

## Impact case study (REF3)

<b>Institution:</b> King's College London		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 14 Geography		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Building back better: King's research leads to widespread uptake of Survivor-Led Response (SLR) approach in humanitarian agencies		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> November 2015 – March 2018		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b>
Mark Pelling	Professor of Geography	From 01/09/2011
James Millington	Senior Lecturer	From 01/09/2017
Maud Borie	Research Associate; Teaching Fellow; Lecturer in Human Geography Education	21/11/2016 – 30/04/2018; 01/05/2018 – 30/09/2019; From 01/04/2020
Faith Taylor	Research Associate; Lecturer in Physical Geography Education	01/07/2015 – 31/10/2017; From 09/09/2019
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2016 – July 2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		

**1. Summary of the impact**

Responding to a desire in the humanitarian community to move away from top-down disaster responses, King's researchers undertook action research with survivors and humanitarians in crisis response situations to develop a unique evidence base for new Survivor- and Community-Led Response (SLR) practices. This was achieved by convening stakeholder spaces for reflection, learning and change that brought local voices and priorities to the fore in response and recovery planning practices of the international NGO sector. The SLR agenda has transformed the policy and practice of the international humanitarian sector.

The NGO Christian Aid was the first to institutionalise SLR into its core principles, leading to changed working practices in its country teams and by its local partners. King's research findings also enabled Christian Aid to champion SLR practices to the wider humanitarian sector. Now advocated by the ACT Alliance of 12 international NGOs and the Local to Global Protection initiative, the SLR approach supports increased local control over response and reconstruction processes as a means of 'building back better'.

**2. Underpinning research**

As part of the 'Grand Bargain' agreement between some of the world's largest donors and humanitarian organisations, the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit committed the international humanitarian sector to a 'localisation' agenda, which puts those affected by disasters at the centre of relief initiatives. This contrasts with prevailing international NGO (INGO) practices which typically position local survivors as beneficiaries of charity, potential employees or external sources of local knowledge for project design. However, there was limited analysis on how to shift from disaster response characterised by top-down needs assessments and aid distribution to processes that support local actors through response and recovery in such a way that no one is left behind.

King's research on disaster management, conducted jointly with international humanitarian organisations, their local partners and disaster survivors, has helped to fill this gap. Over several years, this action research has enabled humanitarian agencies to self-identify shortcomings of the previous top-down approach and instead adopt recommendations coproduced with survivors. For example, a review of the implementation of UN Habitat's City Resilience Action Planning

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(CityRAP) tool in 30 African cities found that its participatory approach can support city managers to engage with populations at risk and build on their local knowledge [1]. In addition, research into visualising resilience in Nairobi and Cape Town (WhyDAR project) found that participatory mapping can make visible the lived experience of often invisible people in informal settlements and open up spaces for creative resilience planning [2]. More inclusive and longer-term outcomes are achieved when humanitarian agencies share responsibility and leadership with local survivors, through building on local institutions and incorporating the social and environmental knowledge of local communities into jointly planned recovery [1,2,3].

In response to the lack of guidelines for how to operationalise the localisation agenda, King's research specifically set out to develop new humanitarian working practices to enable local humanitarian partners to work with community groups, giving increased local control over the allocation of grants and related support. This research was carried out through two competitively-funded international projects: 'Linking preparedness, response and resilience in emergency contexts' (LPRR), funded by the UK's Department for International Development [6], and 'Preparing for extreme and rare events in coastal regions' (PEARL), funded by an EU FP7 Grant [7]. The projects were unique in analysing humanitarian practices from the viewpoint of disaster survivors through extensive in-country individual interviews, focus group workshops and analysis of agency reports.

The LPRR and PEARL research had three main findings:

**(i) Confirmation of widespread demand among crisis survivors for the development of new locally-situated working practices that help to strengthen local leadership through disaster response.** Survivors who had been marginalised from their own recovery through a lack of decision-making power were unanimous in calling for a survivor-and community-led response (SLR). While community response is the norm in the immediate aftermath of disasters before external aid arrives, the research found that existing humanitarian programming fails to harness local capacity in ongoing response and reconstruction. It thus misses the opportunity to build on local ambitions for transformation as part of resilience building, and rather creates a culture of dependence on external aid [4,5].

