Building resilience in conflict settings:

learning from the occupied Palestinian territory

Introduction

This report uses Christian Aid's experience of piloting a resilience project in the occupied Palestinian territory to try to establish initial learning and contribute to the sector's discussions to build understanding of resilience in conflict settings.

Resilience has become a prominent issue over the last decade, and the subject of many debates among humanitarian and development practitioners.[1] Resilience is increasingly seen as a means to bridge humanitarian and development approaches. This shift occurs against a backdrop of donors starting to prioritise longer term approaches within a humanitarian setting, and backing this preference with funding.[2]

Challenges discussed in the resilience and development literature include how to balance the tensions between donor demands for measurable, attributable impact and the operational reality of work in complex environments, the trade-offs involved in building resilience at different levels and the wide range and changing definitions of resilience.[3]

A focus on resilience in conflict settings is more recent. Analysis to date has often focused on the link between conflict and disasters.[4] Observers have also pointed to a gap between the academic analysis of resilience and practitioner experience.[5]

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Key learning about supporting resilience in a conflict setting

a) A tailored participatory vulnerability and capacity assessment (PVCA)process is an important part of a resilience-building process in a conflict setting. The community action plans needs to be flexible to adapt to what can be a rapidly changing environment and so there needs to be a mechanism to facilitate communities to update plans. A community may need additional support to implement the action plan, especially to attract and manage new partners.

b) A resilience process makes explicit the political aspects of vulnerability. The inclusion of practical tools both to identify and analyse power relations within a community and also to analyse the different impacts of conflict on communities will help project coordinators to support communities to identify strategies to deal with this context.

c) A focus on risk and capacity helps communities to identify actions they can undertake despite the constraints of occupation and conflict. It is important to combine community level actions with advocacy for measures which are beyond the community's capacity to address. These may need to link to international advocacy, particularly in relation to conflict-related causes of vulnerability.

d) The inclusion of at least a small budget to support rapid implementation of some of the action plan is important to maintain motivation in the face of the challenging context and in an environment accustomed to humanitarian aid. Visible results in the short term are important, as are the less tangible aspects of capacity building that training and community organisation can bring about.

Resilience approaches in a conflict setting need to include elements of humanitarian and development programming to meet immediate needs and to build capacities over the longer term. For instance, integrating community protection and self-protection measures into programming, and including contingency funds for a humanitarian response in the face of unexpected crises will both meet immediate needs and prevent further erosion to individuals' and community resilience; it will also support the sustained implementation of a community-based resilience approach.

e) A community-based resilience approach has the potential to address some of the negative side effects of long-term aid. In particular it shifts community dialogue from needs to focusing on what communities can do themselves. It helps rebuild the social fabric of a community by catalysing community action and interaction, and empowers individuals and communities to play a leading role in effecting change on their own behalf.

f) Community level actions are able to make a significant contribution to longer-term national aims and systems, for example, in the oPt, community Civil Defence Groups are part of the national emergency response system. In addition community measures to protect their land contribute to the collective effort to resist the occupation.

Christian Aid / Chryssa Panoussiadou / Panos

Above: Kamal and Salwa live in the Access Restricted Area in Gaza. Their livelihoods were devastated by the conflict but they have increased their resilience with a small business through the project

The Project and Christian Aid's approach to resilience

Christian Aid defines resilience as 'the power of individuals and communities to live with dignity, responding successfully to disasters and the opportunities and risks they face'. A key part of Christian Aid's approach to resilience is a community-based process which begins with a participatory vulnerability and capacity assessment (PVCA).[6] A PVCA is a method by which the local partner supports the community to analyse its vulnerabilities and capacities and develop an action plan to build resilience.

In 2011 Christian Aid began a pilot project in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) as part of the Programme Partnership Arrangement (PPA) project funded by the UK Department for International Development. The pilot project aimed 'to develop resilient communities that are able to secure their own livelihoods and incomes', working with three local partners, the Young Women's Christian Association

(YWCA), the Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committee (PARC) and the East Jerusalem Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), in nine communities in the West Bank and three sectors in Gaza. The communities represent a range of contexts including a refugee camp, rural villages and urban and peri-urban communities.

The project has now been running for two years and some interesting findings are already emerging. Drawing on the project's experience so far, this report discusses:

- the implications of a conflict setting for effective community processes

- how conflict shapes communities' priorities and their options and strategies

- the contribution of resilience approaches to longer term change.

Resilience Programme Community Locations

Map showing the nine communities in which the programme was implemented in the West Bank, and Gaza, where three sectors were targetted

The context: conflict, occupation and aid

The occupied Palestinian territory, consisting of the West Bank (including east Jerusalem) and Gaza, has been under Israeli occupation since 1967, and the impacts of the ongoing conflict have been experienced by both Palestinians and Israelis. More than six decades of conflict have meant that developing and sustaining resilient livelihoods is a constant struggle for Palestinian communities.

