the contrary, most of the time it was my impression that local people were welcoming seeing a foreigner

speaking a little of their language, moving around openly and engaging with them rather than doing it from a distance. The general perception mentioned by local people is that most foreigners in their countries (HIC affected ones) only travel in marked cars with strong security measures and therefore they show a low level of engagement with practical everyday life. However, this research acknowledges that fieldwork research for short periods allow for descriptive and exploratory levels of knowledge production,[42] but fundamentally HIC scenarios remain a long-term and always ongoing process.

Importantly, almost all the presented limitations were identified at early strategies of this research which allowed me to adjust my research question, methodology and practices. Part of this preparation was to develop a thorough fieldwork plan that would allow me to gain access to the country cases and to relevant research participants. However, despite all that preparation, it was not possible to get access to Yemen, nor to reach first responders there. Alternative, remote research was implemented. Some of these limitations and challenges point to areas for future research. The following section 9.7 'Intersectionality and future research' presents them in more details.

9.6. Contributions and impact: Policy, practice, social and academic relevance

Five areas of expected contribution were detailed in section 1.4 of the Introduction. I believe that by the end of this research journey, contributions and impact were achieved in all those areas.

Theoretically- and policy-oriented, this research contributes to reducing the knowledge gap on the ill-studied process of disaster response, risk reduction and governance in high-intensity conflict-affected areas. Seeing as the disaster and conflict relationship is still a growing field of inquiry, knowledge of the disaster-conflict interaction is particularly reduced in places under high-intensity conflict. Beyond answering the research question and beginning to contributing to the academic knowledge on the subject, this theoretical contribution is also present on how the results were translated into practical materials that directly inform other actors on the subject.

A major contribution of this research is to present an assessment of DRR in conflict scenarios based on the empirical study of disaster-related actions on the ground. This is major because it helps to balance and nuance different models or assessments on the topic. On the one hand, to all the actors thinking that DRR is not possible in HIC, the results of this research present that is possible although likely to be limited. On the other hand, some actors who advocate for more DRR in conflict-affected scenarios present important

[42] The following blog post that I wrote presents some reflections from one of the authors about the process and limits of conducting fieldwork research: https://issblog.nl/2019/01/21/are-you-oversimplifying-research-dilemmas-honesty-and-epistemological-reductionism-by-rodrigo-mena/

expectations of the positive outcomes of the process (e.g. Peters 2017; Peters and Budimir 2016). Based on the results presented here, these expectations need to be pondered as DRR in conflict-scenarios present important limitations, especially regarding scale.

This research also contributes with knowledge that helps bridge humanitarian and disaster studies. As presented through the chapters, humanitarian aid and disaster-related actions are intertwined during HIC times, but theoretically, as a field of knowledge, and in their policies they act as two different fields. This research was able to present relevant commonalities between disaster and humanitarianism, and at the same time also presents different ways to further bridge their relationship to each other and to other fields or types of interventions like development, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The case of Yemen presents this bridge regarding development, humanitarian aid and disaster and how they connect or not at different moments of a protracted crisis. Afghanistan proves the commonalities between DRR and conflict risk reduction. South Sudan shows how disaster and humanitarian action relate to each other when it comes to assessing where and how to provide assistance.

The project also contributes with furthering understanding and developing of multiple concepts across disciplines:

- *the development-humanitarian nexus* which opens a new academic and policy debate
- *high intensity conflict* as a 'moment within complex emergencies' and protracted crisis
- *governance* with accounts on the 'real governance' of humanitarian aid and disasters
- *path dependency* to explain and show how aid is delivered despite its supposed flexibility
- *agenda setting* and how it translates from the international to the national and local levels
- *decision-making* by carefully tracing how it occurs across diverse actors and moments
- *triage* to be able to study and explain how targeting unfolds and is re-negotiated during crises
- *the humanitarian arena* with several examples on how this arena unfold in different contexts
- *aid-society actors* by tracing, describing and explaining the diversity of players
- *conflict sensitivity* as a tool to implement DRR in conflict-affected scenarios
- *'resonance'* as key for theorizing from case studies
- *ethical research and fieldwork* as operationalised and presented in detail

Methodologically, beyond having developed a manual and providing training on the subject of how to conduct fieldwork safely, this research was able to test all of this knowledge and, above all, gain perspective and reflect more on the process. This reflective process allowed me to open discussion spaces not only on how to research complex settings, but also about the importance of doing it safely and ethically (see sections 3.5 and 3.6).

I have had the opportunity to present and discuss issues on researching peace, drug trafficking and crime in conferences and discussions in Latin America. In South Sudan and Afghanistan, I also presented and shared

with local researchers on this topic. There is the misconception that local researchers are safer in their own countries and cities, but the reality is very different. Local investigators are exposed to the same and sometimes more risks, but often with fewer resources to face those challenges. Many times, international organizations hire them to do research in the most dangerous or remote areas, somehow outsourcing risk to local researchers. These researchers mentioned that they relied on years of experience to do this safely and effectively, but they felt that they lacked more technical knowledge or knowledge on how to adapt research techniques from books to the field. This was a great motivator to work with other researchers and institutions on the translation of the above-mentioned 'Security guidelines' (Hilhorst et al. 2016) into Spanish, Arabic and French[43], so that this tool can reach local researchers and support the process of localising research.