**(ii) Articulation of common components of a Survivor-Led Response** to support NGOs to confidently work with local actors so that disaster response is grounded in local communities and defined by their needs [4]. The LPRR project studied eight post-disaster contexts where the agencies involved had been active in delivering humanitarian response and reconstruction: Bangladesh, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Indonesia, Kenya, Pakistan and two events in the Philippines. Interviews with 327 crisis survivors and first responders highlighted the need for NGOs to collaboratively support local governments and organisations to provide: (a) immediate livelihood support (instead of simply disaster relief), e.g. in the form of microcredits or income-generating activities; (b) psychological support to enable crisis survivors to 'bounce back' better; (c) support for community cohesion and effective communication between survivors; (d) support for effective communication between the community and implementing organisations; (e) coordination of activities with local government from the outset to ensure long-term community resilience; and (f) a forum for confronting the root causes of vulnerability and advocating for change (Fig. 1).



Fig. 1. Survivor-led response for building back better (adapted from [4])

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**(iii) Validation of the SLR approach in both low- and high-income countries.** The SLR approach set out in (ii) was tested in practice through live humanitarian actions in Myanmar and Kenya (LPRR) [4] and in Sint Maarten (PEARL) [5]. Sint Maarten's government invited King's researchers and partners to participate in post-Hurricane Irma reconstruction with representatives from 40 local organisations. This action research provided an opportunity to test SLR approaches in a higher-income country and confirmed its applicability to a wide range of international contexts.

### 3. References to the research

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Supporting publications 1–5 all published in internationally recognised, peer-reviewed journals.

- [1] Spaliviero, M., **Pelling, M.**, Lopes, L.F., Tomaselli, C., Rochell, K. and Guambe, M. (2020) Resilience planning under information scarcity in fast growing African cities and towns: The CityRAP approach, *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, (44). DOI: 10.1016/j.ijdrr.2019.101419
- [2] **Borie, M.**, Ziervogel, G., **Taylor, F.E.**, **Millington, J.D.A.**, Sitas, R., **Pelling, M.** (2019) Mapping (for) resilience across city scales: an opportunity to open-up conversations for more inclusive resilience policy? *Environmental Science & Policy*, 99, 1–9. DOI: 10.1016/j.envsci.2019.05.014
- [3] Ziervogel, G., **Pelling, M. A.**, Cartwright, A., Chu, E., Deshpande, T., Harris, L., Hyams, K., Kaunda, J., Klaus, B., Michael, K., Pasquini, L., Pharoah, R., Rodina, L., Scott, D. and Zweig, P. (2017) Inserting rights and justice into urban resilience: a focus on everyday risk, *Environment and Urbanization*, 29(1), 123–138. DOI: 10.1177/0956247816686905
- [4] Murphy, R., **Pelling, M.**, Adams, H., Di Vicenz, S., Visman, E. (2018) Survivor-Led Response: Local recommendations to operationalize Building Back Better, *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 31, 135–142. DOI: 10.1016/j.ijdrr.2018.04.009
- [5] Collodi, J., **Pelling, M.**, Fraser, A., **Borie, M.**, Di Vicenz, S. (2019) How do you Build Back Better so no one is left behind? Lessons from Sint Maarten, Dutch Caribbean, post-Hurricane Irma, *Disasters*. DOI: 10.1111/disa.12423

### Funding

- [6] Pelling, M. and Visman, E. with Christian Aid. Linking preparedness, response and resilience in emergency contexts in Pakistan, Kenya, The Democratic Republic of Kenya, Bangladesh and The Philippines. DFID START Network Disaster and Emergency Preparedness programme. Full grant GBP978,187 (GBP44,800 to KCL), 2014–2018.
- [7] Pelling, M. (UK PI) PEARL: Preparing for extreme and rare events in coastal regions. European Commission EU FP7 Grant, E5m (GBP240,000 to KCL), 2014–2018.