Recently, the conflict has involved a major Israeli military operation in Gaza in 2012 (Operation Pillar of Defence), ongoing Palestinian militants' attacks from Gaza on Israel and a 118% rise in attacks on Palestinian communities by Israeli settlers in the West Bank from 2009-2012.[7]

The occupation has a direct impact on the Palestinian economy and, as such, on Palestinian people's livelihoods. The World Bank estimates that Israel's sustained control of the West Bank has resulted in a loss to the Palestinian economy of $3.4 billion.[8] Israel controls access into and out of the oPt and imposes significant movement restrictions within the oPt; these discourage private sector investment and undermine internal and external trade. Israel's policy of movement and access restrictions, including the 712km separation barrier which is largely built on Palestinian land, has further undermined people's access to work, trade and, for some, to their land. Unemployment levels are high, averaging 23% across the oPt and rising to 30% in Gaza. Unemployment is higher among women than men.[9]

Under the 1993 Oslo Accords, the West Bank was divided into three administrative zones. 'Area A', which covers 18% of the West Bank, is under the civil and security control of the Palestinian Authority. 'Area B' is under Palestinian civil control and joint Israeli-Palestinian security control, and 'Area C' is under the full civil and military control of the Israeli government. This territorial fragmentation, designed to be temporary, was based on demographic considerations: areas A and B were drawn around main population centres, whereas Area C covers approximately 60% of the West Bank and contains most of the agricultural land and natural resources.
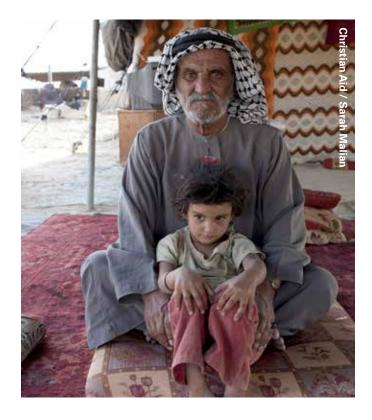
Palestinians must apply for permits from the Israeli Civil Authority to build on their land in Area C; in practice, it is almost impossible to secure these permits.[10]

According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), 'the economy has lost access to 40% of West Bank land, 82% of its groundwater, and more than two-thirds of its grazing land'; it describes the impact of this on the Palestinian agricultural sector as 'devastating'.[11]

In Gaza the Israeli occupation severely limits fishermen's access to the sea, and farmers' access to land and other resources, with the blockade making it extremely difficult for them to reach both domestic and international markets.

There are now approximately 540,000 Israeli settlers living illegally in Area C of the West Bank, with the support of the Israeli government.[12] Palestinian homes are demolished each year, displacing hundreds of people, to make way for the building of settlements; these settlements prevent Palestinians from accessing vital livelihood resources such as water and farmland.[13] 90% of Palestinians are living in less than 40% of the West Bank.[14] The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) noted that the restrictions have contributed to a continued fragmentation of the Palestinian territory.[15] Palestinians interviewed for this study commented on the pressures that the occupation places on cohesion and the social fabric of communities.

According to the United Nations, in 2012, 25% of Palestinians in the West Bank and 54% in Gaza were food insecure,[16] with 12% at risk of becoming so.

The international community has supported Palestinians with significant humanitarian aid. The oPt was the third largest aid recipient in the world in 2011.[17]

Christian Aid / Sarah Malian

Above: Ali is the Mukhtar (head of the village) of Al Rashayda, where the resilience programme has been implemented

The Project Methodology

A participatory assessment and analysis

Before carrying out the PVCA process, Christian Aid provided training to local partners' senior managers and project coordinators. Topics covered included concepts of resilience, a range of participatory tools for community-based assessment and analysis – including seasonal calendars, Venn diagrams, social mapping and community action planning – and the standards of the Humanitarian Accountability Partnership. Local partners adapted this training for volunteers identified to lead the process in their own communities.

Making the process relevant

A key part of the community process was making the concepts of resilience relevant at the community level. For example, while project coordinators sometimes used the Arabic word *maruna*, which means flexibility or the ability to bounce back, to translate resilience, they mainly used a different word, *sumud*, or steadfastness. Local project coordinators found this word resonated with Palestinians' commitment to stand firm on their land in the face of the intense pressures of occupation.

Coordinators adapted the PVCA tools for local use. Initially, they felt the tools would be more relevant for less educated communities and were uncertain they were appropriate to their context; however they found they could adapt them to suit their target communities. Mapping processes, brainstorming sessions and use of the problem tree – a tree being a powerful symbol in Palestinian culture – worked particularly well to stimulate and structure community discussions.

After the PVCA process was carried out, community action plans were put into place and the communities, with support from Christian Aid's partners, took the lead in finding ways to ensure these were implemented. While there was some additional financial support, the community action plans were not fully funded.