These exchanges, which often began as me presenting to them, became a learning space for myself. Their local experiences enriched my knowledge and gave me perspective. Seeking to expand the connections and discussions in this field, all these reflections were later translated into blog posts, and conference presentations. Many of these reflection are also present in a journal article in development[44]. that reflects on three dilemmas of fieldwork research: (1) Epistemological limits and the 'messiness' of fieldwork research, (2) Navigating, narrating and understanding the powerful voices in the field, and (3) on permission to 'do' fieldwork and being a platform for the voice of others. This article presents as one of its conclusions 'that fieldwork research needs to be adopted more reflexively because its practice presents a series of dilemmas that, if not adequately addressed, can produce harm, replicate power imbalances, and lead to biased results'.

Researching areas of high conflict is complex and has led to many universities and organisations avoiding, or not authorising, researchers to work in those places. As social scientists I think that we should not detract ourselves from going to places where the need to know what is happening is so great because we need to inform practices and policies with that knowledge. However, this process must be done in a professional, responsible and ethical manner. It is my aim that this investigation, its learnings and the exchanges described here will contribute to this process.

Besides academic spaces such as conferences or the academic journal, the knowledge generated and the above-mentioned concepts have been shared and discussed in multiple settings with practitioners, including INGOs, NGOs, UN agencies, donors and other research institutions. The project 'When Disaster meets Conflict' also developed a massive online open course (MOOC) in which the results of the project, including those of this research, are taught free of charge. Other consultancies, expert meetings and events have

[43] Available for downloading at www.iss.nl/securityguidelines

[44] This article, titled 'Writing the Lives of Others: Dilemmas of fieldwork research' was written with Janine Bressmer from the Centre on Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding (CCDP) of The Graduate Institute Geneva. At the moment it is in final editing processes before being submitted to a journal for publication.

allowed me to see and value how a multitude of actors can use the knowledge generated by this research. This process has been of much learning too. These exchanges also provide insight into which aspects of this new knowledge makes sense or is useful for those who will engage with it in the future. It also allowed me to delve into the essential questions and recognise blind spots of these questions and their answers.

It is of exceptional importance to remember that, as seen in this research, the number of people affected by disasters in high-intensity conflict areas around the world are in the millions. But the numbers alone do not say much about the life conditions and experiences of those people. If they are affected by disasters, it is because they are vulnerable. In HIC places this generally means high levels of poverty, social and physical insecurity, low access to health and other services and goods. On a social, humanitarian and environmentalist level, it is expected that the results and its application can contribute to better responses to and prevention of disasters in conflict scenarios. It is also expected to contribute to reducing human fatalities, the number of people affected, people's vulnerability, environmental impact, and economic cost associated with disasters in HIC.

Disasters and conflicts, as mentioned across the chapters, are deeply related to the ecosystems and natural resources of affected places. Effective management of disasters and conflicts also means the development of a sustainable and positive relationship with the environments and resources where people live. Although it has not been possible to delve into that interaction in this research due to time constraints, it is expected that the knowledge produced here will also contribute to improve people's lives and the use and care of ecosystems in HIC scenarios.

9.7. Intersecting topics and future research

How disaster governance, response and risk reduction are shaped, promoted and implemented in a context of high-intensity conflict presents several cross-cutting topics that require some attention. Many of them have been addressed or mentioned during this research project, but a more in-depth study and understanding of them is still due and highly relevant. These also opens a window for future research on the different dimensions of disasters in HIC.

One issue to consider is the level of dependency that disaster-related actions have with international actors in HIC scenarios. Disaster is not a priority for national governments or authorities in HIC. The budgets for disaster are strongly based on international funds and even the agenda is promoted and steered by international actors. If international aid actors promoting and implementing DRR withdraw from the countries, adequate disaster management is deemed as unsustainable in any of the three cases study here (South Sudan, Afghanistan and Yemen) by all the participants who were asked about this possibility. At the moment, there are no conversations on possible effective transfer of all disaster management to national

and local actors, nor exit plans for any of the countries studied here nor, to the best of my knowledge, elsewhere. In relation to the results, unless there is peace in their countries, no participant sees this as possible.

Another cross-cutting issue is gender (see Gaillard et al. 2015). During the research process, the extremely reduced number of women involved in disaster-related efforts in all three countries was reinforced by the fact that agendas, projects and strategies addressing disasters very rarely included gender considerations. In all three cases of this study, there was reduced women's access to education, insertion in the labour market, or consideration in decision-making or management spaces for cultural and historical reasons. However, I could not find many incentives from donors or international organizations that would gear the discussion towards how gender can be included in projects and programmes.

It is well known that disasters do not impact everyone equally. Generally, women tend to be more affected by them. In all three cases studied, this was clearly visible. Strictly related to HIC settings, due to the conflict many men flee their homes or are recruited to join armed groups. Men also have more access to paid work and the jobs they carry out in all countries are several times better paid. As a result, when faced with disasters, women generally find themselves facing them alone with fewer resources and while being affected by social conflict. If the way to respond and prevent disasters in HIC scenarios does not begin to move towards a more comprehensive view of risk and include gender issues in their programs, they will never adequately address vulnerabilities at the core of disaster risk.

