



BECAUSE RESILIENCE IS LOCAL

A SYNTHESIS REPORT OF THE INDO-PACIFIC REGIONAL
LEARNING ON COVID-19 AND ITS IMPACT ON
DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT AND RESILIENCE

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I think social modalities and traditional wisdom are very important issues in our case, even in tackling COVID-19, we really need local wisdom and local leaders to achieve sustainable resilience.



**Raditya Jati - Deputy for System and Strategy,
National Disaster Management Agency (BNPB), Indonesia**

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This document provides a synthesis of the outcome of a series of learning events that took place during 2021.

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*Business as usual is no longer an option.
As we learn from the hard-lessons brought by the COVID-19 pandemic, we
have to start to evaluate and revisit our ways of work in humanitarian agendas,
including in the area of disaster management.*



**Achsanul Habib - Director of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Indonesia**

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Executive Summary

“The pandemic is a historical moment. The only choice that we have is to collaborate and to build stronger partnerships – not always starting something new – but utilizing the existing skills and capacities in innovative ways.”

Arshintia, Director of Public Health and Humanity Development of Yakkum Emergency Unit – a local NGO based in Yogyakarta, Indonesia – made this statement during the 2021 Indo-Pacific regional learning process on COVID-19 and its impact on disaster management and resilience. Her observation resonates with the primary findings of this report which suggest that while there are relatively few genuinely new proposals in the way disaster risk managers and humanitarian aid workers should approach disaster management and resilience, the pandemic has reconfirmed the need for urgency in implementing the changes that various international and regional agreements and national policies have already embraced on paper.

The notion of better respecting local disaster management capacities, systems and traditions has once again emerged as one of two key conclusions from this report. This finding is, of course, not new. It is enshrined in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and, in the humanitarian system, has been discussed since long before the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016 and the resulting “Grand Bargain”. But the lessons from this learning process offer three new perspectives on the issue.

The first is that promoting localisation **should be a non-negotiable** for actors working in disaster management and humanitarian assistance at all levels. With restricted movement due to the fear of disease contagion, local communities had to count on their own capacities and resources when responding to the impact of disasters during the pandemic. A number of factors have been investigated in-depth in this report; factors that hampered localisation and some emerging trends that might help to accelerate localisation.

The second perspective that this report offers on localisation is on the question of “**how local is local enough?**” Understanding of the word “local” differs from actor to actor. Meanwhile, this learning from the pandemic clearly highlighted the importance of local leadership, local partnerships and consequently appropriate financing for local responders. When facing an event of the size, scope and gravity of the COVID-19 pandemic, our collective effort should be to support local capacities in disaster management as close to affected communities as possible. This synthesis report highlights some examples of local experiences in dealing with disasters during the pandemic and should thus provide the disaster management community with new perspectives on how to better define the targets for our localization efforts.

The third relates to **resilience** and how disaster risk management and humanitarian action can better place resilience building at the centre of its work, particularly in anticipation of future events like the COVID-19 pandemic. Again, while this is not a new issue, this report offers new perspectives on approaches to resilience. Building on the definition of “resilience” provided by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), this report argues that there is a dynamism to resilience building, that resilience convergence points exist and that these convergence points differ from one situation to another. The report offers a simple modelling principle on how to assess where and when resilience may need to be strengthened.

While most readers will be familiar with the notion of resilience building through systematic and programmatic efforts and processes, this learning series uncovered variables around social and cultural capital as additional determining factors for understanding resilience. These variables stemmed from acknowledging resilience as an inherent trait possessed by human beings at all levels of social structure, from individual through local communities and up to membership of the human race. The report argues that one of the shortcomings in past elaborations of the general concept of resilience is the limited inclusion and recognition of the centrality of existing local cultural and social capital as the foundations upon which to enhance resilience.

As a result of an almost year long process of investigation, wide-ranging discussion and validation involving various experts and practitioners in disaster risk management and humanitarian affairs in the Indo-Pacific region, this report aims to offer new perspectives on how policy makers and practitioners should approach disaster resilience. This is particularly important for the upcoming Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction in Bali, Indonesia. It is hoped that this synthesis report will serve as a significant contribution from the Governments of Indonesia and Australia to the global discourse on resilience using the experience from the pandemic in this region as the basis of analysis.

It is fitting that during 2022 the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction will be hosted by the two governments which led this learning process. Furthermore, Bali which is also famous for its rich culture will be able to stress the importance of how resilience should be approached at the local level with due consideration to local cultural and social capital. Why? **“Because Resilience is Local.”**

April 2022

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In many of the occasions we've seen social media being used for mobilization of help and mitigation of disasters. There have been a lot of good initiatives that probably were not covered by conventional media.



Agung Yudhawiranata - Director for Indonesia and Malaysia, Twitter

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1 | Conclusions and Recommendations

The lively and far-reaching discussions in the six webinars and the Regional Symposium that are described in this report focused on the realities of preparing for, responding to and recovering from disasters in a COVID-19 environment. The recommendations emanating from six academic papers prepared for the Symposium echo the calls for a greater focus on localisation at all levels of administration. The outcome of this learning process can perhaps best be summed up as follows:

Even with the giant momentum and opportunity to transform provided by the global pandemic, the deep-rooted, longstanding and systemic issues surrounding disaster risk management, localisation, humanitarian action and resilience are still with us and remain a slow-motion “work in progress”.

The impact of the pandemic has reinforced findings from policy discussions, studies, and reviews of disaster risk management and humanitarian systems over the last decade and more. The recommendations included below from disaster management stakeholders from all “levels” of the system, and in some cases beyond it, provide impetus to grasp the opportunities for change that the pandemic has provided and the momentum that rapid adaptations have generated.

In summary, the learning process identified two separate but linked sets of six conclusions and thirteen recommendations.

The six conclusions:

- i. **The pandemic highlighted the inherent resilience of communities to shocks and therefore a greater focus on local resilience by disaster risk management stakeholders is required.** Local responders rapidly responded to emerging needs, working synergistically with communities and local authorities and thus reinforcing the proposition “as local as possible; as international as necessary”. Disaster risk management stakeholders at other levels of administration, while still active and highly innovative in approach, were unable to field large numbers of staff to deliver assistance.
- ii. **To achieve greater and more robust local resilience, national, regional, and international actors need to significantly alter their operating models into governance models that can propel, empower and accelerate localisation.** To achieve greater and more robust local resilience, localisation needs to be better supported. National, regional and international actors need to significantly alter their operating models to ensure that local communities – whether living in urban or rural settings – are adequately supported in their front-line roles and that due recognition is paid to their leadership so that their inherent resilience – or ability to bounce back – is accelerated to the greatest extent possible.

- iii. **Measuring success of disaster risk management interventions should be defined by the level of resilience achieved by a local community or society to cope with disasters.** It is important to expedite the localization of disaster risk management. The pandemic limited international, regional, and, in some instances, national assistance for local communities when they were facing the combined adverse impacts of the pandemic and another disaster. Experience from a number of communities has demonstrated how they struggled to deal with disasters in the absence of external assistance. Yet in those struggles, communities have also found a new way to tap into their own potentials to cope with disasters.
- iv. **Comprehending the existing social and cultural capital practiced by a community is the mandatory first step toward strengthening resilience.** The only way to ensure local communities can deal with the adverse impact of disasters during the pandemic is to enhance community resilience so that communities are provided with the enabling environment to recognize their own social and cultural capital and maximize the use of that capital to boost their resilience. As we move slowly but inexorably to a post-pandemic world it is essential that pandemic recovery is managed in such a way that embraces the lessons which communities have learned during the pandemic especially around increased self-sufficiency due to limitations on engaging people from “outside” their communities. In this manner, pandemic recovery can be managed without rebuilding risk and dependency upon external assistance.
- v. **Digital technology can be a significant factor in enhancing disaster risk management and building resilience – if it is adapted to the context.** The uptake of technology is an increasingly crucial aspect in efforts to enhance local resilience. Familiarity with virtual interface tools such as Zoom, and various online information (and retail) tools have allowed local communities to access global knowledge and expertise, which should be considered one of the best-added values that international and regional organizations may offer to local communities going forward. However, the uptake in the use of these technologies to support disaster risk management will be insufficient if they are not adapted to the local context. Where possible such tools should adapt to practices that are ingrained in local culture and customs. In applying technology, it is always important to build upon the existing social and cultural capital of communities, recognising their pre-existing resilience.
- vi. **Resilience is the result of convergence between systematic efforts and processes administered by the state and the social and cultural capital practiced by a community or society.** Successful recovery requires recognition of the relationship between the impact and effect of a disaster, the coping mechanisms and adaptation measures by those who have been affected and the instigation of a recovery programme which responds to these factors. Recognizing the inherent resilience traits of a community and enhancing them is key to the sustainability of community resilience.

The Thirteen Recommendations arising from the Symposium are presented below aligned with the three areas of enquiry that the learning process identified as key priorities:

ON GOVERNANCE

- i. **Accelerating systems thinking at all levels of administration and engagement with a primary focus on enhancing people's resilience to shocks needs to be prioritised.** The complexity of challenges that the region (and the planet) collectively faces in the future is currently unmatched by the systems that we have in place for disaster management, humanitarian action, climate change and environmental issues.
- ii. **Local authorities need to be resourced and capacitated appropriately.** Local authorities are at the forefront in leading the fight against the pandemic and in strengthening local resilience to cope with disasters, and yet they are still under-resourced and under-capacitated. While recognising that there are significant variations between countries in the region, in general the pandemic has facilitated a paradigmatic shift in understanding the role of local government in disaster risk management and popular resilience building.
- iii. **Where needed legislation should be passed which ensures complementarity between public health emergency and disaster risk management laws and regulations.** Legislation is the backbone for a government to operate and the pandemic has provided the opportunity to revisit the relevance, coherence, and complementarity of relevant legislation. The crisis has provided space to accelerate change, particularly in laws and regulations which are sub-optimally aligned with twenty-first century realities. Public health can take note of and draw upon the progress made in the region, especially since 2005, on the development of the disaster risk management regulatory framework and its focus on supporting people to increase their resilience to shocks.

ON PARTNERSHIP MODELS

- i. **Greater efforts should be made to enhance leadership capacity building so there is a greater diversity of trained local disaster risk management leaders who can engage with and facilitate their stakeholders around a common resilience-focused vision which considers the humanitarian/development/risk reduction nexus.** The most suitable partnership model to drive local resilience is one that entrusts local leadership and places local government and local actors at the centre of decision-making. Disaster response during the pandemic requires rethinking partnership models and power dynamics, placing local government and non-governmental partners more centrally in decision-making and operations.
- ii. **Equitable and mutually beneficial partnerships are the basis for sustainable cooperation that enhances local resilience and should be an inherent part of disaster risk management and humanitarian systems, thereby enhancing the resilience of communities to shocks.** In line with long-standing global commitments, those in positions of power should place an increased emphasis on equity of partnerships across different entities and roles, focusing on better risk sharing, accessible complaint handling, mutual respect, and honest relationships for all. Often pre-existing partnerships were rapidly recast during the pandemic to address a new set of socially distanced realities. The

importance of harvesting lessons from these experiences should be embraced with recommendations emphasising the need for continued building of understanding, awareness, and practice at individual and institutional levels including a focus on measurability through key performance indicator development, fairly negotiating and agreeing partnerships guidelines, supporting further capacity building, and thereby enhancing community resilience.

- iii. **Disaster risk management and humanitarian agencies should more fully recognise the increasingly important role that children, adolescents, youth, and other so-called vulnerable groups can play as local agents and consider how best to engage them in partnerships that develop capacities to mitigate risk and support effective preparedness, response, and recovery.** It is important to showcase evidence on the agency of disaster-affected people, children, adolescents, youth, and other so-called vulnerable groups. Non-governmental partners emphasised the need to showcase data in an exemplary manner (data disaggregation, quality, and validation) and to work in a more coordinated and complementary manner to build evidence-based examples of the importance of recognising the agency of disaster-affected people as partners in disaster risk management and resilience building, including children and youth (CAY), marginalized people and at-risk groups.
- iv. **Participants strongly endorsed proposals to move away from the popular “call for proposals” approach and donor-led / donor-encouraged funding and work towards more equitable partnerships to build solutions together.** Examples include joint exploration approaches (research, planning, solution), joint design, etc. This move would generate a stronger sense of partnership rather than the current competitive culture in the disaster risk management system and could lead to better resilience-focused outcomes for recipients of partnership support.
- v. **Self-imposed silos are the hardest obstacle to overcome in building partnerships for local resilience.** In the spirit of working across disaster risk management and the humanitarian-development nexus partnerships should aim to consciously avoid falling into self-imposed silos and ensure that, for example, contingency planning for disaster risk management fully incorporates recovery and post-disaster developmental needs and priorities. Putting leadership and management in the hands of the local proponents so that they are the party to set the agendas and connect the compartments thus breaking the silos may be a useful blueprint to explore.

ON TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATIONS

- i. **Apply service design principles to ensure better adoption.** Service design takes a thorough look at the end-to-end processes and resources involved in developing information systems, including understanding the needs of users, their motivations and behaviours as well as the context in which they will be embedded.
- ii. **Prioritise efforts to better join up data interoperability across all levels of the disaster risk management system.** As disaster management increasingly relies on multi-stakeholder data collection and the analysis of big data, moving toward a more joined-up model for data interoperability is necessary. Thus, commonly agreed approaches to the development of baselines, such as definitions, data disaggregation protocols, and systematized data collection tools and systems within previously defined administrative boundaries, is ever more crucial. Shortening verification processes also needs

to be an area for further acceleration. That this has not happened should be a cause for not only concern but also alarm.