Key steps in the community process

Community selection

- Partners selected communities using criteria such as: their exposure to risks, particularly conflict; their interest in participating; the absence of other organisations working in the area; and partners' prior knowledge of the communities.

Volunteer selection and training

- Partners worked with the Village Council, local community-based organisations and community leaders to select volunteers to undertake training in the PVCA. Each partner insisted on a mix of male and female volunteers and tended to encourage young people to be active, partly due to their availability and the expectation that young people may be better able to learn and use new techniques.

Participatory Vulnerablity and Capacity Assessment

- Volunteers divided the communities into groups. In all communities there were at least two groups, male and female, but in most communities volunteers identified four to six groups including young people (male and female separately), and in one community, unemployed young people and families with a disabled member. The groups held meetings and workshops over four to twelve weeks to carry out the PVCA.

Community action planning

- Each community developed an action plan through a participatory process, with community meetings playing a significant role in prioritising actions.

Plan Implementation

- Communities established a follow-up committee to coordinate the next steps, including implementation, advocacy and seeking new partners to support actions where external resources were needed.

Lessons learned

A number of lessons were learned about carrying out a community consultation and assessment process within a conflict setting.

1.   Manage community expectations

The PVCA process takes time to work through with communities. Coordinators found that communities expected big results as a result of such in-depth consultation. The inclusion of a budget for follow-up resilience interventions and activities in each community (in the case of this project a modest £16,000 a year per partner for two years after the initial training and PVCA process) proved successful as an incentive to maintain the community's interest while the potential benefits of the action plan and training became more obvious.

In some communities the plans have been successfully used to leverage significant additional funding and support for new projects from new partners. For example $164,000 was secured for one of the YMCA's project communities in the Bethlehem Governorate for rehabilitation of land and houses and livelihoods interventions. Community committees, set up to implement the community action plans, commented on their need for more support in contacting other organisations and following up the action plans themselves. These interventions, which have arisen from the plans, help to provide skills and assets that will form the basis of a more sustainable livelihood, rather than simply being one-off grants.

In Gaza the establishment of a multi-stakeholder consultancy group worked well as a way to build external support. Other project coordinators from within this project recommend more involvement from a range of stakeholders throughout the process, with more publicity for the community action plans through mechanisms such as roundtable meetings and field visits.

2.   Build flexibility into plans

'We live with the ever-changing policies of occupation,' said one community member, illustrating people's experience of uncertainty, insecurity and sometimes rapid change. For instance in the aftermath of the Israeli attack on Gaza in 2012, communities and partners had to adapt their action plans to include a response to the destruction of livelihood resources, and continue to deliver the resilience programme alongside a humanitarian response.

3.   In ongoing conflict situations, partners and communities will have encountered many different donor approaches

Local partners said that the real distinctiveness of the resilience approach became apparent during implementation at community level. Particularly striking for some was the involvement of the whole community, rather than just particular groups. The director of a local partner organisation commented: '*We knew a lot about the communities before but we did not see things through their eyes. We see through our own eyes, which leads us to repeat the same interventions. The most important aspect of this [resilience] approach is that it includes everyone and produces new ideas*'. A participant from one of the communities that worked with the YWCA said that this project was: '*different – because this is about the community, not the donor and what they want.'*

4.   Community participation and maintaining people's sense of agency are key

Reliance on long-term aid can have negative consequences on community resilience. A 2012 World Bank report commented on the Palestinian Authority's dependence on international aid.[18] In 2012, the Palestinian Authority was expected to receive approximately $1.14 billion in foreign aid – which would still leave a projected budget deficit.[19] Informants for our study noted how the needs-based focus of humanitarian aid can have a powerful unintended consequence, damaging individuals' and communities' confidence that they can be their own agents of change. This highlights the need for programmes to be carefully designed to build engagement, ownership and responsibility, and to avoid a situation where people become passive recipients rather than challenging participants. People interviewed for this study say that in some instances, aid has contributed to the wearing down of community self-reliance and sense of agency, and noted that the participative nature of the PVCA approach was very positive in counterbalancing this.

5.   Community participation may not take the form you expect

In some West Bank communities, partners struggled to maintain many men's sustained participation in the process. The assessment process seemed lengthy to some, and it is clear that it takes time to get everyone on board. Community volunteers said the men were less interested because they could not see immediate, direct material benefit for the community or themselves, being more accustomed to needs assessments that would then deliver material aid, as a result of decades of humanitarian interventions. A positive, and unexpected, aspect of this imbalance was that it opened up space for women and young people to take part in the PVCA process in a significant and meaningful way, developing their profile within their communities, and ensuring their ideas and priorities were part of the community action plans produced.