A growing tendency in the humanitarian aid sector is the use of technology for data collection and projects management, among others (IFRC 2013; Read, Taithe, and Mac Ginty 2016; Sandvik et al. 2014). In HIC scenarios, problems of access and security increase the reliance on and use of technology for remote managing and for obtaining information over distance; for example by using satellite images (Belliveau 2016; Jacobsen 2015; Read et al. 2016). By being embedded in humanitarian aid actions, disaster response and DRR in HIC settings also rely on the use of technology (Mena 2020). Recent research on the use of technology in Afghanistan for humanitarian aid and disaster actions shows how technology is a 'subject of being instrumentalised and used for purposes beyond its humanitarian' implementation. However, there is a reduced awareness of the harm that the use of technology might bring and the lack of regulations on the use of technologies in the country (Mena 2020:23). Disaster-related actions in HIC scenarios needs to be reflective in the use of technology, especially considering how it can be misused for belligerent activities, or how the use and access to it might reinforce structural inequalities present in the society (Jacobsen 2017; Mena 2020; Sandvik et al. 2014).

The relationship between climate change disaster and conflict is of utmost relevance, especially in places under HIC, as presented in section 4.4 regarding how conflict and disaster interrelate. Multiple authors have also highlighted the relevance of studying and considering climate change when addressing disaster and conflict (Caso 2019; Kelman et al. 2015; Mach et al. 2019). In particular, resource distribution and access seem to be a relevant connection between climate change, disasters, and conflict, opening a more specific line of future research (see Brancati 2007; Drury and Olson 1998; Homer-Dixon 1994; Mach et al. 2019; Nel and Righarts 2008).

In relation to some of the main findings, we must deepen the systemic and therefore complex understanding of disaster risk and its governance. Future research can delve into how to advance a more integrated approach to risk that simultaneously addresses hazards and vulnerability related to conflict and disasters. How disaster risk reduction can be promoted and implemented in HIC affected areas while addressing risk in an integral way (risk of conflict, underdevelopment, and disasters) is just one of the questions and areas for future research. Similarly, another area to examine would be how disaster-related actions can have a more people-oriented approach.

Multiple other cross-cutting topics can be added when it comes to understanding disaster and conflict relationship such as the relevance of including cultural aspects of disasters (Krüger, Greg, et al. 2015) as well as a more in-depth analysis of the legal frameworks involved in disaster response in HIC scenarios (IFRC and UNDP 2015; Venturini 2012). Also, how disaster governance varies in different conflict scenarios, such as post-conflict settings versus low and high-intensity ones. For now, this research focused on understanding disaster governance in HIC scenarios

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As this final section and chapter presents, there is still a lot more to be known, but there is also a lot that has been learned. This research and its contribution and learnings rely on the research team, friends, family and colleagues that facilitate, support, and guide the process. However, it is the people that shared their stories, knowledge and experience with me who deserve the real credit. My efforts were to learn from them, to share, systematise and analyse the information to the best of my capacities. We can do better to reduce the risk and impact of disasters, even in places affected by high-intensity conflict - and we should do it. This research hopes to be a solid stepping stone in the process of crossing the gap in knowledge, from where future research can keep delving into the relationship between disaster and conflict, to overcome the challenges that so far has prevented us from reducing people's vulnerability to conflict and disasters.

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11. APPENDICES

11.1. Conceptualization of the variables and categories

To establish a clear observation and identification of the main variables of this dissertation, the key terms were conceptualized as. The purpose of this conceptualization is the operationalization of the variables. For a more critical, reflective and comprehensive understanding on these concepts, please read their conceptualization in Chapter 4.

Table 15 Conceptualization of variables and categories

Concept	Definition and conceptualization
Disaster	"A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society causing widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses which exceed the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources" (UNISDR website 2017:2)
Disaster (natural hazard related)	A complex combination of natural hazards and social conditions, *disasters* are the impact of natural forces that have severe consequences on vulnerable human populations and their possessions (Aboagye 2012; Hewitt 2013; Todd and Todd 2011; Wisner 2010; Wisner et al. 2004).
Social Violent Conflict	Refers to the competition, clash or contradiction between two or more social groups, actors or parties over a specific goal, resource or interest via the use of manifest violence to pursue their objectives (Oberschall 1978; Homer-Dixon 1994; Galtung 1996a; Demmers 2012; Estévez et al. 2015; Ide 2015). In this particular definition the focus is in the manifest and direct forms of violence, rather than the structural and cultural ones, although these last ones are always at some level present or related to the manifest one (Demmers 2012). Manifest violence is conceptualize as a "visible, instrumental and expressive action. It is this kind of violence that is generally defined as 'an act of physical hurt'' (Ibid. 2012:56).
High-intensity conflict scenarios (HIC)	HIC scenarios are moments of a protracted crisis where wide-spread social violent conflict occurs, involving over a thousand casualties. Local authorities and governments have minimal or no effective control over the country or vast regions of it, generating a high level of state fragility. The provision of goods and basic services is irregular or fragmented, generating a series of losses in the population, causing -in association with the levels of violence- high rates of people fleeing their localities, regions or even the country looking for safety (see Demmers 2012; Grünewald 2012; Healy and Tiller 2014; Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research 2016; Hilhorst and Pereboom 2016; HPN and OPM 2010; Keen 2008a; Maxwell and Majid 2015). As a result of this displacement, conflict spreads over the territory and beyond, impacting neighbouring countries and region (Keen 2008a; Maxwell and Majid 2015). The provision of aid and response is