- iii. **Standardise data sharing.** More specifically, evidence from the exercise demonstrated the need for a holistic multi-stakeholder effort for standardization in data sharing. There are many lessons already evident in the multiple instances of data sharing that have already occurred between government and other parties, but these have often not progressed further to help inform longer-term sustainable and standardized data sharing protocols and processes and do not consider the need for vertical as well as horizontal data sharing.
- iv. **Communications should be embraced as a mitigation tool that requires collective and concerted efforts in media monitoring and combatting fake news.** Disaster management and humanitarian practitioners are encouraged to treat communications as a mitigation tool when incorrect information circulates. This means better joined-up media monitoring to understand what issues are emerging and to rapidly counteract fake news. Multi-stakeholder collaboration for coordinated messaging, including with representatives of relevant disaster-affected populations, will be a critical factor.
- v. **Decision-makers and communications experts should take full advantage of digital technology to increase literacy in disaster risk management and promote community resilience.** Conversely, use social media, such as WhatsApp, to increase disaster literacy, by linking messages to official sources and accessing authoritative newsmakers and influencers to convey messages. Ensure that disaster risk management messaging and information campaigns are inclusive, include non-mainstream media sources and points of distribution where appropriate, for example provision of flyers/notes at public spaces (village offices), announcements from public spaces (including house of worships), also involving public figures, traditional leaders, and religious leaders. A specific focus is needed to ensure accessibility for vulnerable and at-risk populations and reliance on appropriate mediums for delivery beyond current electronic media. At the same time, decision-makers and communications experts should fully harness the power of digital technology to make sure that no one is left behind when it comes to disaster risk management communications.

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Rich culture, language and folklore can be used as mediums to disseminate disaster and pandemic information to indigenous people, especially people with disabilities



**Prof. Fatma Lestari M.Si. PhD - Director, Disaster Risk Reduction,
University of Indonesia**

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2 | Australia and Indonesia – Supporting Regional Learning

This regional learning process is a collaboration between Australia and Indonesia which aims to enhance knowledge sharing and learning on disaster risk management and resilience in the Indo-Pacific region. The Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Disaster Risk Management (2019-2024) or SIAP SIAGA Program aims to enhance collaboration between Australia and Indonesia to improve disaster risk management and humanitarian action in the Indo-Pacific region and to enhance the resilience of people and communities likely to be affected by disasters and crises.

The SIAP SIAGA program,¹ which is funded by the Government of Australia as the operational arm of the Partnership, includes as an outcome strengthened learning, innovation, cooperation and inclusion for disaster management. Thus rapid capture of the lessons on the impact of COVID-19 on disaster risk management in the Indo-Pacific region emanating from the events convened during 2021 and described in this report are a program priority, so that the outputs of the process can feed into local (sub-national) national, regional and international fora which include the May 2022 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, the September 2022 Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, and the ongoing series of Regional Conferences on Humanitarian Assistance, organised by Indonesia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

¹ SIAP SIAGA is an Australia Indonesia Government Partnership, managed by the Palladium Group. <https://www.siapsiaga.or.id/en/>

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COVID-19 was a very important moment of reflection for me because even before the pandemic I was already thinking that we as humanitarian workers or development workers are always trying to play catch up and treating the symptom of whatever crisis we face. And we never sit down and reflect on why we are in this situation.



Dr. Jemilah Mahmood - Senior Adviser to the Prime Minister of Malaysia on Public Health

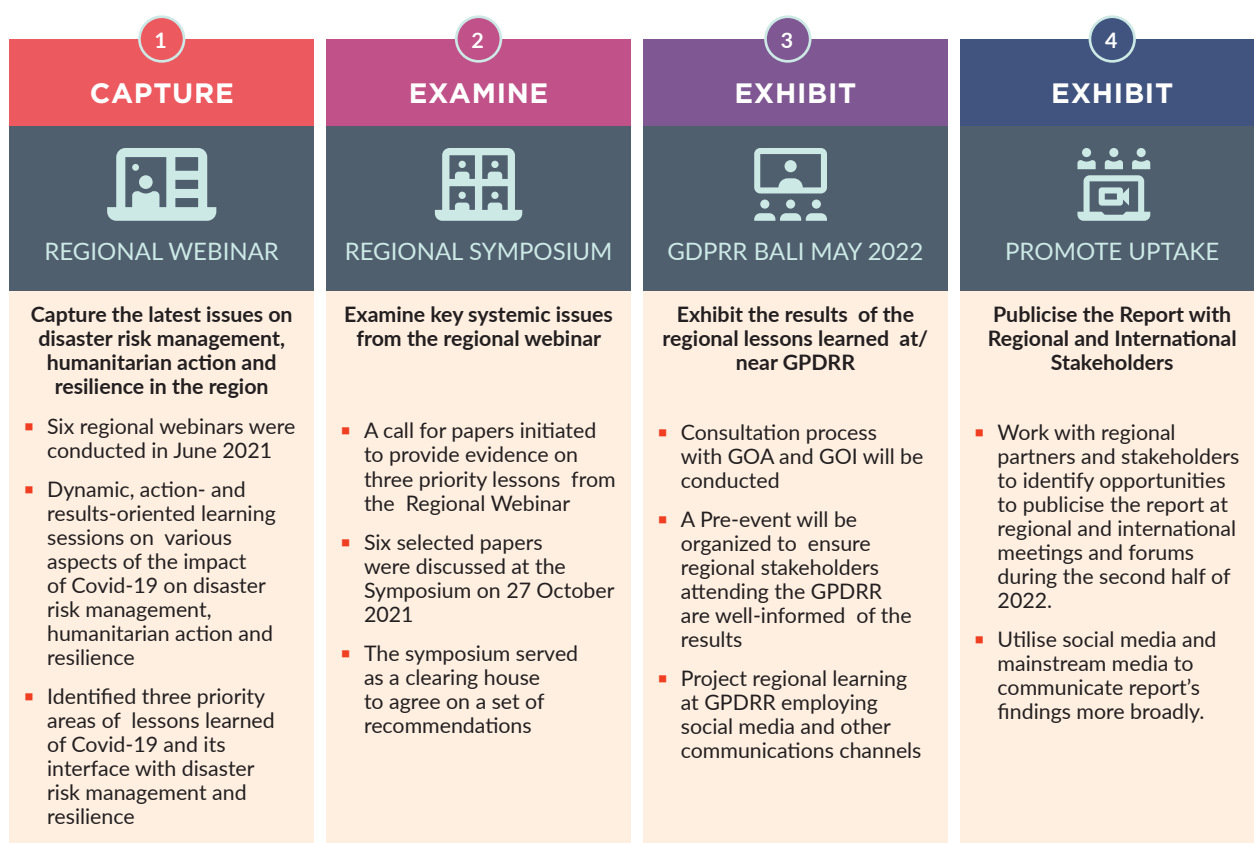
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3 | The Learning Journey

Continuous learning is central to improving disaster risk management since the occurrence of disasters showed no signs of abating amid the challenging battle against the pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant disruptive impact on many areas of our normal life. While it has increased vulnerability the learning process demonstrates that the pandemic has strengthened resilience. The Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) recorded 165 natural and complex disaster events in 2020 in Asia and the Pacific on the Emergency Events Database. These events do not include the pandemic. The combination of pandemic and disaster events has not only had a direct health impact on populations across the region; it has also seriously challenged the ability of humanitarian and disaster response actors to meet the needs of affected people in a timely, efficient, and effective manner.

A series of six regional webinars were designed as the initial path to capture lessons from the Indo-Pacific region on COVID-19 and its impact on disaster risk management and resilience.

FIGURE 1. The four stages of the SIAP SIAGA regional learning journey



The intersection of COVID-19 and natural disasters posed a number of questions, key among which were whether we can more effectively reduce disaster risk, further improve disaster risk governance, and build stronger resilience across the planet where the complexity of disasters and the ability to predict what will come next is arguably more challenging than it was pre-pandemic. If the answer to the question is as articulated in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction - that we must work together to:

"...prevent new and reduce existing disaster risk through the implementation of integrated and inclusive economic, structural, legal, social, health, cultural, educational, environmental, technological, political and institutional measures that prevent and reduce hazard exposure and vulnerability to disaster, increase preparedness for response and recovery, and thus strengthen resilience"

...then the next question would be, what should we do differently? With the aim of trying to answer these questions and in the lead-up to the 2022 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GPDRR) in Bali, SIAP SIAGA hosted a series of six Regional Webinars. This challenging and thought-provoking online learning marathon during the third and fourth weeks of June 2021 examined how the pandemic has affected the region's ability to prepare for, respond to and recover from non-pandemic-related disasters and to explore the lessons that we need to learn.

FIGURE 2. The six areas of enquiry to capture the emerging learning in the Indo-Pacific Region on disaster risk management, humanitarian action and resilience



Packed with regional thought leaders, prominent organisations, and enthusiastic participants² from the Asia Pacific region, the six action- and results-oriented learning sessions offered dynamic and interesting discussions and posed some tough questions. The webinars revealed some difficult issues that need to be addressed as the region strives to improve its overall disaster risk management including identifying, mitigating, preparing for, responding to, and recovering from disasters, pandemics, and other future threats that it faces.

² See Annex 3.

FIGURE 3. The six regional webinars explored diverse issues on building resilience in the Asia Pacific



What was discussed?

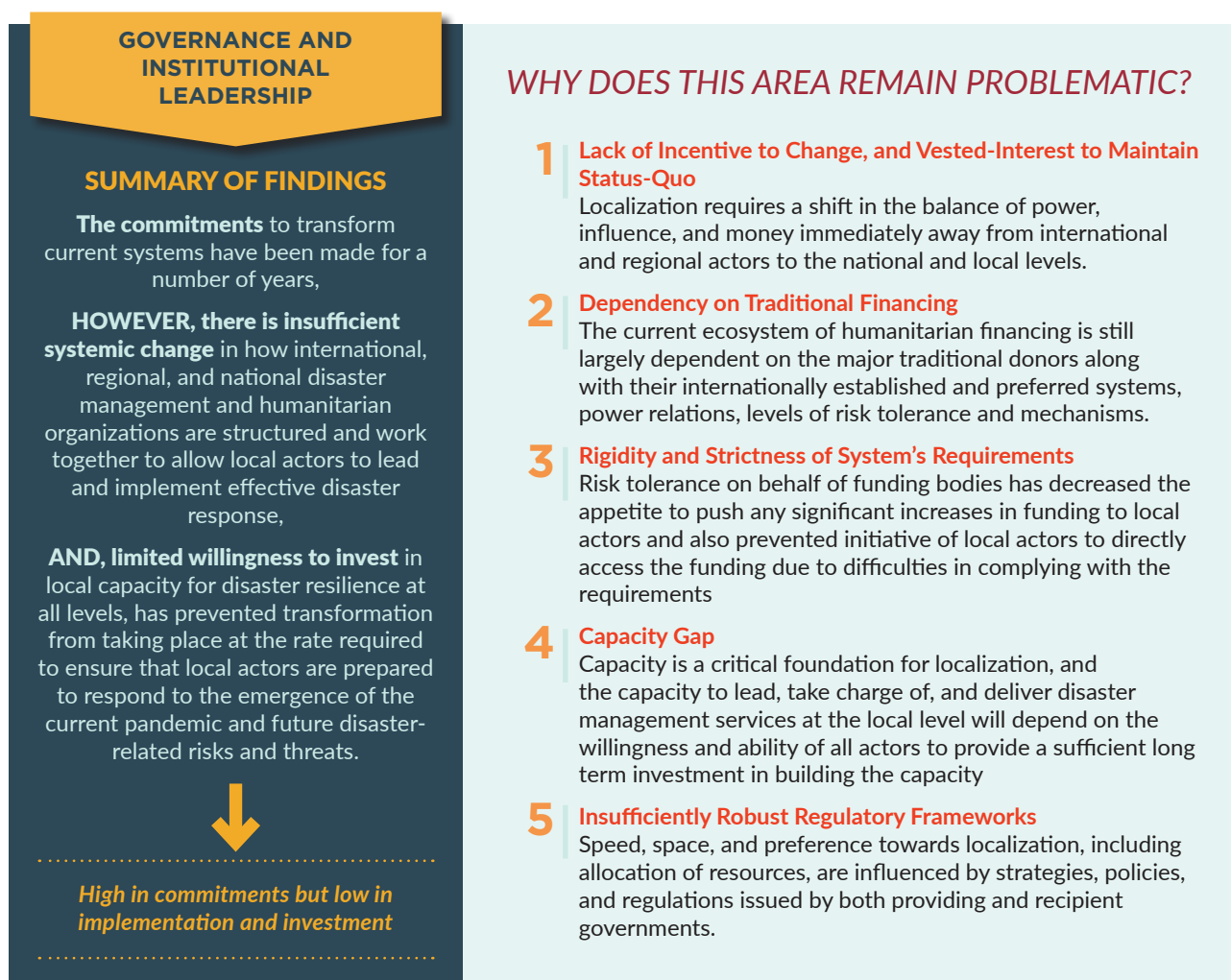
- 1 The first webinar **examined how the pandemic has disrupted the status quo in disaster risk management and humanitarian action in the region** including the transformation of power dynamics and the accelerating effect of the pandemic on changes to management of disaster risk.
- 2 The second webinar **assessed the central role of local government and the changed role of local organisations during COVID-19**, and discussed whether all actors are ready for such change, and most importantly, whether the change will last or the status quo before the pandemic will be re-established once the situation normalises.
- 3 **Local level adaptation to the pandemic and enhancement of local-level resilience to disasters and crises was explored** in session three; in particular how sub-national entities and their representatives behave and interact internally and with others in the context of disaster risk management.
- 4 Session four **exploited the application of the most advanced technology available and the involvement of the tech companies** in the complicated environment in which disaster risk management and humanitarian agencies operate.
- 5 In the fifth webinar, speakers shared their assessment of **what changing dynamics mean for regional and international disaster risk management systems and processes**, the extent to which this sudden shift is both desirable and sustainable, and what the future might look like.
- 6 In this final webinar the panel looked at the new challenges that pandemic conditions have brought for people needing to **access disaster-related information and the role of media** in community-level resilience to disasters, including the impact of fake news.