Other community members commented on the positive difference between this process and other consultations and assessments they had experienced, which often

amounted to little more than a short community meeting and also tended to involve the same people. A community member from Al Nwei'meh village, Jericho, said: '*The PVCA was very special. It let us talk about everyday risks which we were not able to do before. We did co-exist with them but we did not really talk about them or identify them so accurately or systematically or link them with other results.*'

6. Try to maintain momentum

Partners commented on the need to act quickly on the action plans once the PVCA process was complete to maintain momentum and ensure that the trust

community members had placed in the new approach was maintained and transformed into action. The budget for small projects assisted and enabled this to take place. This is particularly important in a conflict situation where the reality on the ground is frequently changing. However, in some places the budget was not enough to maintain momentum in challenging situations and partners used other methods to engage communities, such as events to reinvigorate community participation at different stages of the project.

Case Study 1. Conflict does not prevent the PVCA process from unlocking local ideas and potential

Example: Al Rashayda

Al Rashayda is a pastoral Bedouin community in the Bethlehem Governorate. The Bedouin's traditional grazing lands are slowly being reduced, with a detrimental effect on their livelihoods. The land where they live has recently become a closed Israeli military zone, with heavy artillery and live firing, and the Israeli Government plans to completely displace this community. This affects their ability to reach water sources, graze their sheep or find appropriate living conditions during the different seasons.

i) Vulnerability and problems

The YMCA worked with Al Rashayda to identify vulnerabilities, capacities and roles in the community. Women make significant contributions to household work and income-generating activities: rearing livestock, making dairy products, caring for children and the elderly and preparing food. Despite this, they have limited control over family income. Men trade the meat and dairy products and thus control the family income. In the PVCA, women emphasised the health vulnerabilities caused by dust and dirt in the tents and, in particular, scorpions. Dairy products and other goods for sale are produced within the tents, so livelihoods are also affected by the unhygienic living conditions. The problem tree and other discussions helped to link lack of cleanliness and health issues with the design of their living conditions. Participants also highlighted their limited access to water, restrictions on movement for animal grazing, and transport and economic vulnerabilities.

ii) Restrictions on solutions

Some of the Bedouin want to build semi-permanent homes but are not given permits by Israel to allow them to build. If they did build, the homes would be subject to demolition orders, as the area is now a military zone, which makes the community reluctant to invest and

build. They are also not allowed to build walls around their tents to keep out the dirt, dust and scorpions.

iii) Solution identified

A woman in the community suggested cementing the floors and building a small ledge less than a metre high to limit dust and dirt. Such a small ledge would bypass Israeli building restrictions. YMCA shared the community action plan with donors and was successful in gaining funding to cement the floors and build ledges for 60 tents so far. The women reported that this had eased their workload, increasing time available for livelihoods activities, as well as creating more hygienic living and working conditions and thus reducing health risks.

'The training was a challenge but it was interesting to see the results. I learned that people living far away in the village face the same problems as me. I was proud to be able to able to do something for my village. We have water and concrete floors now, which keeps scorpions and mud out of our house. The whole community has benefitted from our input.'
Community member, Al Rashayda

iv) Learning

- PVCAs and community action planning can produce practical solutions which come from the community themselves to reduce risk, despite the political context.

- The PVCA raises vulnerabilities that may go unheard through other assessment processes and which cut across sectors; one solution can address multiple risks.

- The action plan can be used by local communities and local partners as a tool to leverage funds and support from other organisations.

How does conflict affect how communities identify their vulnerabilities and risks, and their responses?

Analysis of vulnerability

One of the first steps in the resilience process is the community analysis of their situation. The analyses showed that communities tend to prioritise conflict-related and immediate threats above longer-term risks and donor priorities.

The risks and vulnerabilities identified and prioritised by the communities did not necessarily match donor priorities or the scientific agenda. Communities highlighted their vulnerability to economic hardship and their lack of control over, or loss of, livelihood resources such as land and water. They also prioritised health concerns, including psychosocial issues and children's wellbeing. Some environmental issues, such as lack of wastewater systems, sewerage infrastructure and flooding, were priority issues in some communities. Yet longer-term risks, such as the high risk of earthquake, which was a focus of the project in its original scoping phase and is a risk being addressed by other donors working in OPT, tended not to be prioritised by communities. Therefore programme activities in this particular community-led project would not necessarily respond to the risks that donors would prioritise.

Some of the threats and risks identified by communities:

- open firing in Gaza's buffer zone and coastal regions
- Israel Defence Forces incursions into the Gaza Valley
- violent attacks from settlers in the Nablus and Bethlehem areas
- injuries and farming losses from wild animals and from dogs released from settlements
- Israeli regulations meaning that people cannot build homes or expand communities in the Bethlehem, Nablus and Jericho areas
- requirement for permits for Palestinian farmers to farm their own land in Area C
- confiscation or destruction of resources including water sources, fishing boats, crops, greenhouses
- demolition of Palestinian homes
- restrictions on movement which prevent access to markets, employment, education and health services.