Concept	Definition and conceptualization
	difficult and restricted due to a range of challenges (detailed in the article/sample chapter), being access and security the most overt ones.
Response	"The provision of assistance or intervention during or immediately after a disaster to meet the life preservation and basic subsistence needs of those people affected. It can be of an immediate, short-term, or protracted duration" (UNISDR website 2017:6)
Aid-society	Aid-society is dynamic and represent the relationships between different actors of the Aid or the Society spheres, without being always clear to which one and actor belong. Aid actors are those for whom the humanitarian action is part of their core function, and they usually are part or linked to international institutions. Society actors play relevant roles in the response, but humanitarian aid is not part of their core function. Local state and non-state institutions and people are part of these actors. Aid actors, however, must not be seen as totally external to the realities of the places where they act. They actually "add a layer to the complexity of governance in crisis-affected settings, creating an imprint on the institutional landscape as it unfolds" (Hilhorst 2016:5). Conversely, society actors interact with aid in strategic ways pursuing their interests and agendas.
Humanitarian Arena	As an actor-oriented perspective and the term humanitarian arena seeks to represent "the outcome of the messy interaction of social actors struggling, negotiating and at times guessing to further their interests" (Bakewell, 2000, p. 108–9 in Hilhorst and Jansen 2010:1120). However, this arena is not out here, rather is built by the multiple actors, institutions and stakeholders involved in the process, including those not pure-humanitarian ones (Hilhorst and Jansen 2010; Hilhorst and Pereboom 2016). Humanitarian action is in this terms "an arena where actors negotiate the outcomes of aid" (Ibid. 2010:1120).
Legitimacy	Legitimacy is understood as "worthiness of support, a sense that something is "right" or "good" or that one has the moral obligation to support it". It is contextual and can apply to all sort of actor, calling "conferee" who is being assed for legitimacy and "referee" to whom judge the conferee as worth it of legitimacy. It must be stressed that this definition of legitimacy is used here under an actor-oriented perspective and so, as presented by Pattison, "rather than the focus being on whether a particular action is justified, the concern is with the justifiability of the agent undertaking the act" (2008, p. 397).
Power relations	Power is the capacity or ability of any subject to achieve outcomes and decide, as presented by Giddens (1984:257). Giddens, moreover, argues that "there is never a situation in which there is absence of choice" (den Hond et al. 2012:239) and so, people always make a decision on their actions, even if they are difficult, limited or constricted by their context. In HIC or disasters, there is the idea that people are forced to act in specific ways or that the surrounding conditions predetermine their actions.
Hazard & Natural hazards	Hazard: "Potentially damaging physical event, phenomenon or human activity that may cause the loss of life or injury, property damage, social and economic disruption or

Concept	Definition and conceptualization
	environmental degradation" (UNISDR website 2017:4). Natural hazards: "Natural processes or phenomena occurring in the biosphere that may constitute a damaging event" (UNISDR website 2017:4)
Risk	"The probability of harmful consequences, or expected losses (deaths, injuries, property, livelihoods, economic activity disrupted or environment damaged) resulting from interactions between natural or human-induced hazards and vulnerable conditions" (UNISDR website 2017:7). In this research the focus will be on "natural" hazards.
Vulnerability	"the degree to which one's social status (e.g. culturally and socially constructed in terms of roles, responsibilities, rights, duties and expectations concerning behaviour) influences differential impact by natural hazards and he social process which led there and maintain hat status" (Wisner et al. 2012a:22)
Humanitarian Aid	Humanitarian aid, disaster relief and crisis or emergency response, at least theoretically, have relevant similarities with disaster response. All of them sought to bring assistance to people in need, reduce their suffering and procure human dignity. Supposedly, this is a short-term assistance previous a long-term and more permanent response by governments and other organizations. However this is not always the case, and protracted crisis tend to bring protracted aid and responses (Harmer and Macrae 2004). The main difference and particularity of disaster response is the existence of a natural hazard as main trigger of the disastrous situation, whereas humanitarian aid and emergency-crisis response may also be active in cases of conflict and war.

11.2. Appendix Chapter 'State of the Art'

Interviews:

All semi structured interviews were conducted in person by the author between November 2016 and March 2017. The interviews were conducted in The Netherlands, Sierra Leone, Uganda, and South Sudan. Average duration: 75 minutes

Thematic analysis:

Although traditional thematic analysis try to work with no more than a couple of themes (analytical categories), due to the exploratory nature of the literature review in which this method was used it was decided to use a large range of themes to identified as much nuances in the literature as possible. During later stages of this analysis these analytical categories were reduced to a smaller number of themes.