The regional webinar series concluded that while the pandemic has accelerated space and opportunities for rapid transformation on disaster risk management, humanitarian action and resilience, three often institutional and largely pre-existing factors have either slowed or derailed the process. The online discussions threw the net as wide as possible and obtained a broad range of perspectives on the impact of COVID-19 on disaster management and resilience. Speakers emphasised that disaster management, resilience building, and humanitarian action should follow the internationally acclaimed aspiration coined by then-United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon of “as local as possible, as international as necessary”.³ Webinar conclusions largely confirmed that while the pandemic has caused untold devastation across the region, the limitations on “business as usual” approaches to assisting people affected by (non-pandemic) disasters means that space and opportunities for acceleration of the transformation of disaster management and humanitarian action to strengthen local leadership and community resilience should have been grasped. This direction of travel is aligned with national and sub-national aspirations across the region and the commitments included in the 2015 Grand Bargain. However, speakers in the webinar series noted that a broad range of often institutional and largely pre-existing factors either slowed or derailed this process. The three areas were (i) Governance and Institutional Leadership (ii) Partnership Models (iii) Technology and Communications.

³ Statement by the UN Secretary-General at the World Humanitarian Summit <https://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sghsm17778.doc.htm>

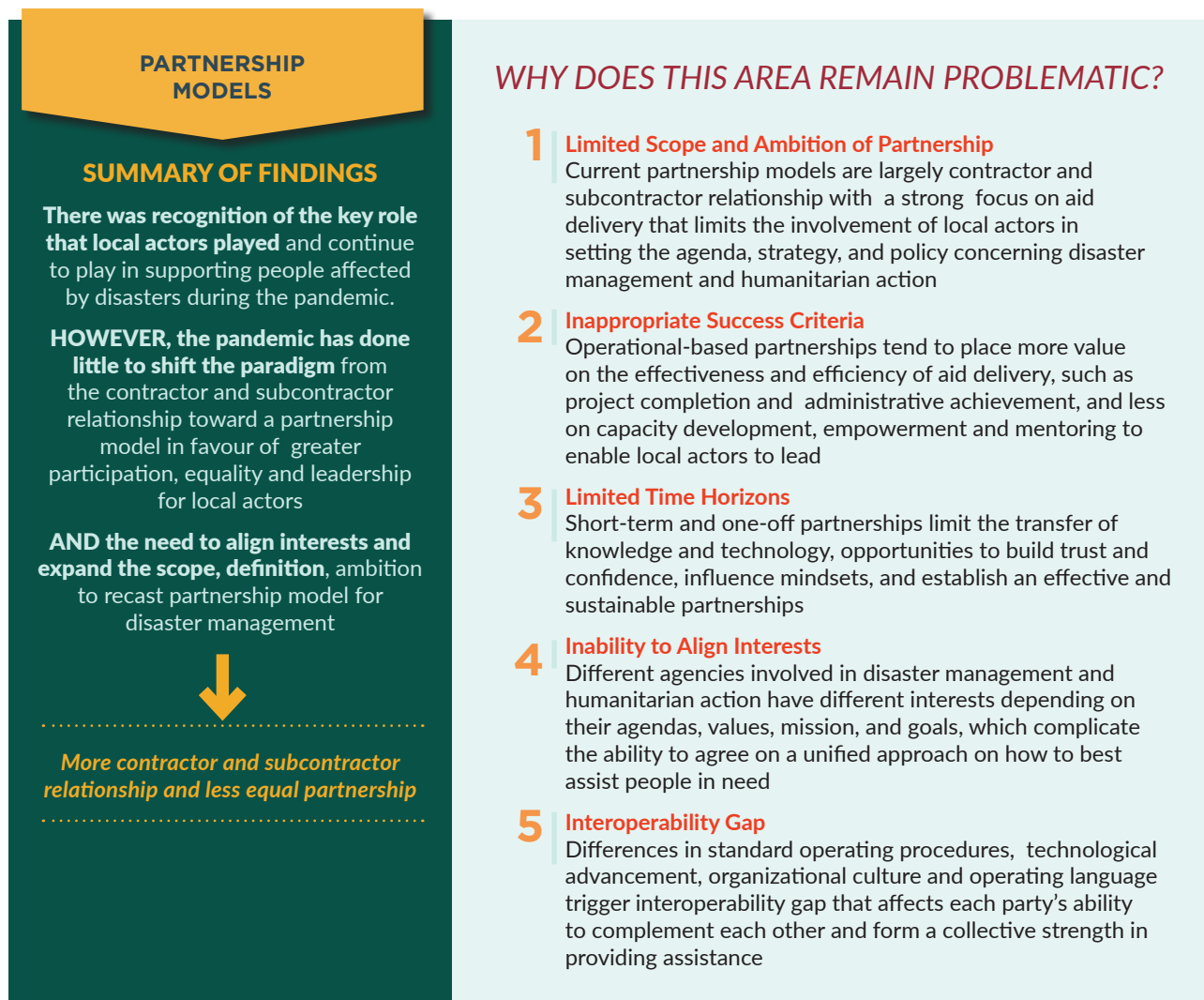
On Governance and Institutional Leadership. While commitments have been made for a number of years, there is insufficient change in how international, regional and national disaster management and humanitarian organizations are structured, and how they relate to each other, to allow effective disaster response to be led and implemented by local actors. This, coupled with limited willingness to invest in local capacity for disaster resilience at all levels, has prevented transformation from taking place at a rate required to be able to ensure that local actors are prepared to respond to the growth of disaster risks such as the emergence of the current pandemic. While the pandemic has demonstrated very clearly the capacities of local actors to lead response efforts, discourse requires a change in emphasis to match current pandemic-aware reality with theoretical approaches which remain largely rooted in pre-pandemic perspectives.

FIGURE 4. Findings on Governance and Institutional Leadership



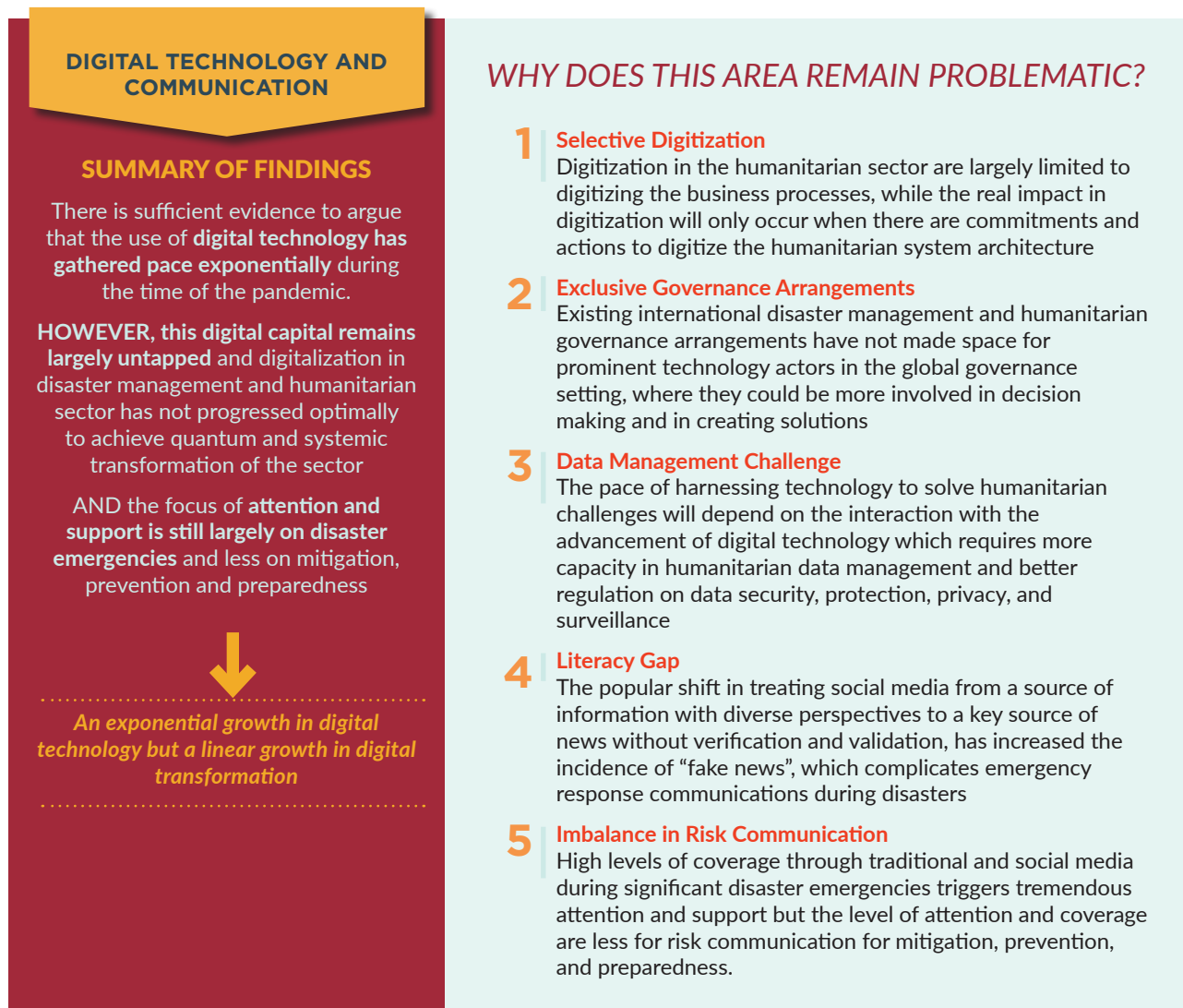
On Partnership Models. Evidence from the webinars suggests that the pandemic has done little to shift the paradigm in favour of greater participation, equality and leadership for local actors in partnerships. Current models focused on contractor/contractee principles and agreements. While there was recognition of the key role that local actors played and continue to play in supporting people affected by disasters during the pandemic the need to expand the scope, definition and ambition of disaster management partnerships and to recast management and alignment of interests so that they are fit for purpose were raised as issues to be further examined.

FIGURE 5. Findings on Partnership Models



On Digital Technology and Communications. The use of technology has accelerated exponentially during the pandemic. This created momentum to accelerate digitalisation in the disaster management and humanitarian sectors in support of enhancing resilience at the local level. Yet this valuable social capital remains largely untapped and disaster management sectoral digitalization has not progressed sufficiently rapidly.

FIGURE 6. Findings on Digital Technology and Communication



As the second stage of the learning journey, a regional symposium was organised to delve into the findings from the webinars to generate the evidence base for the learning process. In order to gather this evidence, SIAP SIAGA organized a regional symposium to provide an opportunity for stakeholders across the region to support the process through structured sharing of experiences. In preparation for the Symposium the program initiated a call for short papers, inviting six selected academics and disaster management practitioners to consult with communities, obtain their feedback and perspectives on the three issues highlighted as outcomes of the webinar discussions and share their programmatic experiences, further enriching the evidence base. The papers⁴ were presented at the Regional Symposium. The Symposium aimed to encourage debate about the emerging lessons, engaging those that support the initial findings from the online discussions and those who challenge them by presenting alternative evidence.

The outcomes of the October 2021 Symposium form the basis of this Synthesis Report. The Symposium, held online on 27 October, included some 300 participants from 20 countries across the Indo-Pacific region. Sessions were organised around the three themes and six papers with the process driving towards a limited and clearly articulated set of recommendations for action by the diverse range of stakeholders engaged in the intersection of disaster risk management and pandemic preparedness and response.

⁴ Papers (detailed below) can be found here: <https://www.siapsiaga.or.id/knowledge-product/>

(i) Ms. Gabrielle Emery, Asia Pacific Disaster Law Manager, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies: **“Laws, Disasters and Public Health Emergencies in Asia Pacific: Lessons from COVID-19”**

(ii) Ms. Adelina Kamal, Independent Consultant and former AHA Centre Executive Director: **“Creating a Level Playing Field: Lessons from COVID-19 on improving localisation”**

(iii) Ms. Arshintia, Director YAKKUM Community Development and Humanitarian Units: **“Contributing factors to Strengthening Local Partnerships: Lessons from Bethesda Yakkum Care Centre, Jogjakarta”**

(iv) Mr. Nghia Trong Trinh, Ms. Vanda Lengkong, Ms. Katherine Phillips, Ms. Brigitte Rudram, Plan International: **“Increasing Adaptation Capacity of Children, Adolescents and Youth (CAY) in the Context of COVID-19 and Changing Climate through Partnered and Participatory Engagement Approach, and Feminist Principles”**

(v) Prof. Dra. Fatma Lestari, Ms. Devie Fitri Octaviani, Ms. Wulan Kusuma Wardani, Mr. Andrio Adiwibowo, Mr. Rafi Ronny Wazier, University of Indonesia: **“Importance of Integrating Native Language into the Digitisation of Disaster and Pandemic Communication for People with Disabilities in Indonesia: Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic”**

(vi) Mr. Faizal Thamrin, Humanitarian Data Adviser, Pulse Lab Jakarta: **“Supporting the Development of Information Systems – A Pandemic-related Case Study in Indonesia”**

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One of the points that I'd like to raise is that you would think that this would have been the turning points in many ways towards the real localization of humanitarian response. I mean, this was where most of the large agencies had very difficult time moving people into field location that they have to really think through a number of new ways to carry out business – I don't know if we've really seen this turn.