### 4. Details of the impact

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Through ongoing mutual and reciprocal collaboration between academic and non-academic partners at the design, research and implementation stages [4,5], King's research has brought about profound changes in the awareness, understanding, policies and practices of international humanitarian agencies, most notably in its key action research partner, Christian Aid. King's action research confirmed the success of, and demand for, the survivor- and community-led approach (SLR) to post-disaster recovery and reconstruction [1–5]. This evidence has (i) underpinned the institutionalisation of SLR approaches into Christian Aid's core principles and led them to push for global sector change; (ii) transformed the interventions delivered by Christian Aid and its local partners in their humanitarian practice and disaster response; and (iii) led to wider global uptake of SLR approaches as evidenced by changing funder priorities and increased use of SLR practices.

#### **(i) SLR approaches are now a priority in Christian Aid humanitarian work**

King's action research with Christian Aid, its local partners and survivors on the LPRR [4], PEARL [5] and WhyDAR [2] projects, has led Christian Aid to institutionalise SLR approaches as one of the five priorities of its Humanitarian Division [A]. As explained by the Division's Director, "*The inclusion of SLR is significant because our core humanitarian priorities set out our overall approach, structure priorities and govern how local branches of Christian Aid operate. Christian*

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*Aid has expanded its SLR work in countries such as the Philippines, Myanmar, OPT and Gaza, Kenya and Haiti and is systematically looking for new funding to scale up SLR for wider adoption* [A]. The implementation of SLR practices contributed to Christian Aid being one of only three (out of 31) aid organisations rated as excellent in ensuring that beneficiary feedback is systematically integrated into programme design and delivery by the Overseas Development Institute's 2019 review of the Grand Bargain agreement [B]. The LPRR project was recognised by the Department for International Development, the UK's largest funder of the humanitarian sector, as an example of good practice in ensuring the participation of affected populations in planning, policy development and strengthening community capacity [C].

### **(ii) Changes in Christian Aid's local working practices lead to improved relationships with local partners and communities**

The incorporation of SLR approaches into Christian Aid's core priorities has changed working practices by its country teams and partners. By initially educating 1,000 individuals through advocacy sessions, and delivering in-depth workshops on SLR best practices to 51 staff from local NGO and government partners in Myanmar, Kenya and Pakistan [D], King's SLR guidelines [4] have subsequently been incorporated into local and national organisations' tools and policies in all three locations.

For example, for Christian Aid Myanmar, the co-produced research into, and implementation of, the SLR approach with King's researchers allowed them *"to build on local capacities and deliver quicker, more inclusive and more cost-effective responses"* [E]. Christian Aid Myanmar's Country Director further highlighted that this support to a network of small community-based organisations has made it possible *"to reach minority ethnic groups who we would not have reached otherwise, and who would have had only limited humanitarian relief"* [E]. In Kenya, the LPRR project worked closely with the Marsabit County Government to maintain stability and reduce tensions in 10 communities affected by drought by helping to establish a stakeholder forum – the first time that local NGOs, community members and the government had been brought together [F]. This provided the necessary evidence for the county to update its Disaster Risk Management policy in 2018 to recognise the role of local organisations in the coordination of emergency and disaster-related events [G1 and G2].

The success of the SLR approach in developing new humanitarian working practices that enable local partners to work with community groups and give them increased local control over the allocation of grants and related support [4,5] has been independently confirmed in external evaluations by Action Against Hunger UK's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Services [D] and the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative [G1].

In addition, the SLR approach has been shown to lead to better outcomes for people in, for example, an SLR intervention in Gaza, co-managed by Christian Aid. Here allowing local communities to lead the process of humanitarian action, including allocation of micro-cash grants, leveraged an additional 350% through community donations, free labour and decreased prices by the private sector, and directly improved the wellbeing of 73,700 people [H].

### **(iii) Global uptake of SLR by INGOs and associated organisations – changing minds and working processes**

The institutionalisation of SLR approaches within Christian Aid at the levels of both core policy and local working practices has led the organisation to push for global sector change. Through the Local to Global Protection Initiative (L2GP) which it co-leads, Christian Aid has used King's research as core evidence to further promote SLR adoption across the wider sector [A]. Research findings and results of SLR actions [1–5] have been disseminated by Christian Aid to the humanitarian and funding community through presentations at key sector forums. These included the 2019 Global Conference of the UNISDR (a multi-stakeholder forum on disaster risk reduction established by the UN General Assembly) and the 2019 Interagency Resilience Learning Group event of BOND, the UK's international development network, in both cases showcasing the effectiveness of SLR in disaster management.