Initial analytical categories:

– Disaster response: formal phases – Disaster response: spontaneous – Crisis or conflict definitions – HIC (high-intensity conflicts) – HIC and rival-similar terms – Humanitarian aid: definition – Humanitarian aid: history – Humanitarian aid: actors and organisations – Spatio-temporal conditions of the response – Type of organisation/s in disaster response – Aim/drivers of the response – Main problems /constraints – Chain of actions – Negotiations strategies – Networks in disaster and conflict response – Legitimacy: definition and theory – Legitimacy: whom – Legitimacy: what – Legitimacy: mechanism and strategies – Legitimacy: interrelated – Power relationships: definition and theory – Funding or financing process – Media role and interference – State - government/s: role in the response – State - government/s: collaboration with aid-society actors	– State - government/s: control and legitimacy over actions – State - government/s: relationship with responders – The UN role or presence – NGOs role or presence – INGOs role or presence – ICRC-IFRC role or presence, including national societies – Local organisations role or presence – Lay people/volunteers' role or presence – Local partners' collaboration – Military role and collaboration – Role and presence of other governments – Security/protection against other people: who? – Security/protection against other people: how? – Security/protection for the disaster: who? – Security/protection for disaster: how? – Medical care of the affected population – Migration and displacement – Governmental, Legal or Regulatory

11.3. Fieldwork risk management plan and preparations

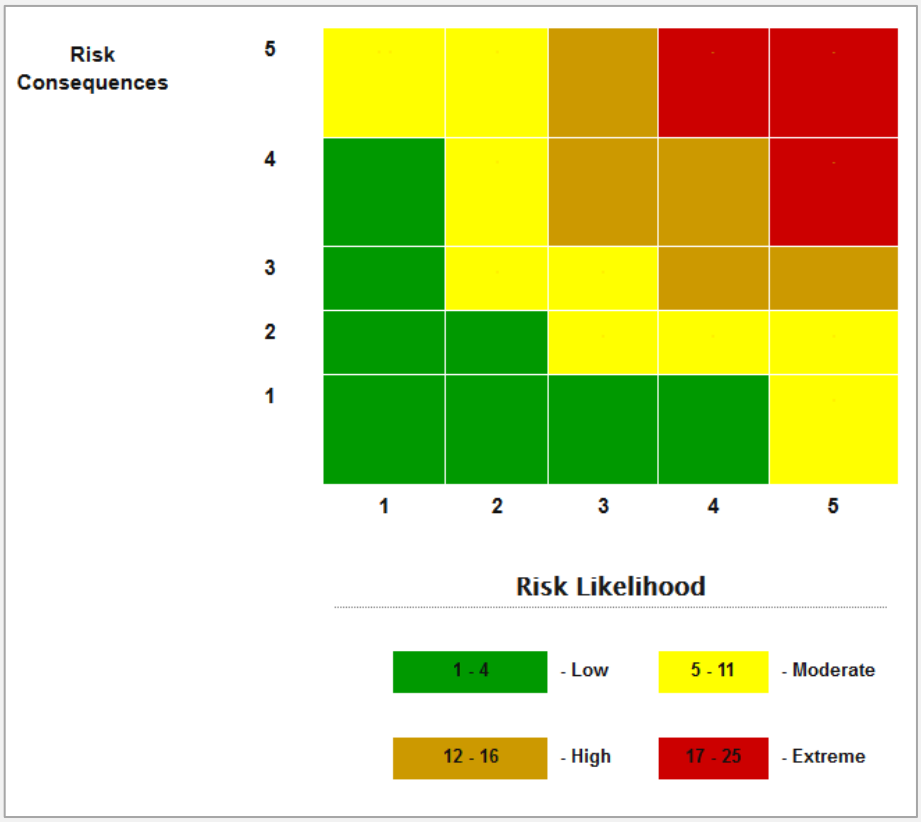
Risk assessment

Fieldwork risk assessment was developed using a likelihood and consequences approach. In brief, it consist in listing all possible and foreseeable risk, qualify them based on likelihood and consequences descriptors (see Table 16), create a risk rating (see Table 18), and develop risk control measures. Table 17 present the fieldwork risk assessment developed for this research. For privacy and security reason some risks are not listed here.

Table 16 Likelihood and Consequences Descriptors

Rating	*Likelihood Descriptor*	*Consequences Descriptor*
1	Rare	Low
2	Unlikely	Moderate
3	Moderate	Relevant
4	Major	Major
5	High	Extreme

Table 17 Risk Rating Descriptors and Risk Rating Matrix



Rating	*Description*	*Required Action*
L	Low	Acceptable: Unlikely to require specific application of resources; Manage by routine procedures. Monitor and review.
M	Moderate	Acceptable: Unlikely to cause much damage and/or threaten the efficiency and effectiveness of the program/activity. Treatment plans to be developed and implemented by operational managers. Manage by specific monitoring or response procedures.
H	High	Generally not acceptable: Likely to cause some damage, disruption or breach of controls. Management attention needed and management responsibility specified; Treatment plans to be developed and reported.
E	Extreme	Not acceptable: Likely to threaten the survival or continued effective functioning of the program, either financially or politically. Immediate action required.