Andrew Schroeder, Vice President of Research and Analysis, Direct Relief

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4 | Disaster Risk Management, Resilience and Localisation in The Time of COVID-19

The way in which disaster risk management and disaster response had to rapidly adapt to pandemic conditions added impetus to debates about the regionalisation and localisation of aid, arguably accelerating moves towards decentralising disaster risk management and resilience programming. While there is no doubt that COVID-19 has been a devastating shock for humanity, one of the emerging key learnings is that contemporary societies are in fact able to ‘act with necessary force’ or take urgent action when left without viable alternative options.⁵ In countries across the Indo-Pacific region new regulations were quickly enacted, often tacked onto current disaster risk management legislation. Airports, restaurants, sports arenas, places of worship, shops and schools were literally closed overnight, and people’s movements were heavily restricted – all made feasible because the reason for these draconian actions was accepted as legitimate and proportionate (even if only because the measures were seen as temporary).

States were able, or perhaps more accurately, compelled to embrace measures against COVID-19 that have had enormous economic consequences and costs, along with creating the risk of economic recession and severe unemployment. The pandemic and our responses to it have had a significant impact on all aspects of human activity across the planet. But as with most events that cause disruption, it is those people with the greatest vulnerabilities that have suffered the most severe hardships and whose resilience to crises has been most acutely tested – and they are the focus of the learnings included in this document.

Despite the pandemic, disasters continue to strike as usual and seriously challenged the ability of humanitarian and disaster response actors at all levels of administration to prepare for and meet the needs of disaster-affected people in a timely, efficient, and effective manner. As noted in the introduction the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters (CRED) recorded 374 natural and complex disaster events between January 2020 and February 2022 in Asia and the Pacific on the Emergency Events Database,⁶ not including events related to COVID-19. These events had a direct health impact on populations across the region because of pandemic restrictions and related duty of care to personnel.

The pandemic reconfirmed national and sub-national disaster actors and the disaster management competencies they are imbued with are the backbone for building resilience and, when needed, delivering assistance. This fact was repeatedly proven when movement controls, social distancing and other constraints prevented a “business as usual” approach for international, regional, and national risk management programming and aid deliveries. COVID-19 tested the resilience of communities to manage the extraordinary challenges that the pandemic has wrought and the additional responsibilities they shouldered to maximise their resilience in the face of increased exposure to the impacts of disasters.

⁵ <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/06/20/europe/greta-thunberg-coronavirus-climate-change-trnd/index.html>

⁶ <https://public.emdat.be/data>

The key message from this learning exercise is that **we should not waste the lessons from this global pandemic**. In addition to the recommendations emanating from the Symposium which are listed on page 1 are two main conclusions:

Firstly, the pandemic highlighted the inherent resilience of communities to shocks and that therefore there is a need for a greater focus on the dynamics of local resilience by disaster risk management stakeholders. Localised response, which is neither new nor unusual, was much more visible during the pandemic. Local disaster risk management stakeholders rapidly planned for and responded to emerging needs, working in synergy with communities and local authorities and thus reinforcing the proposition “as local as possible; as international as necessary” while disaster risk management stakeholders at other levels of administration, while still active and innovative in approach, were unable to field large numbers of staff to deliver assistance.⁷

Secondly, as they have long promised, national, regional and international actors need to significantly alter their operating models so that they propel, empower and accelerate localisation. These actors need to change their working practices in order to ensure that disaster risk management actors in local communities, whether living in urban or rural settings, are adequately supported in their front-line roles. Resourcing for and sharing agency and power with local actors needs to be a top priority. Due recognition should be paid to the leadership roles played by local actors, especially during complex crises such as disasters during pandemics with the objective that their inherent resilience – or ability to bounce back – is accelerated to the greatest extent possible.

While neither of these findings is new, their appearance as the two key conclusions should give us all cause to pause and wonder why this issue is still a key priority after Osaka, Hyogo, Sendai and the World Humanitarian Summit’s Agenda for Humanity have all laid out plans and processes to enhance resilience and localise decision-making.

So much promised; so little delivered.

⁷ “Localization” in this context is defined as locally led planning, implementation, and coordination of disaster management and humanitarian response.

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As the pandemic continues and we have restrictions on the mobilization of people, I think what we're seeing is that it has become increasingly important for all humanitarian actors that they strive to adapt and really support effective local leadership to deliver assistance to those communities most in need.



Stephen Scott, Deputy Ambassador, Australian Embassy Jakarta

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5 | Why The Focus on Local Level Resilience?

Resilience is an inherent trait of any community or society and therefore “outside” efforts to strengthen resilience should be designed based on the context and preexisting social and cultural capital. The learning process revealed struggles with terminology. The term “building resilience” gives the impression of a need to start from scratch, which is not reflective of reality and poses the risk of destroying human and other capital and structures that already exist in any community, large or small. To support the conclusion that operating models need to be overhauled the learning process proposed that, instead of “building resilience” the starting point must be to acknowledge existing social, intellectual and physical capital inherent in communities and societies, and then to identify how best to support locally driven efforts to strengthen what already exists as a way to safeguard futures.

Resilience is measured not only by the ability of a system but also, and perhaps more importantly of a community or a society to “jump back or recover” from the effects of hazards in a timely and efficient manner. The resilience of communities is “formed” through coping mechanisms and adaptation measures. There are two “types” of coping mechanism -- positive and negative mechanisms and three ways in which communities adapt to changed circumstances: absorption, adaptation and transformation. After a disaster hits people will “adjust” in order to survive by initiating coping mechanisms, and adaptation measures. In the context of disaster risk management, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) defines resilience as *“The ability of a system, community, or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management.”*⁸ Creating or supporting resilience requires a coherent and joined up approach to reduce disaster risk and lessen the adverse impacts of hazards.

Figure 7 demonstrates the theory that the words “disaster” and “disaster risk” describe the potential and actual adverse effects of an event on a community or society, while “disaster risk management” and “risk reduction” describe the systematic processes including analyses, administrative policies and strategies to reduce disaster risk and lessen the adverse impact of hazard. These definitions assume that societies, represented by communities, are faced with the most adverse impacts of a disaster. Yet the roles of these communities or societies are not articulated in the definitions of disaster risk reduction or disaster risk management. The learning process argues that this omission means that there is a collective failure by disaster risk management stakeholders to understand that communities or societies are more than passive participants, simply on the receiving end of systematic efforts and processes in reducing risk that are being delivered to them through administrative and bureaucratic methods.

⁸ <https://www.undrr.org/terminology/resilience>

FIGURE 7. The Resilience Cycle



All definitions above are from UNISDR Terminology on Disaster Risk Reduction and UNDRR website

FIGURE 8. The convergence points of resilience



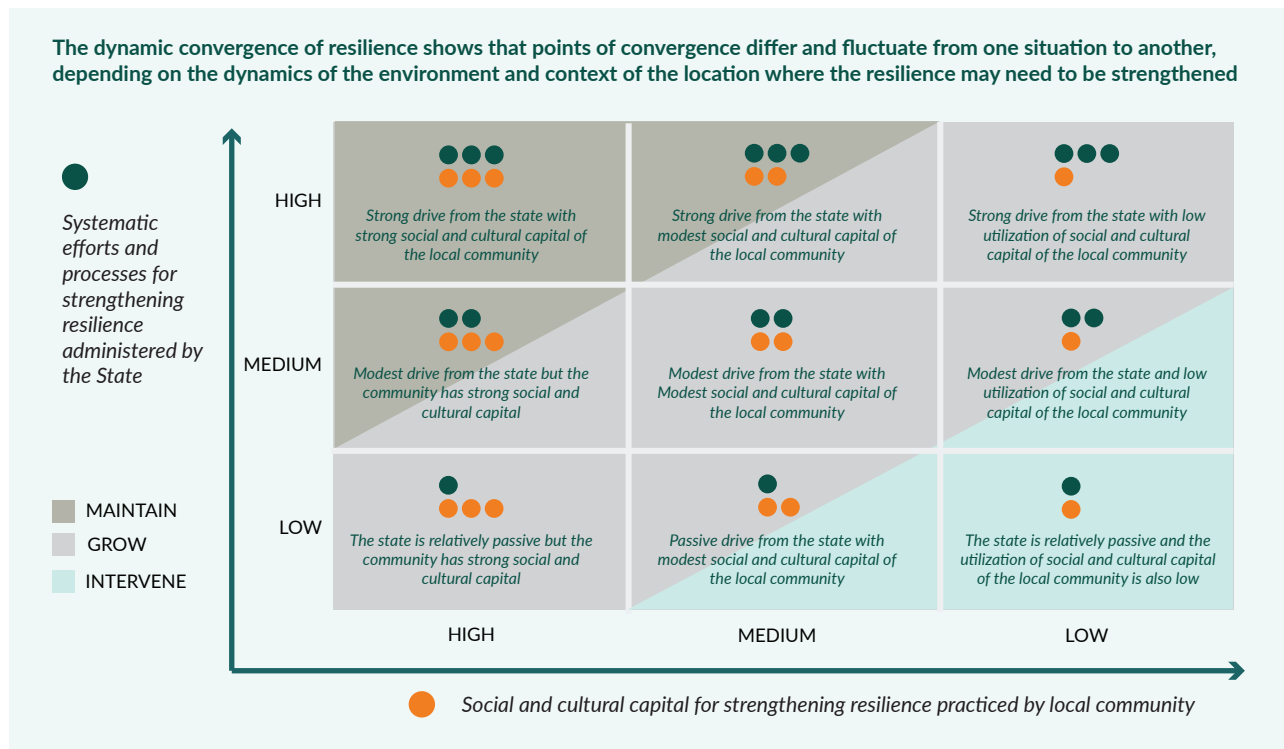
While the state has the primary role in reducing disaster risk it is important to recognise that this responsibility should be shared with other stakeholders. The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, which aims to substantially reduce disaster risk and losses in lives, livelihoods, and health and in the economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental assets of persons, businesses, communities and countries, also recognizes that the State at national level has the primary role to reduce disaster risk but that this responsibility should be shared with other stakeholders including local government, the private sector and others.⁹

Findings from the learning process support the assertion that resilience is the result of convergence between systematic efforts and processes administered by the State and the social and cultural capital believed and practiced by a community or society (Figure 8). In most cases, the practice of resilience generated through the application of local knowledge and culture existed long before the introduction of systematic efforts and processes enforced by the State. Analysis included in the academic papers prepared for the learning process reinforced the importance of understanding that social and cultural capital is highly contextual and

⁹ <https://www.undrr.org/implementing-sendai-framework/what-sendai-framework>

that its strength lies in the inability to apply a one-size-fits-all approach. In contrast, administrative systems are standardized approaches amplified by rules, regulations, operating procedures and checklists, and tend to follow a standardized, one-size-fits-all model.

FIGURE 9. The dynamic convergence of resilience



Therefore, the convergence point between systemic efforts and practices administered by the State with social and cultural capital in one country, society or community is likely to differ from another country. Achieving resilience is not a static process but rather a dynamic convergence. For example, a change of leadership in a government could shift the political commitment from a strong drive toward systematic efforts and processes for strengthening resilience into a modest drive or even to a state of passivity. Similarly, a transformation of a community or a society from rural to urban could also shift the level of social and cultural capital invested in bolstering resilience.

Figure 9 also demonstrates that different levels of dynamic convergence will require different strategies to strengthen resilience. In the context of a strong drive from the government and strong social and cultural capital of the local community the adopted strategy will be to maintain the existing performance, governance, and political commitment while keeping a close watch for signs of complacency. By contrast, where the state is relatively passive and the utilization of social and cultural capital of the local community is also low, there would be a need to intervene with external resources and force as the current situation lacks the required combination of willingness and capacity to strengthen resilience. So, if there is one thing we should take away from this observation on dynamic convergence, it is the importance of avoiding using a standard generic recipe and cookie-cutter approach to resilience building simply “because it worked somewhere else”.

Shortcomings in current discourse. This approach addresses the unequal power dynamics to which the Grand Bargain makes eloquent reference and promotes the development of a level playing field, greater equity and more equal partnerships between international, national and local actors. We observed that the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction falls short¹⁰ in adequately elaborating this general concept of resilience to include recognition of the centrality of existing local cultural and social capital as the foundations upon which to enhance resilience. Of course, to ensure that social and cultural capital are adequately respected and considered requires a rebalancing of power relations between front line disaster risk managers and the other levels of administration and the power inherent in the current disaster management and humanitarian systems. The Sendai Framework and the Grand Bargain have expressed an understanding of the need for change. The lessons included below both reinforce the need to focus on implementing change and provide some pointers on how it may best be hastened, using the COVID-19 pandemic as a change accelerator.

¹⁰ <https://www.undrr.org/publication/sendai-framework-disaster-risk-reduction-2015-2030>

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There are a lot of people who feel that humanitarian and disaster fields are working in silos instead of really engaging with the public. This is where companies like Facebook and others who are in this field as well have made a significant contribution in showing how can you communicate your data better to the public.



Noudhy Valdryno - Politics and Government Outreach Manager Facebook Asia-Pacific

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6 | Findings on Localisation

The Sendai Framework encourages an all-of-state and all-of-society approach to disaster risk management that facilitates the participation of all stakeholders and calls for national governments to follow a set of actions in enhancing resilience. While governments are the legal signatories, the pandemic's impact on capacity and ability to manage disasters and disaster risk and reach communities in need demonstrates the importance of recognising that although capacity exists at the national level, national authorities need to adjust their processes and practices in providing assistance to respond to local disasters or crises where access constraints are a complicating factor, such as in archipelagic nations and small island developing states. The concept of surge assistance or quick deployments of additional capacity to support local authorities in managing disasters cannot be easily implemented without increasing the risk of exposure for employees and communities to disease contagion. This was noted across all levels of administration.