There was also a noticeable difference in the vulnerabilities highlighted by men and women. Men focused more on livelihoods and physical infrastructure issues while women tended to focus more on issues such as the health of their children and women-friendly income generation opportunities. When mapping the risks and vulnerabilities they faced, women's maps focused on the home and houses within the community, while men's maps included their land, fields, water and Israeli settlements.

The community analyses cut across sectors. This project focuses on resilience of people's livelihoods, and much of the communities' analysis of vulnerability drew on issues around economic instability, damage and destruction to livelihoods resources, and a lack of access to land, water, and markets, as well as focusing on health, education and identity issues. Such analysis fits with the sector's growing concern to consider the inter-connectedness of problems and solutions.

The community analysis shows the breadth of conflict-related vulnerabilities. For instance, the limited access to emergency services and schools experienced by communities in rural parts of the Nablus and Bethlehem Governorates was caused in part by settler violence, which makes people unwilling to travel, and in part by checkpoints obstructing travel. Sewerage and wastewater problems in Gaza and the Bethlehem area are linked to Israeli control of underground water sources and the pollution of water sources by Israeli settlements.[20] Economic concerns around household incomes across the project communities were found to be linked to limited access to land and water, which reduces the potential of agricultural livelihoods.

Overcoming community perceptions to identify actions

Communities often felt they faced insurmountable problems and would only be able to build their resilience if the occupation ended. Project coordinators said they had to work hard to support communities to identify actions they could take despite the occupation. Communities were also extremely frustrated that many measures they could identify to build their resilience were not allowed because of policies of the occupation. For example Nablus villagers want to build greenhouses to improve agricultural productivity, but this can't be done because the villages are in Area C, where Israel restricts Palestinian construction or rehabilitation of homes, clinics, wells, schools, animal shelters and all other vital community infrastructure. Israeli authorities have rejected 94% of permit applications for building in recent years.[21] If Palestinians do build without a permit, they are subject to demolition of that structure and fines.

'The conflict is the source of all our problems. It limited what we put in the action plan. For example we need a hospital but we can't have that so we put health action days as an action instead'
Community member, Beit Skariya, Area C community

Project coordinators found the focus on reducing risk helped move discussions forward by revealing the extent to which risks were shared.

'The process helped us to see that problems do not affect just individual houses but are shared. Before, we thought of the flood as something affecting individuals. But now we see it is a community issue... We found risk expresses the problem more deeply and precisely. It helps you think how you can solve a problem. If you think only of needs, you will not solve it. Thinking about risks can change your way of thinking. It affects how you think about yourself too.... usually people do not appreciate the capacities we have. They just complain and talk about needs'
United Nations Relief and Works Agency official, working with the project volunteers and partners in Aqbet Jaber refugee camp, Jericho Governorate

Coordinators found the focus on capacities helpful in moving planning forward. Asking questions about capacities was something new and innovative within communities; most people were more accustomed to answering questions about their needs. Coordinators introduced the concept of capacities as being about strengths, resources or aspects of the community about which people felt proud.

Another way that partners and communities worked to overcome frustration with limits on their options caused by the conflict and the occupation was to link practical actions at community level with advocacy for longer term change. For example in Beit Skariya, the YMCA worked with the community protection group – a group established as a result of the community action plan in this project – to compile a submission to a UN fact-finding mission on Israeli settlements and settler violence which would then be used by the international community. In Gaza, PARC is working with the Gaza fishing committee, another body set up through the project, for longer-term change through advocacy. They are advocating to the authorities in Gaza to improve domestic conditions for the fishing sector by, for example, reducing tax levies, as well as advocating to international bodies, calling for an end to the blockade of Gaza and a lifting of the six-mile fishing zone enforced by the Israeli Navy, which severely limits the fishermen's ability to achieve a sustainable livelihood.

Some of the capacities that communities identified included:

- human capital: good experience of sustaining agricultural livelihoods; ability to produce traditional crafts; high level of high school and university graduates; determined and innovative population, already used to adjusting their lives to the disasters of the occupation and conflict

- social capital: strong society based on family structures and values; community based on charitable and communal living (in some communities)

- natural capital: land; mountains; appropriate farming methods; natural water springs; local areas of natural beauty that attract tourists

- physical capital: agricultural structures, fishing boats, homes.