The SLR concept has been endorsed by the General Assembly of ACT alliance, the largest coalition of Protestant and Orthodox churches and church-related organisations engaged in humanitarian, development and advocacy work worldwide. Their new strategy for 2019–2024



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states that “ACT Alliance will support survivor and community-led approaches to humanitarian response to ensure efficiency, resilience, dignity and self-esteem within communities” [I, p26].

SLR has now been adopted and promoted by 12 INGOs and 18 national NGOs globally [A]. The Haiti Country Director of one of these INGOs, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe (DKH), describes how the SLR approach “has changed the work of our local implementing partners, who are for the first time not implementing activities themselves. Instead, they are providing support to communities by helping them to reflect on their situation or the crisis in which they find themselves, providing demand-led skills training, and monitoring community-led activities. This represents a significant change in our local partners’ habitual role in other projects. As stated by our partners, giving communities the lead in this way has resulted in a significant improvement in the quality of the relationships they have with these communities” [J].

Sector change is then widely evidenced by a refocusing of funding priorities to include SLR approaches. For example, in 2020 King’s research [4,5] was used by Christian Aid Myanmar to secure funding from the European Commission’s ECHO Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) Programme for a ‘Communities at the Centre’ SLR initiative led by Action Aid and Christian Aid in Rakhine, Myanmar [E]. As highlighted by Christian Aid’s humanitarian division director, “as part of L2GP, several new INGOs have obtained support for the use of SLR in Sudan (Saferworld), ...Mali (PeaceDirect), Haiti and Somalia (DKH)” [A]. Furthermore, a range of the LPRR core recommendations have been adopted and funded in recent humanitarian responses such as in the Disaster Emergency Committee’s East Africa (2017–20) and Indonesia (2018–2020) appeals. These interventions have received over GBP840,000 to implement SLR approaches like provision of micro-grants for livelihood support, psychological support and training [A].

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

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- [A] Testimonial from: Head of the Humanitarian Division, Christian Aid, London, 12 Jan 2021.
- [B] Overseas Development Institute, Humanitarian Policy Group commissioned report “Grand Bargain Annual Independent Report 2019”. Written by Victoria Metcalfe-Hough, Wendy Fenton and Lydia Poole
- [C] Disasters and Emergency Preparedness Programme with Action Against Hunger, Start Network, UKAid and Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities Network (2018) report on “Localisation in Practice – Emerging Indicators and Practical Recommendations”
- [D] “Linking Preparedness, Response and Resilience Project Final Evaluation Report” (2018) Written by: Action Against Hunger UK’s Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Services. Authors: Katherine Dunlop and Mariagni Ellina.
- [E] Testimonial from: Country Director, Christian Aid Myanmar, 11 Jan 2021.
- [F] “Learning Report 2016” for Disasters and Emergency Preparedness Programme with Action Against Hunger, Start Network, UKAid and Communicating with Disaster Affected Communities Network
- [G] Reports commenting on outputs of the LPRR project: [G1] “Disasters and Emergency Preparedness Programme External Evaluation: Summative Report” (2019). Written by Phuong Pham, Vandana Sharma, Rebecca Hémono, Jessica Jean-Francois and Jennifer Scott on behalf of Harvard Humanitarian Initiative. [G2] “WFP support to Marsabit County’s emergency preparedness and response” World Food Programme Kenya Infobrief 29 (Jan 2019).
- [H] “Learning Brief: Gaza community led action in practice” for Local2Global Protection (L2GP) community. Written by Mai Jarar with Ahmed Sourani and Shahnaz Jubran (2020).
- [I] Action by Churches Together (ACT) Alliance Global Strategy 2019–26 – Hope in Action: Putting People First.
- [J] Testimonial from: Country Director, Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe (DKH) Haiti, 15 Jan 2021.