Thus, there is no choice other than to rely on the resilience and resourcefulness of the smallest level of community such as apartment blocks, individual streets in cities, and villages and hamlets in rural areas, or a set of them which are exposed to the same hazards. Ensuring that people living in these locations are appropriately and adequately equipped to meet these challenges should be one of the emerging priorities from lessons learned during the pandemic. As Adelina Kamal notes

“Investing in localisation should be done not only during the response stage, but more importantly at the preparedness stage. In fact, this can be the training ground or ‘local incubator’ for grooming smaller-scale local NGOs and other local actors, to develop their capacities and learn from each other, before they get involved in the response.”

However, she also explains that the lack of an agreed definition of “localisation” is problematic:

“Studies indicated that while there is almost a universal agreement on its importance, there is no single definition of localisation. This has led to a lack of clarity or shared understanding of localisation. At the conceptual level this has made it difficult to measure achievements or the lack thereof in localisation”.

Deliberations throughout the process showed a clear understanding that transformative change is unlikely to happen unless there is a change in the incentives or disincentives for those who benefit the most from the status quo. The Grand Bargain, agreed as an outcome of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, also recognises the need to intensify efforts to localise humanitarian action. While most international humanitarian agencies adopted the Grand Bargain commitments¹¹ – including Workstream 2¹² which commits the 65 signatories¹³ to “More Support and Funding Tools for Local and National Responders” there have been arguably only minimal changes in the architecture of the humanitarian system, while moves to recast the debate have led to the development of “Grand Bargain 2.0”, the desired outcome of which is

¹¹ World Humanitarian Summit. 2016: The Grand Bargain – A Shared Commitment to Better Serve People in Need, https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/grand_bargain_final_22_may_final-2_0.pdf

¹² <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/more-support-and-funding-tools-for-local-and-national-responders>

¹³ <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain-official-website/grand-bargain-signatories>

“Better humanitarian outcomes for affected populations through enhanced efficiency, effectiveness, and greater accountability, in the spirit of Quid pro Quo as relevant to all”.¹⁴ Set against this is the relatively simple proposition which underwrote the development of Yakkum’s local level partnership in Central Java, Indonesia, forged at speed at the onset of the pandemic.

“While there are many recognized benefits and advantages to partnership development, the answer to why one seeks to establish partnerships is relatively simple. There is added value in working with other organizations. Establishing effective and inclusive partnerships takes time, and it is important to create the right framework from the start and review the structure and process of the partnership to measure its success or failure”.

The shortcomings in the Grand Bargain process – at least to deliver on core time-limited commitments – are particularly obvious in how local actors are still struggling to obtain access to international funding; and in how partnerships between local, national and international actors continue to be nuanced by a power dynamic that is often vertical rather than horizontal and largely fails to recognise that preparedness, response and recovery are and always have been “locally-led” – it is working out how to add value to that leadership that the system struggles with.

This exercise also found that a number of significant actors who should be considered as members of local communities in developing and delivering solutions for disaster management issues such as private sector companies continue to be routinely excluded in disaster management coordination mechanisms and decision-making processes, despite a number of examples of where such inclusion has reaped benefits (e.g. the Philippines Disaster Recovery Foundation and the UN’s Connecting Business Initiative).

Progress towards acceptance of more localised decision-making remains unseen and unfelt by many on the ground - in terms of the depth and quality of financing, partnership equity and long-term investments both financially and institutionally. The pandemic appears not to have shifted these relationships.

6.1 BARRIERS TO CHANGE

Lack of incentives, poorly balanced power structures in partnerships, hurdles to maximizing the use of digital technologies, and access to high-quality disaster information are four major problems impeding the strengthening of local resilience.

(I) LACK OF INCENTIVES

Supporting front line responders and disaster affected people to maximise their resilience requires a shift in the balance of power, influence, and money away from international and regional actors and towards national and ultimately local levels. While the pandemic might have been a contributing factor to accelerating change there is little real time evidence from this study that this is occurring. As Adelina Kamal notes

¹⁴ Overseas Development Institute. 2021: The Grand Bargain at Five Years – an Independent review <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2021-06/Grand%20Bargain%20Annual%20Independent%20Report%202021.pdf>

“COVID-19 could have been a watershed moment for accelerating significant progress in localisation. However, the opportunities have not been fully capitalised and as such, the impact has not been transformational and sustainable. Many believed that COVID-19 has “forced the international system and host governments to better recognise the unique role of local actors”.¹⁵ However, it is unclear whether this recognition will be institutionalised into practice beyond the pandemic. The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated that “local actors are best placed to respond – even when faced with a global crisis”.¹⁶ However, localisation has been made more out of necessity, as “it is circumstances rather than choice that have stopped international responders taking the lead”.¹⁷

In addition, the Humanitarian Advisory Group’s Jo-Hannah Lavey noted in her remarks during the webinar on the impact of COVID-19 on international and regional organisations that

“in term of factors behind this status-quo and the inability to shift substantially first are the entrenched power, incentives and structures in the international humanitarian system. They just don’t support locally led humanitarian action, and financing is a really clear example of this. It is very difficult to get funding from the international system directly to local and national actors. There is real need for an intermediary just in terms of administration and risk and those kinds of things. And that’s really hard to change”.

Interestingly the lack of incentives at the international level are not unique. They are also visible at national level. For example, research by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)¹⁸ which analysed law and public health emergencies (PHE) in 130 countries including 16 from Asia and the Pacific noted that while most states have laws and policies which enable the participation of entities within government in PHEs there is a focus on departments and agencies that are perceived as ‘core’ actors, rather than the full range of government agencies, including local authorities, that may need to be involved. Contributing factors, as described by IFRC’s Gabrielle Emery, seem to be the relatively antiquated PHE legislation enacted in a number of countries where

“the majority of public health legislation, at least prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, was relatively old. In fact, some dated back to late 1800s, early 1900s. The fact that a law is old does not necessarily make it weak or ineffective. Old laws may have been amended to modernise them, while still having the same date. However, the IFRC Report finds that older laws tend not to take an ‘all health risks’ approach and/or they may specifically target diseases that are no longer prevalent such as smallpox. This legal misalignment resulted in hastily made regulations being enacted which did not necessarily always build or complement pre-existing systems”.

¹⁵ Barbelet, V., Bryant, J., Spencer, A. 2021. HPG working paper: Local humanitarian action during COVID-19 – Findings from a diary study. Overseas Development Institute (ODI) Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG). <https://odi.org/en/publications/local-humanitarian-action-during-covid-19-findingsfrom-a-diary-study/>

¹⁶ DA Global. 2021. Literature Review: Is aid really changing? What the COVID-19 response tells us about localisation, decolonisation and the humanitarian system. British Red Cross. <https://www.redcross.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/international/humanitarian-policy>

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. 2021. Law and Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response: Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic. <https://disasterlaw.ifrc.org/media/3010>

The lessons emanating from the pandemic provide the opportunity to rethink public health emergency legislation and its relationship with disaster management law. Following the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami significant and rapid progress was made to enact new laws supporting enhanced disaster risk management and resilience - the same level of effort would be warranted as we look towards an uncertain risk-filled future, including from increasingly frequent public health threats. Hopefully the incentives to accelerate preparedness are starting to outweigh the incentives not to do so.

(II) POORLY BALANCED POWER STRUCTURES IN PARTNERSHIPS

Current operational-based partnership models for disaster risk management and humanitarian programming, largely between a contractor and subcontractor/contractee(s), regardless of the origin of the parties to the agreement, tend to focus on aid delivery, aligned primarily (but not always) with the contractor's risk appetite and policies and procedures. While it can be argued that this is sound commercial practice the imbalance in power relations upon which such agreements are based limits the involvement of local actors in setting the agenda, strategy, and policy concerning disaster management and humanitarian action. This may include inappropriate or unwelcome policy prescriptions around, for example, gender, disability, age and other variables. The nature of the power relations in these arrangements does not naturally promote meaningful discussion between the parties in determining what culturally appropriate and relevant programmatic support to localisation and strengthened resilience will look like in the future as complexity, such as that experienced through the pandemic, increases.

Yakkum found through their stakeholder consultations that there are contributing factors and challenges to effective local partnership:

Contributing factors:

- (i) Strategic directions to prioritize partnership and inclusive service.
- (ii) Structure of partnership team and diverse leadership
- (iii) Partnership's interaction: networking and communication
- (iv) Partnership's process: capacity building, resource mobilization and innovation

Challenges:

- (i) Challenges to align interests,
- (ii) Absence of systematic resource mapping,
- (iii) Difficulty in increasing outreach or scope of services in a timely manner, and
- (iv) Interoperability gap between policies and on-the-ground coordination mechanism

Given the differing narratives, perspectives and related goals of international, regional, national and local level organizations, this learning process has noted that aligning interests among partners remains the most significant challenge and one of the most urgent priorities.

The study also found that to enable and support local partners to grow, international regional and national partners should aim to avoid burdening local actors with administrative and financial requirements that they cannot follow, and which are likely seen as irrelevant to their goals and objectives. On the contrary when partnering with local actors, national, regional and international partners should provide programmatic support that enhances technical capacities and strategic organisational development priorities such as negotiation, organisational, management, communication and leadership skills, so supporting efforts to increase assertiveness and confidence when dealing with (the same) national, regional and international actors.¹⁹

¹⁹ Barbelet, V., Bryant, J., Spencer, A. 2021. HPG working paper: Local humanitarian action during COVID-19 – Findings from a diary study. Overseas Development Institute (ODI) Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG). <https://odi.org/en/publications/local-humanitarian-action-during-covid-19-findingsfrom-a-diary-study/>

(III) BARRIERS TO MAXIMISED USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Digitisation in the humanitarian sector is largely limited to digitising business processes, while the real impact toward local resilience will only occur when there are systemic actions to digitise the overall disaster risk management system and humanitarian architecture. Evidence gathered for this exercise and highlighted in other literature, seems to indicate that, unlike in the commercial and public service sectors, the significant resources that have been deployed for digitisation in disaster risk management and particularly for the humanitarian sector are largely limited to digitising business processes. There has been limited progress in addressing the need to digitise and better automate system architecture including, in some countries, sufficient investments in improving digitisation of social protection data. This limits the transformational impact that technology has brought to other sectors, for example through maximising supply chain efficiency via a digitised “just in time” approach, or the significant benefits that were apparent using technology in public health systems during the pandemic.

Transformational improvements are needed in enhancing coherence between the different “levels” of the system, especially given the increasing incidence of complex challenges (like the pandemic). This includes ensuring that digital literacy is better mainstreamed across the disaster management ecosystem, including by ensuring access to relevant tools at the front line, which often remains the most poorly resourced part of this ecosystem.

The sector also needs to absorb lessons more systematically from other sectors on how digitisation has enhanced response to complex events. Countries that initially maintained low COVID-19 per-capita mortality rates appeared to share strategies that include early surveillance, testing, contact tracing, and strict quarantine. Those with relatively high mortality rates generally had lower levels of awareness on tracking and tracing, sometimes due to stigma attached to “being infected”. The scale of coordination and data management required for effective implementation of these strategies — in most successful countries — relied on adopting digital technology and integrating it into policy and health care²⁰. The private sector has undergone a transformation that many thought impossible pre-pandemic²¹. By contrast poor understanding by decision-makers on how digital tools and services can improve disaster risk management, preparedness and response operations may arguably have compromised the effectiveness of those operations.

In summary, the pace of harnessing digital technology to solve disaster risk management challenges will depend on upscaling some of the fundamentals such as capacity in data management and analysis, including for senior leaders, and a greater focus on data disaggregation, including in data collection, analysis and presentation. On disaggregation Plan International noted, for example, that

“...governments must ensure that relevant data to enable successful partnership between Children, Adolescence, Youth and other parties are disaggregated by gender, age and disabilities and include other gender equality indicators. This builds on internationally accepted best practice which requires that gendered data should be made available, analysed and actionable in all walks of life”.