Source: Adapted from 'Risk Rating & Risk Management' (Southern Cross University 2012)

Table 18 Fieldwork Risk assessment

	Risk description	*Like-lihood*	*Conse-quence*	*Risk rating*		*Risk controls*
1	Illness or disability of the researcher impeding go to fieldwork	1	5	5	Moderate	Two months before each fieldwork I start a health and safety plan.
2	Illness of the researcher during fieldwork	3	3 to 4	12	High	During fieldwork the researcher I have a health and safety plan.
4	*Serious* illness or disability of the researcher during fieldwork	2	5	10	Moderate	During fieldwork I have a health and safety plan that includes evacuation in case of serious illness. These plans include access to health system in neighbouring countries (with better or operative health systems) to the main study cases.
5	Lack of access to technological or equipment require.	1	4	4	Low	No risk controls required
6	Budget cutbacks, unexpected expenses or insufficient resources	2	4	8	Moderate	A comprehensive budget was designed, including funds for unexpected expenses.
7	Vehicle mechanical problems, traffic accidents (Info: Partner institutions will be responsible of some transportation, other will be based on hired local driver or taxis)	3	4	12	High	A road worthy pre-check will be run by the researcher before each trip. Moreover, safety protocols will be ensured. First aid kit and comms will be always at hand reach. In long trips, or trips to isolated areas, a monitoring and tracking protocol will be follow.
8	Loss of normal communications reception (mobile phones and land lines)	4	3	12	High	The researcher will have its own satellite communications instruments. The researcher has experience and training using this equipment's.
9	Problems on the route, deviations may be needed.	4	3	12	High	Proper pre-trip planning and up-dated routes information. Any problem will be notified and established protocols will be followed. The researcher will have its own navigation instruments. The researcher has experience and training navigating with GPS, compasses and maps, both during the day and the night.
10	Lack of access to drinkable water. Reduction in food rations.	1	4	4	Low	The researcher will have its own water purifier pills, water filters, and emergency food rations.
11	Robbery	3	1 to 3	9	Moderate	Depending on the characteristic of the robbery, different consequences can be expected. The research applies a complete set of measures to avoid this to happen. For instances, (1) the researcher will not carry with him unnecessary valuables on unsecure environments (2) relevant documents will be formally copied three times. Each set of relevant documents will be kept by different third parties.
12	Wide spread violence resulting in the need of evacuation (Researcher not	3	9	9	Moderate	The main risk control here is prevention. The researcher will avoid to visit territories

	Risk description	Like-lihood	Conse-quence	Risk rating		Risk controls
	present in the precise affected place)					where early warnings on the rising of the conflict are placed. I have also been trained and have real experiences acting in these scenarios, including the immediate report of what is happening. For this research there is a protocol to follow. Pre-evacuation arrangements with partner organizations are also developed.
13	Reduced access to the field.	4	4	16	High	The research includes phases of fiel work and phases of remote research. This last one seeks to counteract issues of access.
14	Kidnapping	3	4 to 5	15	High	The researcher will carry with him at all moment his mobile phone with an App that can inform either that the researcher is in danger (activate by the researcher) or an automatic message that the researcher requires assistance (automatic if the researcher fails to comply with scheduled check-ins). These messages are send even with the mobile phone turned off. Moreover, the researcher has had three trainings in which he learned techniques to cope with this situations and has experience dealing with abduction and detention situations in the past.
15	Wide spread violence (Researcher present in the precise affected place)	3	4-5	15	High	Combines control from Risk 12 and 14 Extra control are Medivac arrangement (in the extreme situation of being wounded), including insurances.

Contingencies in Risk management plan

In the event that, while complying with established procedures and control measures, unplanned events occur posing a new risk, the protocol of actions was:

- Assess the likelihood and consequences of the new risk, looking to establish its risk rating.
- If the risk rating is Low, establish control measures and report to the supervisor in the weekly report.
- If the risk rating is Moderate, establish control measures and report to the supervisor immediately (if the level of risk is based on a high consequences) or on the daily report (if the level of risk is based on a high likelihood).
- If the risk rating is High, discuss with stakeholders (partner institutions), immediately inform to the supervisor, and take decisions for action.

For any event that does not allow coordination with other parties, or communication with the supervisor, I had to take all measures to preserve my life and health. Once the risk has passed, I am expected to communicate and deliver a detailed report to all parties involved.

Languages and communication

Country	Language Requirement	Measures
South Sudan	Linguistically, there are more than 60 indigenous dialects in the country, but the official language is English, and the second most used is an Arabic pidgin, the Juba Arabic. In summary: **English** primary, especially for interviews, as most aid actors and country official speaks de language. **Arabic** secondary, as most people in the country speak the language and to basically communicate with civilians.	**Arabic: Level** A2 A translator was hired for formal activities or the need of do interviews in Arabic.
Uganda	**English** primary, especially for interviews, as most aid actors and country official speaks de language. English and Swahili are also official languages.	No measures were needed.
Afghanistan	**English** primary, especially for interviews, as most aid actors and country official speaks de language. **Pashto and Dari** secondary, as most people in the country speak these languages and to basically communicate with civilians.	A translator was hired for interviews in Pashto and Dari. Pashto and Dari uses the Arabic alphabet. This allowed me to read. On top, I took classes of Dari for daily life communication.
Yemen	**English** primary, especially for interviews, as most aid actors and country official speaks de language. **Arabic** secondary, as most people in the country speak the language and to basically communicate with civilians.	**Arabic: Level** A2 A translator was hired for formal activities or the need of do interviews in Arabic.
Jordan	**English** primary, especially for interviews, as most aid actors and country official speaks de language. **Arabic** secondary, as most people in the country speak the language and to basically communicate with civilians.	**Arabic: Level** A2 A translator was hired for formal activities or the need of do interviews in Arabic.