Christian Aid / Madeleine McGivern

Above: Fishermen inspect and prepare their nets at the Gaza fishing port. Many nets and boats are destroyed by the Israeli navy

Case study 2. Finding solutions is possible despite the restrictions of occupation

Example: Beit Skariya

Beit Skariya is a small village in Area C, completely surrounded by Gush Etzion, a cluster of large illegal Israeli settlements and smaller illegal settlement outposts that are connected to one another via trunk roads that Palestinians are prohibited from using. Much of the community's land is under threat of confiscation and villagers are prohibited from building any sort of building or semi-permanent structure in the village. The only way for community members to access Palestinian transport – including children trying to get to school – is to walk along roads which are for Israeli settler use only; therefore people in Beit Skariya face daily threats of abuse and violence from the Israeli settlers when travelling.

i) Vulnerability and problems

Israeli restrictions mean that new houses cannot be built and the community is extremely concerned about its future viability as young people have to leave when they marry to find homes outside the village. The PVCA cited attacks from settlers on the village, their crops and population as a key concern. Women in Beit Skariya also identified the lack of a grocery store in the village as a problem as there is nowhere for people to sell their produce. People had to travel to Bethlehem to shop; a slow, expensive and dangerous journey given the limited transport and need to walk tracks surrounded by settlements. Their other option was to use a nearer shop run by a settler. Having a shop in the village is viewed as important by the women in the community, as a means to support Palestinian trade, as part of life in the village, and as a way to limit exposure to violence on the roads.

ii) Restrictions on solutions

The ideal solution identified by the women is to build a grocery shop in the village but Israel's policy of enforced building restrictions prevents this.

iii) Solution identified

The village has identified a building currently used for animal storage which will be used as a grocery shop, bypassing restrictions on the construction of new buildings. The community has emptied the building and collected money locally to cement the floor, ensuring the ownership and sustainability of the project amongst community members. The idea came from the YMCA and the Women's Association, which was set up by women in the community as a result of this project. With the help of the YMCA, the Women's Association has linked with other organisations to find support for the project. New partners include Arab Centre for Agricultural Development (ACAD), which is supporting the development of a cooperative and providing training for women in income-generating activities. The Palestinian local government office has offered support. However, while this support is welcome, it has raised the challenge of dealing with different organisations with different policies. For instance ACAD has suggested the grocery shop be linked with a cooperative to be established in the community, so it would not be led and managed purely by the Women's Association. The local government offered to support the grocery shop but without a community contribution which the YMCA, ACAD and the Women's Association insisted on. Decisions over the future of the grocery shop now sit with the Women's Association, who will decide how to progress. This is an empowering position for a community organisation set up less than two years ago, both with their community and in the wider context. The Women's Association has turned down funding from an organisation which was trying to influence the way the project was going to be implemented, evidencing the ownership and confidence the community now feels over projects taking place in their village.

iv) Learning

- Working within the restrictions arising from the occupation requires innovative, creative, resourceful and imaginative solutions, which can come from community members themselves.

- Promotion of the community action plan can attract additional partners and funding.

- Working with multiple partners brings new resources and ideas but can also be challenging for both the community and the original partner organisation when new partners have different approaches. It is essential that the original partner supports the community structures established through the PVCA process in the development and implementation of the action plans until this support is no longer needed, in order to protect the space that has been created for them to operate within.

The way conflict shapes community priorities and choices

Communities are mindful of limiting further exposure to risk and incurring further loss

A clear priority identified by all communities was livelihood support. The West Bank communities reported their growing concern that more Palestinians are working in the illegal Israeli settlements because of a lack of alternatives.[22] Livelihood support and development is seen as a way to establish alternatives to working in settlements, meeting a household economic need and also a political aim to increase the viability and independence of the Palestinian economy. Community members also identified through the PVCA process the importance of keeping land actively used and farmed. This is important for both economic and political reasons: as a means to a livelihood and to reduce the risk of further Palestinian land being confiscated, as Israeli law states that if land is not cultivated for three successive years, it may become the property of the state.[23]

Some potential actions to build resilience can expose people to new or increased risks, and this influenced community choices. For example, some communities decided a protection group would be an effective way to address some of the security abuses they faced, for example from settler attacks on crops and people.

The project provided training in working with the media, using social media, human rights law and advocacy.

In Beit Skariya a protection group was established following a community vote. The group has set up a Facebook page where it documents human rights violations and incidents of settler violence. The Facebook presence has raised the village's profile in the Palestinian media, which is significant for an isolated community surrounded by a huge Israeli settlement. Before the project the village was not even recognised by the Palestinian Authority; now one of the Authority bodies, the Palestinian Civil Defence, works with the community and the protection group to build their resilience. The continued engagement with local media is in part responsible for this.

There is ongoing debate in the community about which strategies are most effective to protect the community. Some people argue that promoting good news stories, such as support for projects by international donors, disguises the hardship they face and gives a misleadingly positive impression of their situation. Some are cautious about publicising violations in fear of repercussions by settlers. Discussions continue within the community but the success of the protection group in highlighting the risks the community faces, and the results of this raised awareness, are significant in a previously extremely marginalised community.