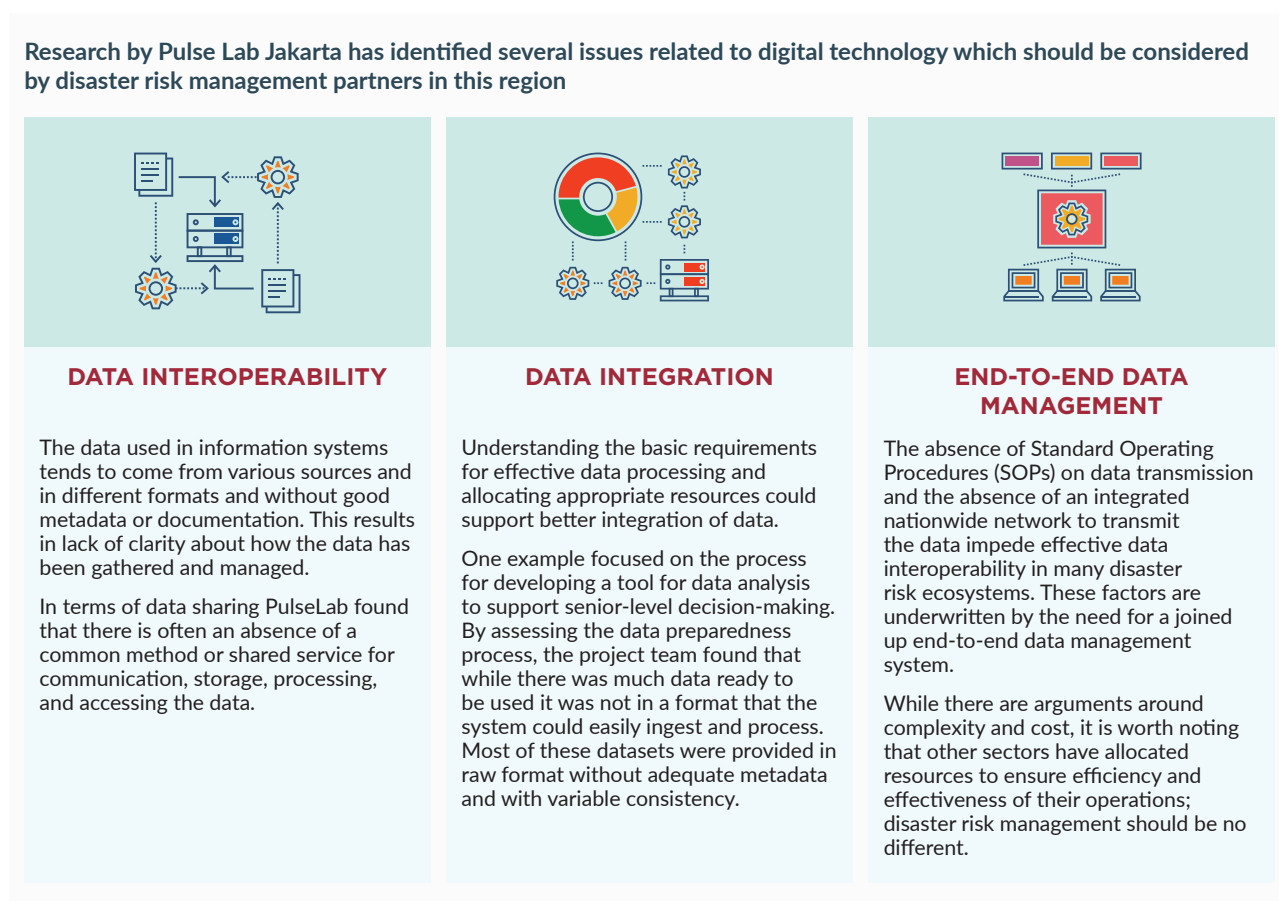
²⁰ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/landig/article/PIIS2589-7500\(20\)30142-4/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/landig/article/PIIS2589-7500(20)30142-4/fulltext)

²¹ <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/how-covid-19-has-pushed-companies-over-the-technology-tipping-point-and-transformed-business-forever>

Yet the willingness to upscale these fundamentals is very diverse in different organizations and communities, as are the relative capacities to manage data in real time at different levels of administration. Looking specifically at pandemic response Andrew Schroeder from Direct Relief explained that

“there are good examples around the use of human mobility data. We had an unprecedented policy situation [during the pandemic] where governments began imposing social distancing orders and this has never been done in this way before at this kind of scale. There was no established feed-back mechanism to understand is anyone listening to this; what are the consequences; feeding that information into understanding what are the economic impact of a lockdown orders; impacts on cases – a kind of rapid modelling. This capacity was rapidly developed through the ubiquitous digital signal that we now have, where we have billions of mobile phones floating around the world. The ability to aggregate and organize this data, in real time, is a real win”. Building on this rapid change and broadening it out should be a pressing priority for the disaster risk management community.

FIGURE 10. Key challenges in harnessing digital technology



(IV) UNDERSTANDING DISASTER INFORMATION – THE NEED TO ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY

The study noted that the technical nature of disaster information and provision only in one language in a country with many local languages meant that it was difficult for local communities to easily assimilate it and act accordingly. One of the studies prepared for this exercise, conducted by the University of Indonesia, noted that during disasters technically sound information needed to be translated into local languages in order to deliver appropriate, timely and relevant guidance that is easily accessible in local languages. Even a simple common disaster technical term can be hard to understand for indigenous communities. For example, the word “risk”, which is not included in the local language simply because the indigenous community neither defines nor experiences what “risk” is.

Where they do not have a clear understanding of the expression “disaster risk” these communities will have difficulty in preventing and mitigating it. This is also true for digitised communications where the extent to which native language and indigenous knowledge are included within digitised communication materials will have a bearing on how people react. For example, the University of Indonesia’s study found that the fast growth of use of digitised communication among people with disabilities is not balanced with content development that should support users with language barriers. Some technical terms in disasters and epidemics including risks, evacuation routes, and vaccination are unfamiliar to many. This language barrier can pose a serious problem for the most vulnerable, especially people with disabilities considering that they need immediate access to information when a disaster happens in order to ensure that they can act as early as possible given mobility challenges while often their lack of access to income generation prevents them from accessing technological tools.

6.2 ENABLERS OF CHANGE

This learning process also established that there are four possible key drivers arising from responses to disasters in this region during the pandemic that could help the acceleration of localization.

(I) INCREASING APPETITE FOR LOCALIZATION

The inability to deliver disaster assistance without increasing the risk of disease contagion has reinforced the need for decision makers to accelerate efforts to reinforce or strengthen local level resilience while reducing dependency on regional and international assistance. The pandemic has increased the appetite in some global and regional organizations as well as national authorities and their non-governmental counterparts to tailor support and services so that they fully reinforce local leadership in disaster management and humanitarian response. It is also driving increased discourse by policy think tanks and others. The passage of Cyclone Harald through Vanuatu in March 2020 is a prime example of this change taking place in real time.²²

This increase in appetite can be observed from the number of guidance documents and procedures that have been issued and/or adapted by international and regional organizations to either explicitly or implicitly support localization due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee issued the IASC Interim Guidance on Localisation and the COVID-19 Response in May 2020.

²² <https://www.theguardian.com/world/commentisfree/2021/apr/10/covid-closed-our-borders-to-international-help-after-a-cyclone-but-showed-us-locals-are-the-best-first-responders>

Since “business as usual” had limited viability during the pandemic, international and regional organizations had to redefine their added value while acknowledging the importance of stronger engagement for local actors. The guidance opens by stating that “Local actors, including civil society organisations, government, and the private sector, as well as communities themselves (including displaced communities), are critical in every humanitarian operation, and even more so in the current context that is shaped by restrictions on travel and movement because of COVID-19”. The key messages emanating from the guidance include:

- **Responsible partnership** is based on equality, mutual respect, mutual accountability, trust and understanding, and a sharing of capacities and information (rather than a one-way flow). The COVID-19 context also requires additional flexibility due to the difficulties of operating environments.
- **Support local leadership**, enable systematic local participation and active engagement in coordination mechanisms and decision-making processes at national and sub-national levels, especially regarding the regular country level contributions to the Global Humanitarian Response Plan revision.
- **Flexible and simplified funding** will be essential to continue the mobilization of front-line local actors to deliver assistance rapidly and effectively and should be provided as directly as possible.

While these are not new commitments, their articulation in this context underlines the potential that the pandemic has provided for non-local service providers and donors to reconceptualize their relationship with local disaster management actors. This gear change was articulated at the learning webinar on the pandemic’s impact on the role of the regional and international disaster management system(s) by the Head of UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Asia Pacific Regional Office, Markus Werne²³

“Where we stand now, I am much more optimistic that at least regional and international systems are in such a place that they have practiced, discussed, and thought through how they will work in a way that is complementing nationally led response in support of affected people. The key, of course, is bringing together of all the various advantages, skills and experience that all these systems have. It’s clear to us that those who are closer to the affected people have local knowledge. They also have speed of delivery and speed of deployment if necessary. Whereas those who are further away may bring best practices that are not immediately apparent in those local contexts, (such as) experiences from around the world. “

But beyond these observations, and as noted elsewhere, while the change in rhetoric is welcome it has yet to translate into clearly defined change where it matters.

(II) LOCAL EXPERIENCE DURING THE PANDEMIC

One positive impact because of the pandemic is the increased confidence of local leaders in dealing with disasters and the resilience of communities at the lowest administrative levels to manage the challenge without external assistance. Fear of contagion and strictly imposed health protocols hindered operations by external actors. Thus, communities had no other option but to rely on themselves. Lessons from Cyclone Seroja, which hit East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) province in Indonesia in April 2021 during the height of restrictions focused on hinderances to on-site coordination and provision of assistance from outside.

²³ Head of OCHA Regional Office for Asia and Pacific in Webinar 5 - The Pandemic’s Impact on the Role of Regional and International Disaster Management.

Conclusions were that more needs to be done at the policy level to put into place measures that enhance resilience and promote risk reduction prior to disasters and that these measures need to be sensitive to additional risk factors – like pandemics. For example, from Cyclone Seroja, the local government authorities in NTT learned that climate induced disasters such as cyclones can be predicted, but that early warning systems must be maintained and regularly updated to reduce the adverse impact of such events. Local authorities have also taken it upon themselves to increase their own capacity in this field instead of counting on a nationally deployed system. Prof. Daniel Kameo, Executive Adviser to the Governor of East Nusa Tenggara, explained during his session at the webinar that

“...the second lesson that we now recognize, or perhaps we already knew but never really acknowledged, is that disasters can be predicted scientifically, and preventive measures are of course the best way to eliminate destruction from any natural disaster. We know this but are not yet making full use of the available technology and science to prepare us for disasters. Now we know that the knowledge is there, the technology is there, we’d better use it to avoid or eliminate destruction from natural disasters...”

Also observed during the series of learning events was that there is much local wisdom related to disaster mitigation. It is important that this is preserved and, where possible shared with people in other regions and countries. For example, in certain parts of Flores (in NTT province) where the community experiences landslides, people receive their warnings not from mobile phones but from roosters which make unusual noises and people then know that “something is going to happen”.

Leadership and coordination are key challenges in disaster response where multiple stakeholders are involved, particularly where there are layers of authorities and actors including local, provincial, national and international actors engaging. Similar experiences in Thailand demonstrated how COVID-19 enabled local leaders to grow and gain experience. Ms. Panapa Na Nan, Director of the International Cooperation Section at the Department of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation of Thailand, speaking in the second webinar, shared the experience of local leadership in Thailand

“With COVID-19, during disasters and the related restriction of movement, local and provincial governments led disaster response operations under the management of the provincial governor. He took charge and activated the emergency operations centre at the provincial level. The regional disaster management hubs, which are nationally managed entities took on a supporting role and became more of a staging area, providing technical support to the local and provincial governments. Strong, firm and emphatic leadership is a must. Of course, when travel becomes impossible, the role of local leaders becomes more and more crucial.”

(III) GREATER RELIANCE ON THE SKILLS AND CAPACITIES OF CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH

In the absence of external assistance communities seem to be more inclined to engage with children, adolescents and youth. The pandemic has also pushed communities to rely on their own assets including human resources. Of interest from the paper prepared by Plan International for this exercise was the finding that in the absence of external assistance communities seem to be more inclined to engage with sub-groups who would not traditionally be engaged in disaster situations such as children, adolescents and youth.

“Children, adolescence and youth (CAY) are communicators of impacts and risks, informing their communities (families, friends, school and social networks) about climate change mitigation and adaptation practices. They are also innovative agents of change, identifying new ways to address the impacts of climate change using pre-existing community assets, improving both their own, and their communities’ safety. Ensuring the participation of CAY in climate change adaptation and DRR is also an opportunity to strengthen sustainable development and empower the next generation of leaders to be aware of environmental risks”.

In highly hierarchical cultures found in most countries in Asia, children, adolescents and youth often struggle to be heard. Yet their knowledge of new technologies as “digital natives” rapidly shifted this culture during the pandemic and opened some space for them to contribute more significantly in the efforts to maintain and enhance resilience. This approach incorporated new capacity at the local level that was inadequately tapped before the pandemic.

(IV) INCREASING NUMBERS OF USERS OF TECHNOLOGY

Local communities even at the lowest level can access, engage with, and influence national, regional and global expertise and knowledge if supported with the right infrastructure such as electricity and internet. Discourse during this learning process, as well as more broadly, confirms that the pandemic has massively accelerated acceptance, uptake and use of technology. The inability to travel and meet in person has created a new culture to meet and interact virtually across different platforms²⁴. In response to that new culture, companies have accelerated the digitisation of their customer records and internal operations supply-chains. At the same time, developers have responded to the need for increased virtual interactions by creating a wealth of new applications that enable individuals and communities to interact without increasing the risk of disease contagion. Jane Thomason, Founder of SuperNova Data, speaking during the Webinar session on technology and communications, explained that

“We’ve just had this huge acceleration (of the uptake of technology) right from the beginning of the pandemic, because the first thing is you need to know is what’s happening. We also saw that anything that can be done remotely suddenly is done remotely. Whether it’s education or tele-health or remote care, all those things happened.

“In my work on technology and social impact at the macro level, the humanitarian sector has always been ahead, and if you have a look at the use of these technologies in camps in tracking and tracing people who are on the move, then the humanitarian sector has been right up there.”

But these new cultures and apps need to be supported with the right infrastructure such as access to electricity and the internet in order to enable and allow local communities to access, engage with and influence national, regional, and global expertise and knowledge at relatively low cost and with previously unimaginable ease. This calls for disaster management innovators, humanitarians and networks such as GSMA²⁵ to rethink what their humanitarian aid basket should include, for example a cell phone with optional data collection/reporting tools already installed, electronic cash assistance vouchers, an internet dongle and access to messaging groups link WhatsApp and Telegram that can help recipients to articulate their needs to service providers and receive timely, accurate and verifiable information.

²⁴ This learning process was conducted without either the 500 or so people involved in the eight events that were held, or the team that managed the process, ever being together in the same room.