Training Certificates

The following Field Research and Fieldwork trainings and certificates have been approved and are up-to-date in the cases of those who required so (e.g. advanced first aid training):

- **Basic Safety and Security Course**: HEAT equivalent for being deployed to unsafe areas overseas, Centre for Safety and Development, The Netherlands, 2016
- **Fieldwork and Research in Complex and Hostile Places Course**, University of Melbourne, 2014
- **Personal Security and Communications in the field**, Practical course, RedR Australia, 2014
- **Stay Safe, Personal Security in the Field**, IFRC (International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies), 2014
- **Advanced Security in the Field**, UNDSS (United Nations Department of Safety and Security), 2014
- **Apply First Aid** (Senior Level 2), IFRC (International Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies), 2014
- **Course in Psychology of Emergency**, Mutual Security Organization, Chile, 2012
- **Advanced Diving course for underwater fieldwork**, SSI Advanced Research/OW, 2014

Medical preparation

- Vaccination:

Vaccine	Required	Status
Yellow Fever	Yes	Up-to-date
Tetanus	Yes	Up-to-date
Poliomyelities	Yes	Up-to-date
Diphteria	Yes	Up-to-date
Hepatitis A+B	Yes	Up-to-date
Meningitis	Yes	Up-to-date
Typhoidvaccine	Yes	Up-to-date

- Medication:

Medicine	**Role**	**Expiration date, posology and quantity check**
Lariam (Malaria)	Prevention	Yes
Mosquito Repellent	Prevention	Yes
Sunblock	Prevention	Yes

- First Aid and Medical plan:

Item	**Role**
First aid kit	Contents 1 x Sodium chloride 15ml 2 x Conforming bandage 5cm, 2 x Conforming bandage 10cm 2 x Crepe Bandage 10cm, 4 x Triangular bandage calico 1 x Hypoallergenic tape 1.25cm 3 x Eye pads />3 x Gauze swabs 7.5cm 5's 1 x Scissors s/steel 5 x Safety pins 12's 1 x Sun Screen 30+ 100gm 1 x Notebook & pencil set 3 x Amputed parts bags 3 x Disposable nitrile gloves 1 pair 1 x Rescue thermal blanket 3 x Antiseptic (Chlorhexidine) Solution 30ml
Additional first aid requirements	Medicines: Charcoal tablets, paracetamol, ketoprofen, ibuprofen, broad-spectrum antibiotic, medical oral rehydration salts
First aider training requirements and numbers	First Aid Senior Level: Australian Red Cross Society (Code 3605) Certificate, Number: 135265156 HLTFA311A Apply first aid HLTCPR211A - Perform CPR HLTFA211A- Provide basic emergency life support Psychology of Emergency, Mutual Security Organization, Chile

Communication and Navigation in the field

Category	Item
Main communication systems	Mobile phone with Local Sim card
	Skype
Back up communication	SpotGen3 device (satellite-based messaging device)
Pre activities communication check	All equipment's are charged and working, spare batteries for all equipment's, solar and manual (dynamo) charger
Navigation system	Electronic maps in mobile phone and GPS
	GPS
Back up navigation system	Physical maps of each city to visit and general country routes map
	Compass In an emergency, the tracking functionality of SpotGen3 device (satellite-based messaging device)

Food and Water

Category	Item
Main Water	Bottled water when there is no access to potable water.
Back up water	60 water purification tablets and two water filters
Back up food system	3 rations of emergency Food (food independency for up to 5 days)

Security apparatus

Category	Item
Tracking	The researcher will carry with him at all moment his mobile phone with an App (GCORE-Field Connect) that can inform either that the researcher is in danger (activate by the researcher) or an automatic message that the researcher requires assistance (automatic if the researcher fail to comply with scheduled check-ins. This messages is send it even with the mobile phone turned off). For more information: https://gcore.com/solutions/deploy/field-connect/ As a backup system the researcher will have a satellite device (DeLorme inReach SE or SpotGen2), allowing him to navigate and send messages via satellite, not depending on mobile signals.
Call for help	
Early warning to emergency contact person	