Above: **Noora is one of Beit Skariya's volunteers who has been trained and now works with the village CBO to implement community-led projects which increase the community's resilience. In the background is an illegal Israeli settlement**

Case study 3. Complex problems require multi-level interventions

Example: Aqbet Jaber

Aqbet Jaber is a large urban refugee camp in the Jericho Governorate. It has high levels of unemployment, especially amongst young people, who make up 65% of its population. The evolution of the 1948 camp into the solid concrete structures housing more than 30,000 people today has led to many problems, including poor infrastructure and a lack of services within the camp, which results in dangerous floods, public health hazards and difficulties for various vulnerable groups such as children and disabled and elderly people. The United Nations Refugee Works Agency (UNRWA) has responsibility and jurisdiction for the refugee camp but works with the Jericho Governorate and the Popular Committee, the camp's representative body.

i) Vulnerability and problems

Aqbet Jaber experiences regular flooding, which has caused deaths and damage to homes. The Governorate attempted to build a retaining wall to keep water out but this was poorly designed and remains unfinished due to a lack of dedicated resources. Some households have built their own retaining walls but these divert water onto other houses, exacerbating the risk. Construction companies are building illegally and waste is being dumped in the valley behind the camp, both of which destabilise the land and impede water flows, making flooding worse.

ii) Restrictions and constraints to solutions

One solution is to divert the course of the water altogether but that would require Israeli approval because it would involve Area C land. This is therefore not an option. Responsibilities are shared between governorate departments and the camp's Popular Committee (the governance structure within UNRWA camps), which has also contributed to slow decision-making. UNRWA has proposed to make a plan to guide construction in the area but this is not supported by the camp residents, who are registered refugees, including people who fled their homes in 1948 and their descendants. For them, a permanent construction plan for the camp would imply that they accept they will not be going back to their original homes.

iii) Solution identified

Working with the community, the YWCA produced an advocacy film to highlight the experience of flooding in the community. The film was shown at a high-level Jericho Governorate meeting which included representatives of all the key departments, including the Ministry of Health and the Palestinian Civil Defence who are the body responsible for disaster risk reduction within the West Bank. The technical committee that was set up by the community as a result of the PVCA process, which represents the different groups within the camp, coordinated advocacy initiatives with the YWCA to get the film shown and secure the meeting with key stakeholders. The meeting focused on agreeing responsibilities for waste management within the camp and managing digging and construction in the valley to prevent flooding and land destabilisation. Outside the meeting, community members also put pressure on UNRWA and the camp's Popular Committee to act through a variety of lobbying initiatives.

As a result, the project's technical committee has agreed to work with UNRWA and the community to improve rubbish collection and disposal within the camp, and, significantly, the Governorate has budgeted funds to improve the retaining wall in the next financial year. It was also agreed also that the issue should be raised to the Higher Council of Refugees. The technical committee plans to use the film for advocacy and fundraising internationally.

iv) Learning

- The PVCA helped the community to recognise the need for a collective response to their vulnerability to flooding.

- Action took place at many levels – among individuals, the camp's Popular Committee and different parts of the government.

- Advocacy helped to move forward plans for addressing the risk of flooding. Sustained advocacy will be needed to ensure next steps are followed through.

- It is possible to hold duty bearers to account within the wider context of conflict. Whilst Israel's policies on Area C were not challenged in this advocacy, other accountable bodies were engaged with successfully, including UNRWA and the Jericho Municipality.

Lessons about working with communities to identify their vulnerabilities in conflict settings

1. Internal dynamics within communities need to be understood

While the conflict setting is a significant factor in communities' vulnerability, internal dynamics play an important role too. The PVCA process provided a means to understand this. Community volunteers found the question 'Who is influential in making decisions in this community?' useful during the assessment and analysis process. This has highlighted the dynamics of power and influence particular to a community. For example, in Beit Skariya, communities said one part of the village had more control over decision-making and influence than others. In Zatara, the mapping processes revealed that capacities and resources were associated with specific political parties. Among the Bedouin community of Al Rashayda, the initial consultation showed that divisions between families was a key dynamic.

Group discussions took place on these internal dynamics as part of the PVCA, but not within the more large-scale community meetings: partners stated that discussion on such inequalities in the communities had the potential to impede the project's implementation and could even be dangerous for the community volunteers and coordinators. The coordinators and communities used the PVCA tools and methodology to attempt to manage and counter existing power structures and dynamics, and put measures in place to ensure that benefits of projects would not be driven by these power inequalities, for example by ensuring that community committees included members who were not from the usual powerful groups, and by using social media to publicise training opportunities. In one community project, coordinators went from tent to tent conducting PVCAs

in order to increase participation by marginalised groups. Transparency and information sharing between partners and communities was essential. Coordinators said that one of the positives of having a relatively low budget for the project was that it encouraged groups within communities who weren't usually given power to be involved and disincentivised more traditionally dominant groups and political interests from controlling the project.

2. Analysis in a conflict setting makes the politics of vulnerability explicit

Resilience approaches, with their focus on disaster risk reduction and climate change, have tended to concentrate on 'natural' hazards and to some extent on technical solutions. Literature on resilience has increased attention to the political dimension of vulnerability and the potential of political economy analyses[24] for disaster resilience. A community analysis in a conflict area inevitably focuses on political aspects, as the conflict is a key factor shaping the community's vulnerability and the choices available to them. A resilience approach in a conflict setting can make the politics of vulnerability more explicit.