²⁵ <https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/mobile-for-humanitarian-innovation/>

“

More and more people are getting their news from social media rather than conventional forms of media. In the same way that we've seen citizen journalism in the war in Syria, we're now seeing citizen journalism in the form of social media.



Anne Barker – Indonesia Correspondent, Australian Broadcasting Corporation

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ANNEX 1.

WEBINAR SERIES

OUTCOME NOTE

SIAP SIAGA ONLINE LEARNING SERIES on Covid-19 and Its Impact on Disaster Management and Resilience: 14 – 28 June 2021

OUTCOME NOTE

1. BACKGROUND

Under the SIAP SIAGA Program²⁶ (Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Disaster Risk Management) the Governments of Australia and Indonesia aim to develop an evidence-based series of lessons to demonstrate how knowledge management and learning can best be institutionalised to promote innovation. Thus, rapid capture of the lessons emanating from the events since the start of 2020 across Asia and the Pacific is seen as a program priority, especially since the intention is that the outputs of the learning process will be delivered in a timely manner and thus be useful to regional stakeholders, and also feed into the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GPDRR) and/or Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (APMCDRR) to be held in 2022, so ensuring that captured lessons can be shared both within and outside the region.

Specifically, it is proposed that learning lessons from managing disaster response and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic should be shared regionally, leveraging the Indonesian Government's series of conferences on humanitarian assistance²⁷, and be put forward as a potentially significant contribution by the Governments of Australia and Indonesia for the GPDRR and/or APMCDRR. Related lessons are in the process of being developed via a broad consultative approach engaging a wide group of stakeholders in the region through:

- a series of online lessons learning discussions (completed June 2021),
- presentation of a synopsis of the initial lessons from the online discussions at the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' (KEMLU) Regional Conference on Humanitarian Assistance (RCHA) (date to be confirmed),

²⁶ The Siap Siaga Program is an Australia-Indonesia Partnership in Disaster Risk Management, which aims to strengthen Indonesia's management of disaster risk and engagement between Australia and Indonesia through an adaptive approach that puts learning and knowledge management at the core of the program. The program focuses on understanding the cause and effect of changes within the system, developing actions to better harness and influence behaviours and patterns that could improve Indonesia's ability to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from disaster.

²⁷ The theme for the 2021 Regional Conference on Humanitarian Assistance will be 'Advancing Humanitarian Capacities in a Changing World: National and Local Leadership'

- a regional online symposium, designed to more deeply explore key issues emanating from the webinar series (October 2021), and
- a Regional Learning Meeting to be convened in early 2022, as a follow up action from the 2021 KEMLU conference at which the final draft of the learning document will be presented and discussed, in preparation for its wider dissemination and socialization at the GPDRR and/or APMCDRR next year.

Thus, between 14 and 25 June 2021 a series of online webinars were convened to garner broad lessons on the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the collective ability to manage disasters in the Asia and Pacific regions. Organised to develop an evidence-base, the online discussions aimed to seek inputs on six areas of enquiry:

- i. What have been the implications of the pandemic for business as usual in responding to disasters?
- ii. Has the pandemic fostered and supported a changing role for local organizations in delivering humanitarian assistance because of pandemics? If so, is this simply a blip in the business-as-usual model or a sign of a more significant change?
- iii. How have local communities and people adapted to the conditions wrought by the pandemic and ultimately enhanced local level resilience to disasters and crises through learning from this event?
- iv. What has been the impact of changing uses of technology in coordinating assistance in a COVID-19 environment?
- v. How has the pandemic changed the roles of the regional and international humanitarian systems? Is this change sustainable?
- vi. What has been the role of the media (including social media) in supporting efforts to manage the pandemic; has the media helped to enhance local level resilience to crises and disasters through its actions during this pandemic?

2. ANALYSIS OF WEBINAR OUTCOMES²⁸

The aim of the online discussions was to throw the net as widely as possible and obtain a broad range of perspectives on the impact of COVID-19 on disaster management and resilience. The online sessions met this aim and provided initial observations around possible lessons that will be further explored during the next steps in the process. The discussions engaged subject-matter experts from governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international and regional organisations, the private sector, the tech sector and others, triggering timely, challenging debate and discourse with the online audience on possible lessons that can be further explored.

²⁸ Video and audio recordings of the six webinars can be found on SIAP SIAGA's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/siapsiagadrmproject>

Speakers emphasised that the practices of disaster management, resilience, and humanitarian action are expected to follow the internationally acclaimed aspiration of “as local as possible, as international as necessary”, and the need to ensure that assistance reaches those most in need – with a focus on identified vulnerable and marginalized groups.

Webinar conclusions largely confirmed that while the pandemic has caused untold devastation across the region, the limitations on “business as usual” approaches to provision of assistance to people affected by (non-pandemic) disasters means that space and opportunities have been accelerated for rapid transformation of disaster management and humanitarian action to strengthen local leadership. This direction of travel is aligned with national and sub-national aspirations across the region and the commitments included in the 2015 Grand Bargain²⁹. However, speakers in the webinar series noted that a broad range of often institutional and largely pre-existing factors have either slowed or derailed this process.

Analysis of the series revealed that three key areas remain problematic and thus ripe for further enquiry through a Call for Papers in preparation for the online symposium, which will be held on 20 October 2021. The three areas are as follows:

KEY AREA 1	GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTIONAL LEADERSHIP ³⁰
Summary of findings	While commitments to transform current systems have been made for a number of years, there is insufficient change in how international, regional and national disaster management and humanitarian organizations are structured, and how they relate to each other, to allow effective disaster response to be led and implemented by local actors. This, coupled with limited willingness to invest in local capacity for disaster resilience at all levels, has prevented transformation from taking place at the rate required to ensure that local actors are prepared to respond to the now exponential growth of disaster risks such as the emergence of the current pandemic and future disaster-related risks and threats.
Why does this area remain problematic?	<p>1. Lack of Incentive to change, and vested-interest to maintain, status-quo</p> <p>Localization, in its most simple form, requires a shift in the balance of power, influence, and money (see point (ii) immediately below) away from international and regional actors to the national and local levels. Lack of willingness and/or incentives for this to take place manifests as resistance to this agenda, particularly from those whose incentives favour maintaining the status quo. While the pandemic could be a contributing factor to accelerating change there is little evidence that this is occurring.</p>

²⁹ To get more means into the hands of people in need and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action, the Grand Bargain sets out 51 commitments distilled in 9 thematic work streams and one cross cutting commitment: 1. Greater Transparency; 2. More support and funding tools to local and national responders; 3. Increase the use and coordination of cash-based programming; 4. Reduce Duplication and Management costs with periodic functional reviews; 5. Improve Joint and Impartial Needs Assessments; 6. A Participation Revolution: include people receiving aid in making the decisions which affect their lives; 7. Increase collaborative humanitarian multi-year planning and funding; 8. Reduce the earmarking of donor contributions; 9. Harmonize and simplify reporting requirements; 10. Enhance engagement between humanitarian and development actors.

³⁰ **Governance** is the system of rules, practices, and processes by which an organisation is directed, controlled and operates, and the mechanisms by which it and its people are held to account. **Institutional leadership** is the collective ability of an organization to detect and cope with changes in the external environment by maintaining its primary goals.

Why does this area remain problematic?

2. Dependency on Traditional Financing

The current ecosystem of humanitarian financing is still largely dependent on the major traditional donors along with their internationally established and preferred systems, power relations, levels of risk tolerance and mechanisms. Alternative financing such as the private sector, regional, national (i.e., governmental), and local financing, have yet to exhibit scale.

3. Rigidity and Strictness of System's Requirements

Early indications seem to indicate that, despite decreasing access for international, regional and national actors to communities because of pandemic-related concerns, risk tolerance on behalf of funding bodies has decreased the appetite to push any significant increases in funding to local actors.

4. Capacity Gap

Capacity is a critical foundation for localization, and the capacity to lead, take charge of, and deliver age, gender and disability appropriate disaster management services at the local level, is a key determinant in the path towards localization. Developing this capacity requires long-term developmental resources that most humanitarian actors are unwilling (or unable) to invest.

5. Insufficiently Robust Regulatory Frameworks

Speed, space, and preference towards localization, as well as for programming which focuses attention and resources, including on the differential needs of particular social groups, such as women, children, the elderly and the disabled, are influenced by strategies, policies, and regulations issued by both providing and recipient governments. The absence of regulations, in particular those that would enable greater regulation of international and regional cooperation, disaster assistance and partnership, a stronger role for local organizations, greater participation of specific social groups and the financing of local organizations have been contributing factors to limiting effective localization.

KEY AREA 2

PARTNERSHIP MODEL³¹

Summary of findings

Evidence from the webinars suggests that the pandemic has done little to shift the paradigm in favour of greater participation, equality and leadership for local actors in partnerships with models focused on contractor/contractee principles and agreements. While there was recognition of the key role that local actors played and continue to play in supporting people affected by disasters during the pandemic the need to expand the scope, definition and ambition of disaster-management partnerships and to recast management and alignment of interests so that they are fit for purpose in our current environment, where COVID-19 will continue to be a prevalent factor, were all raised as issues to be further examined.

Identified issues

1. Limited Scope and Ambition of Partnership

Current operational-based partnership models, largely between a contractor and contractee, tend to focus on aid delivery, aligned with the contractor's risk appetite and policies and procedures. This limits the involvement of local actors in setting the agenda, strategy, and policy concerning disaster management and humanitarian action, including more detailed treatment of and focus on gender, disability, age and other variables for which the system must do better. This approach also does not enable meaningful discussion in determining what localization will look like in the future as complexity, such as that experienced through the pandemic, increases.

³¹ Partnerships are defined for the purposes of this paper as the arrangements, structure, and approach toward collaboration among involved parties.

Identified issues	<p>2. Inappropriate Success Criteria</p> <p>Operational-based partnerships tend to place more value on the effectiveness and efficiency of aid delivery (project completion, administrative achievement) and less on capacity development, empowerment, mentoring and differential requirements of local actors to lead on articulating needs and deciding best delivery modalities, depending upon, inter alia, gender, age and other social considerations and the different pressures wrought by operating in a pandemic environment.</p> <p>3. Limited Time Horizons</p> <p>Short-term and one-off partnerships limit the transfer of knowledge, technology and opportunities to build trust and confidence, influence mindsets, and establish an effective and sustainable partnerships, especially with particular social groups; all of which are best done long before disasters strike. The need for sustainable partnerships were considered particularly important in the context of operations being managed during the pandemic.</p> <p>4. Inability to Align Interests</p> <p>Different agencies involved in disaster management and humanitarian action have differently aligned interests depending on their agendas, values, mission, and goals, which complicate the ability to agree on a unified approach on how to best assist people in need. This interoperability gap between partners, caused by lack of attention to definition of the motivating factors behind the development of the partnership, can be a factor in preventing them from strengthening collective capacity to assist the affected community.</p>
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KEY AREAS 3	DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATION ³²
Summary of findings	<p>There is sufficient evidence to argue that the use of technology has gathered pace exponentially during the time of the pandemic. This created momentum to accelerate digitalization in the disaster management and humanitarian sectors in order to enhance resilience at the local level. Yet this valuable social capital remains largely untapped and sectoral digitalization has not progressed optimally.</p>
Why does this area remain problematic?	<p>1. Selective Digitization</p> <p>The significant resources that have been deployed for digitization are largely limited to digitizing the business processes in the humanitarian sector. This falls short of what is needed since the real impact in digitization will only occur when there are commitments and actions to digitizing the system architecture, including greater focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coherence between the different “levels” of the system, especially given increasing incidence of complex challenges (like the pandemic). • Better use of digitisation for management of complex response operations - particularly sudden onset operations during a pandemic such as COVID-19/ • Recognising and addressing inherent biases in data management away from addressing gender and other socially based inequities. • Systematizing humanitarian cash transfers/synergizing with national social protection programs rather than the current country-by-country. Agency-by-agency approach. • Fully digitizing and universalizing the humanitarian logistics system. • Data-enabling the humanitarian coordination system, and • Deeper examination of issues around ID in camp situations and potential links to the broader international travel regime.

³² **Digital technology and communications** are defined for the purposes of this paper as a rapidly expanding, somewhat chaotic and, at the same time, enormously powerful means by which to support evidence-driven management of improved, more localized and more inclusive response to disasters and crises.

Why does this area remain problematic?

The pace of harnessing technology to solve humanitarian challenges will depend on upscaling some of the fundamentals such as capacity in data management, and a greater focus on data disaggregation, including data collection, data analysis and data visualization; government regulation on data security, protection, privacy, and surveillance; interaction with the advancement of digital technology; and the importance of understanding who will be impacted by the technology.

The impact that the pandemic has had on acceleration of digitisation in disaster management and humanitarian action is also an issue which will require significant further research and analysis.

2. Exclusive governance arrangements

Existing international humanitarian governance arrangements have gone through several rounds of reform since the establishment of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in 1991 but there have been limited efforts to bring technology actors into the disaster management and humanitarian global governance setting where they could become more actively involved in decision making and in creating solutions for disaster management, resilience, and future global humanitarian action challenges, taking lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Literacy Gap

The popular shift in how social media is perceived (previously as a source of information with diverse perspectives and now increasingly as a key source of news without verification and validation) has increased the incidence of so-called “fake news”, which complicates emergency response communications during disasters, including the current pandemic. It also can distort communication lines between affected populations and assistance providers during decision-making processes.

4. Imbalance in Risk Communication

High levels of coverage through traditional and social media during significant disaster emergencies trigger tremendous attention and support – as seen during COVID-19 surges during the pandemic, while the same level of attention is much harder to garner for risk communication for mitigation, prevention, and preparedness.