12. OTHER OUTPUTS

Type of output	Title	Reference
Journal Article	Conflictos socio-ambientales en la sociedad moderna: aportes de la ecología política Latinoamericana y la teoría de la acción comunicativa	Cárcamo, F., & Mena, R. (2017). Conflictos socio-ambientales en la sociedad moderna: Aportes de la ecología política Latinoamericana y la teoría de la acción comunicativa. *Journal of Political Ecology*, *24*(1), 1077–1093. https://doi.org/10.2458/v24i1.22004
Contributing paper	Disaster Risk Governance and Humanitarian Aid in different Conflict scenarios	Hilhorst, D., Mena, R., van Voorst, R., & Desportes, I., Melis, S. (2019). *Disaster Risk Governance and Humanitarian Aid in different Conflict scenarios* (GAR19 - Contributing Paper, p. 49). United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). https://www.preventionweb.net/publications/view/65903
Manuals	Security guidelines for field research in complex, remote and hazardous places	Hilhorst, D.J.M, Hodgson, L, Jansen, B.J, & Mena Fluhmann, R.A. (2016). Security guidelines for field research in complex, remote and hazardous places. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/1765/93256
Manuals	Manual on Conflict Analysis Tools: Preventing, mitigating and reducing the risk of social conflict in Civil DRR Projects	Mena, R. (2018) Manual on Conflict Analysis Tools: Preventing, mitigating and reducing the risk of social conflict in Civil DRR Projects. Training Manual for the Afghanistan Resilience Consortium (ARC), Kabul, Afghanistan.
Reports	Technology & Humanitarian Aid in Afghanistan: Using technology for data collection and communication in a context of conflict	Mena, R. (2020). Technology & Humanitarian Aid in Afghanistan: Using technology for data collection and communication in a context of conflict (Working Paper). Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU). https://areu.org.af/publication/technology-and-humanitarian-aid-in-afghanistan-using-technology-for-data-collection-and-communication-in-the-context-of-conflict/
Reports	Disaster risk reduction and protracted violent conflict: The case of Afghanistan	Mena, R., Hilhorst, D., & Peters, K. (2019). Disaster risk reduction and protracted violent conflict: The case of Afghanistan (p. 56). Overseas Development Institute (ODI) - International Institute of Social Sciences (ISS). https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12882.pdf
Reports	Understanding and Preventing Social Conflict while Implementing Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction in Afghanistan	Mena, R. (2018) Understanding and Preventing Social Conflict while Implementing Community-Based Disaster Risk Reduction in Afghanistan. Study report for the Afghanistan Resilience Consortium (ARC), Kabul, Afghanistan.
Reports	South Sudan: Disaster Response and Humanitarian Aid	Mena, R. (2017) South Sudan: Disaster Response and Humanitarian Aid. Study report for the Save the Children and the Dutch Joint Humanitarian Response for South Sudan (SSJR), South Sudan.

Type of output	Title	Reference
Reports	Integrated Risk Management & Conflict Research committed by the Partners for Resilience	Hilhorst, Vervest, Desportes, Melis, Mena, van Voorst (2020) Integrated Risk Management & Conflict Research committed by the Partners for Resilience
Research briefs	Prioritizing disaster response in a context of high-intensity conflict. The case of South Sudan (Research Brief No. 9)	Mena, R. (2019b). Prioritizing disaster response in a context of high-intensity conflict. The case of South Sudan (Research Brief No. 9). International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), EUR. https://www.iss.nl/en/file-download/download/public/157264
Research brief	Disaster Risk Reduction in a high-conflict setting: The case of Afghanistan (Research Brief No. 6)	Mena, R. (2019a). Disaster Risk Reduction in a high-conflict setting: The case of Afghanistan (Research Brief No. 6). International Institute of Social Studies (ISS), EUR. https://www.iss.nl/en/research/research-projects/when-disaster-meets-conflict/societal-engagement
Blog posts	COVID-19 | Remote research in times of COVID-19: considerations, techniques, and risks	Mena. R, Hilhorst, T.K. BLISS, the blog of ISS on global development and social justice. (May 20, 2020) https://issblog.nl/2020/05/20/covid-19-remote-research-in-times-of-covid-19-considerations-techniques-and-risks-by-rodrigo-mena-and-dorothea-hilhorst/
Blog posts	Rethinking how to respond to COVID-19 in places where humanitarian crises intersect	Mena, r. BLISS, the blog of ISS on global development and social justice. (April 07, 2020) https://issblog.nl/2020/04/07/covid-19-rethinking-how-to-respond-to-covid-19-in-places-where-humanitarian-crises-intersect-by-rodrigo-mena/
Blog posts	Technological solutions for socio-political problems: revisiting an open humanitarian debate	Mena, R. AREU (Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit) (May 27, 2018). https://areu.org.af/archives/15654
Blog posts	Are you oversimplifying? Research dilemmas, honesty and epistemological reductionism	Rodrigo Mena BLISS, the blog of ISS on global development and social justice. (January 21, 2019) https://issblog.nl/2019/01/21/are-you-oversimplifying-research-dilemmas-honesty-and-epistemological-reductionism-by-rodrigo-mena/
Blog posts	Scholars at Risk: precarity in the Academe and Possible Solutions	Mena. R, Biekart, K. BLISS, the blog of ISS on global development and social justice. (December 15, 2017) https://issblog.nl/2017/12/15/scholars-at-risk-precarity-in-the-academe-and-possible-solutions-by-rod-mena-and-kees-biekart/
Blog posts	A double message about safety and security for field research	Hilhorst, T; Mena. R. Norwegian Centre for Humanitarian Studies (available: May 2, 2017)
Blog posts	Conflicts and disasters: an integrated debate for peacebuilding and Development	Mena, R; Hilhorst, D; Melis, S. IPRA Newsletter (International Peace Association). Vol. 6 No. 4 (November 2017) http://www.iprapeace.org/images/newsletters/ipra-news-letter6-vol-4.pdf
Blog posts	Climate change and the role of Anthropology: Reflection form the RAI-2016	Mena, R; Theil, C. Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland (December 2016) https://www.therai.org.uk/

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