3. NEXT STEPS

The presentations provided by the 18 speakers and the excellent quality of the questions and answers in each session ensured that the Webinar Series provided a rich basis for further analysis between now and the GPDRR. The forward pathway for this work will be through:

- A **call for papers**, (based on the outcomes articulated in this Outcome Note), to be held between 10 and 31 August for development of six (6) thematic papers (two per Key Area).
- **Preparation of papers** by selected authors between 10 September and 8 October.
- An **Online Symposium** to be held on 27 October at which the contents of the papers will be debated and form the basis for the development of the full lessons learned report.
- Presentation of progress made thus far at the Government of Indonesia's **Regional Conference on Humanitarian Assistance 2021** to be held before the end of the year.
- Presentation of the completed learning report at a **Regional Learning Meeting**, to be hosted under the aegis of the Government of Indonesia's Regional Conference on Humanitarian Assistance process, in early 2022.
- Final presentation of the learning report at the **Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction**, to be held in Bali, Indonesia in May 2022 and/or at the **Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction** to be hosted by the Government of Australia in 2022.
- Presentation and dissemination through other regional and international platforms thereafter.

August 2021

ANNEX 2.

REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON DISASTER MANAGEMENT CONCEPT NOTE

Background: Under the Australia-Indonesia Partnership for Disaster Risk Management (2018-2024) the Governments of Australia and Indonesia, supported by the SIAP SIAGA Program³³, aim to develop an evidence-based series of lessons to demonstrate how knowledge management and learning can best be institutionalised to promote innovation. Thus, rapid capture of the lessons stemming from the events of the eighteen months across the Indo-Pacific region is seen as a program priority, with the intention is that the outputs of the learning process will be delivered in a timely manner, and also feed into the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GPDRR) 2022, so ensuring that captured lessons can be shared both within and outside the region.

Initial Evidence Gathering: Specifically, it was agreed that learning lessons from managing disaster response and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic should be shared regionally. Thus, between 14 and 25 June 2021 a series of online webinars were convened to discuss broad lessons on the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the ability for stakeholders in the region to effectively manage disasters. These discussions provided initial observations around lessons that will be further explored during the upcoming Symposium. Analysis of the webinar series revealed that three key areas remain problematic: (i) Governance and Institutional Leadership; (ii) Partnership Models; and (iii) Technology and Communications. Papers addressing these challenges are now being prepared for the Symposium:

Name	Presenting a Paper on	Title and Organisation	Thematic Area
Ms. Gabrielle Emery	Laws, Disasters and Public Health Emergencies in Asia Pacific: Lessons from COVID-19	Asia Pacific Disaster Law Manager <i>International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies</i>	Governance and Institutional Leadership
Ms. Adelina Kamal	Creating a Level Playing Field: Lessons from COVID-19 on improving localisation	Independent Consultant, and Former Executive Director <i>AHA Centre (2017-2021)</i>	Governance and Institutional Leadership

³³ The Siap Siaga Program is an Australia-Indonesia Partnership in Disaster Risk Management, which aims to strengthen Indonesia's management of disaster risk and engagement between Australia and Indonesia through an adaptive approach that puts learning and knowledge management at the core of the program. The program focuses on understanding the cause and effect of changes within the system, developing actions to better harness and influence behaviours and patterns that could improve Indonesia's ability to prevent, prepare for, respond to, and recover from disaster.

Name	Presenting a Paper on	Title and Organisation	Thematic Area
Ms. Shinta Arshinta.	Contributing factors to Strengthening Local Partnerships: Lessons from Bethesda YAKUM Care Centre, Jogjakarta	Director <i>YAKKUM Community Development and Humanitarian Units</i>	Partnership Models
Mr. Nghia Trong Trinh	Increasing Adaptation Capacity of Children, Adolescents and Youth (CAY) in the Context of COVID-19 and Changing Climate through Partnered and Participatory Engagement Approach, and Feminist Principles	Regional Resilience and Safe Schools Specialist <i>Plan International</i>	Partnership Models
Prof. Dra. Fatma Lestari M.Si. PhD	Importance of Integrating Native Language into the Digitisation of Disaster and Pandemic Communication for People with Disabilities in Indonesia: Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic	Director, Disaster Risk Reduction, <i>University of Indonesia</i>	Technology and Communications
Mr. Faizal Thamrin	Supporting the development of information systems – A Pandemic-related Case Study in Indonesia.	Humanitarian Data Adviser, <i>United Nations Global Pulse</i>	Technology and Communications.

The Regional Symposium: The full agenda for the Symposium is appended at Annex 1 and registration is open by following this link: s.id/regionalsymposium. The six papers will be presented and discussed in Working Session 1, with the aim that the outcomes of the deliberations are further examined in Working Session 2, where Symposium participants will be requested to draw lessons and conclusions. These draft lessons and conclusions will be presented by the Working Session moderators in a final plenary session where further inputs will support the elaboration of a learning document that will be prepared as the Symposium outcome document.

Preparation and Publication of the Learning Document: The learning document will be presented to a meeting of regional stakeholders, to be held in early 2022, as one of the follow up actions from the Government of Indonesia's Regional Conference on Humanitarian Assistance, with the aim that the meeting participants endorse the lessons, which will then be presented at the May 2022 Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

REGIONAL LEARNING SYMPOSIUM ON COVID-19 and its impact on Disaster Management and Resilience

AGENDA

Registration Link: s.id/regionalsymposium

TIME	SESSION		
10:00	Opening Session		
	<p>Introduction to the Symposium – Symposium Moderator, Mr. Oliver Lacey-Hall, Lead Adviser, SIAP SIAGA Regional Sub-Program</p> <p>Welcoming remarks from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of Indonesia</p> <p>Welcoming remarks from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Government of the Commonwealth of Australia</p> <p>Group Screenshot photograph</p>		
10:20	Summary of the June 2021 Online Webinar Outcomes, Ms. Lucy Dickinson, Team Leader, SIAP SIAGA Program		
10:35	Introduction to the first breakout sessions, including the introduction of the moderators for the sessions		
10:45	Session 1A – Governance and Institutional Leadership	Session 1B – Partnership Models	Session 1C – Technology and Communications
	Laws, Disasters and Public Health Emergencies in the Asia Pacific: Lessons from COVID-19	Contributing Factors to Strengthening Local Partnerships – Lessons from Bethesda Yakkum Care Centre, Jogjakarta	Importance of Integrating Native Language into the Digitisation of Disaster and Pandemic Communication for People with Disabilities in Indonesia: Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic
	Ms. Gabrielle Emery, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies	Ms. Shinta Arshintia, YAKKUM Foundation for Public Health	Prof. Dra. Fatma Lestari M.Si. PhD, University of Indonesia
	Creating a Level Playing Field – Lessons from COVID-19 on improving localization	Increasing Adaptation Capacity of Children, Adolescents and Youth (CAY) in the Context of COVID-19 and Changing Climate through Partnered and Participatory Engagement Approach, and Feminist Principles	Supporting the development of information systems – A Pandemic-related Case Study in Indonesia.
	Ms. Adelina Kamal, Independent Consultant and Former Executive Director AHA Centre (2017-2021)	Mr. Nghia Trong Trinh, PLAN International	Mr. Faisal Thamrin, UN Global Pulse

TIME	SESSION		
11:50	Moderated Discussion	Moderated Discussion	Moderated Discussion
12:25	Summary and closing of session	Summary and closing of session	Summary and closing of session
12:30	LUNCH BREAK		
13:30	Session 2A – Governance and Institutional Leadership	Session 2B – Partnership Models	Session 2C – Technology and Communications
	Introduction to the session and discussion process, presentation of initial conclusions from breakout session 1A and a series of questions to pose to the audience	Introduction to the session and discussion process, presentation of initial conclusions from breakout session 1B and a series of questions to pose to the audience.	Introduction to the session and discussion process, presentation of initial conclusions from breakout session 1C and a series of questions to pose to the audience.
13:55	Moderated Discussion	Moderated Discussion	Moderated Discussion
14:40	Formulation of conclusions and recommendations for submission to the plenary; session closing	Formulation of conclusions and recommendations for submission to the plenary; session closing	Formulation of conclusions and recommendations for submission to the plenary; session closing
15:00	Lessons from the COVID-19 Response in Malaysia Discussion with Tan Sri Dr. Jemilah Mahmood, Executive Director, Sunway Centre for Planetary Health, Malaysia		
15:15	Opening and introduction of the plenary session		
15:20	Presentation from the Working Group: Governance and Institutional Leadership		
15:40	Presentation from the Working Group: Partnership Model		
16:00	Presentation from the Working Group: Technology and Communication		
16:20	Discussion		
16:45	Summary and Session close		
16:55	Closing Remarks by the National Disaster Management Authority of the Government of Indonesia.		

ANNEX 3.

WEBINAR SPEAKERS, ACADEMIC PAPER AUTHORS

1. WEBINARS – HELD ON 14, 16, 18, 21, 23, 25 JUNE 2021

Webinar 1:	COVID 19 AND THE LONG-AWAITED DISRUPTION IN THE DISASTER RESPONSE ARCHITECTURE: CAN CHANGE REALLY HAPPEN?
Moderator:	Tan Sri Dr. Jemilah Mahmood, Senior Adviser to the Prime Minister of Malaysia on Public Health
Panelists:	Dr. Rahmawati Hussein, Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Centre Indonesia and Member of the CERF Advisory Group Mr. Rene S. Meily, President, Philippine Disaster Foundation, Inc Mr. Josefa Lalabalavu, Pacific Disaster Risk Management (DRM) Coordinator, Plan
Webinar 2:	COVID 19 AND THE CHANGED ROLE OF LOCAL ORGANISATIONS IN AID DELIVERY: WILL IT LAST?
Moderator:	Mr. Said Faisal, Senior Adviser, SIAP SIAGA Program
Panelists:	Dr. Faizal Perdaus, President, Mercy Malaysia Ms. Victoria Saez-Omenaca, Head, UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Indonesia Ms. Lan Mercado, Regional Director for Asia, OXFA
Webinar 3:	LOCAL LEVEL ADAPTATION TO THE PANDEMIC AND ENHANCEMENT OF LOCAL LEVEL RESILIENCE TO DISASTERS AND CRISES
Moderator:	Dr. Raditya Jati, Deputy for System and Strategy, National Disaster Management Agency, Indonesia Panelist
Panelists:	Mr. Prof. Daniel Daud Kameo, Executive Adviser to the Governor of Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia Ms. Pannapa Na Nan (Aimee), Director, International Cooperation Section, Dept of Disaster Prevention and Mitigation, Thailand Dr. Bernadia Irawati Tjandradewi, Secretary-General United Cities and Local Governments Asia Pacific

Webinar 4:	CHANGING USES OF TECHNOLOGY IN COORDINATING ASSISTANCE IN A COVID-19 ENVIRONMENT
Moderator:	Mr. Petarca Karetji, Head, Pulse Lab Jakarta
Panelists:	Dr. Jane Thomason, Founder, SuperNova Data, and Blockchain and Disruptive Tech Expert, Australia Mr. Andrew Schroeder, Vice President of Research and Analysis, Direct Relief, USA Mr. Noudhy Valdryno, Politics and Government Outreach Manager Facebook Asia-Pacific
Webinar 5:	THE PANDEMIC'S IMPACT ON THE ROLE OF THE REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL DISASTER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM(S)
Moderator:	Mr. Oliver Lacey-Hall, Lead Adviser, SIAP SIAGA
Panelists:	Ms. Adelina Kamal, Executive Director, ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance (AHA) Centre Mr. Markus Werne, Head of Office, OCHA Asia Pacific Ms. Jo-Hannah Lavey, Executive, Humanitarian Advisory Group, Australia
Webinar 6:	THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA IN SUPPORTING EFFORTS TO MANAGE THE PANDEMIC. Has the media helped to enhance local level resilience to crises and disasters?
Moderator:	Mr. Said Faisal, Senior Adviser, SIAP SIAGA Program
Panelists:	Ms. Anne Barker, Indonesia Correspondent, Australian Broadcasting Corporation Mr. Agung Yudhawanata, Director for Indonesia and Malaysia, Twitter Dr. Raditya Jati, Deputy for System and Strategy, National Disaster Management Agency, Indonesia

2. ACADEMIC PAPERS PREPARED FOR THE REGIONAL SYMPOSIUM

Principal Author	Paper	Title and Organisation	Thematic Area
Ms. Gabrielle Emery	Laws, Disasters and Public Health Emergencies in Asia Pacific: Lessons from COVID-19	Asia Pacific Disaster Law Manager, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies	Governance and Institutional Leadership
Ms. Adelina Kamal	Creating a Level Playing Field: Lessons from COVID-19 on improving localisation	Independent Consultant	Governance and Institutional Leadership
Ms. Shinta Arshinta.	Contributing factors to Strengthening Local Partnerships: Lessons from Bethesda Yakkum Care Centre, Jogjakarta	Director, YAKKUM Community Development and Humanitarian Units	Partnership Models
Mr. Nghia Trong Trinh	Increasing Adaptation Capacity of Children, Adolescents and Youth (CAY) in the Context of COVID-19 and Changing Climate through Partnered and Participatory Engagement Approach, and Feminist Principles	Regional Resilience and Safe Schools Specialist, Plan International	Partnership Models
Prof. Dra. Fatma Lestari M.Si. PhD	Importance of Integrating Native Language into the Digitisation of Disaster and Pandemic Communication for People with Disabilities in Indonesia: Lessons from the COVID-19 Pandemic	Director, Disaster Risk Reduction, University of Indonesia	Technology and Communications
Mr. Faizal Thamrin	Supporting the development of information systems – A Pandemic-related Case Study in Indonesia.	Humanitarian Data Adviser, Pulse Lab Jakarta.	Technology and Communications.