3. It is possible to unlock community potential and creativity despite the context and constraints

The occupation places restrictions on community actions, particularly in terms of building, movement and also people's mindsets. However, the experience in the oPt demonstrates how communities can identify innovative ways to address some aspects of vulnerability, as can be seen in the case studies in this report.

Building resilience is a long-term process, and this study has been written just over two years into the pilot project. However, some results and learning are already emerging. These results and changes include:

Above: Hanan and her children live in Al Rashayda, a Bedouin community in Area C. Formally nomadic but forced to settle by occupation policies, the villagers are severely affected by water shortages and movement and access restrictions

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Building resilience in conflict settings: emerging lessons and results

Increased community capacity

Examples include:

- individuals report increased confidence to take an active role in their community

- the establishment of new groups in the community, eg Protection Groups, a Women's Association, Community Follow Up Committees (sometimes called Technical Committees), Civil Defence Groups

- additional NGO support for participatory community activities

- increased community awareness of shared risks

- more people within communities playing leadership roles

- spaces created for groups to engage across the community, for example through Technical Committees

- new skills in the community, eg first aid, crisis response, social media, advocacy, participatory decision-making.

'Life was boring before. Now we have lots of training and activities. We organise ourselves to finish housework by 10am so then we are free to work in the community until about 1pm, when children come back from kindergarten.'
Community member, Beit Skariya

'We have all become active members of the community, for example in doing advocacy and lobbying campaigns.'
Community member, Al Dyouk

Foundations being put in place for livelihoods improvements

Examples include:

- infrastructure improvements, eg rehabilitation of land and equipment, extension of water systems

- improved community facilities and services achieved through local advocacy, such as transport services which increase people's access to markets, employment and education

- training for men and women in new skills to generate incomes, eg financial management and creation of cooperatives

- in one community, establishment of cooperatives, a local market, and plans for a dried food production factory

'Before the (YWCA) training we did not have a goal. Now we have a plan. It helped us practically but also inspired us. Now we will set up a wedding decoration business. The training helped us to draw up a budget with costs and to identify pricing. The business will provide decoration for wedding halls. In the future if it is successful we want to expand it to be able to organise the full event with the food, music and other items'
Young person, Aqbet Jaber Refugee Camp

Advocacy efforts leading to increased profile and new links for communities and their priorities

Examples include:

- increased community visibility through local and social media coverage

- more vocal articulation of community priorities and concerns to Palestinian authorities at local, regional and national levels, to local and international donors and agencies, and to international bodies, including the UN (for example through protection groups)

- new community links to national structures, eg Palestinian Civil Defence.

'*Before the project we didn't know risks or what to do about them, but now we work as a team to demand our rights in one voice*'
Community committee member, Aqbet Jaber

These results demonstrate some of the ways in which a resilience approach can begin to address the trends of dependency and fragmentation of civil society that conflict and long-term dependency on humanitarian aid can cause. They are further discussed below.

What contributions do resilience approaches make to long-term change in conflict settings?

a) Resilience approaches can shift mindsets

The resilience process focuses on what communities can do for themselves. It has stimulated more people to become active in their community, for example in the project's ongoing community Technical Committees, on village councils and in youth and women's groups. One of the key changes that community members emphasised in this study was 'changes in people's mentality', meaning both that more people had the confidence to take an active role in the community and also that there was more belief that a community could and should act to improve its situation. However, this is a long-term process.

b) Resilience approaches can strengthen civil society

New groups have been established in some communities as a result of the resilience-building process to date, eg Beit Skariya Women's Association, Aqbet Jaber's Community Committee and Amuriya's and Zatara's Technical Committees. These groups provide additional points of contact for external organisations and spaces for community members to promote their priorities. This space, which is very limited within the context of conflict in oPt, is extremely precious, and the project's success in creating these spaces is an important one which community members recognise. The project has also provided new training opportunities in aspects of leadership and advocacy. Through the PVCA process itself, non-traditional community leaders have come forward to take an active role in their community.

Case study 4. Constant adaptation is required to maintain resilience in a conflict setting

Example: Fishing sector in Gaza

i) Vulnerability and problems

Fishermen's livelihoods in Gaza are under threat as Israeli restrictions limit them to fishing up to six miles from shore, in contravention of the Oslo Accords. Fishermen have had boats confiscated and nets destroyed if they go beyond the six-mile limit. The coastal fishing community in Gaza exists under Israeli blockade, and has felt the effects of large military operations in 2008 and 2012 in which many boats and nets were destroyed.

ii) Constraints

The fishing community and the Hamas Government in Gaza cannot control the restrictions and policies which Israel imposes on the fishing community.

iii) Solution identified

PARC has worked with Gaza's fishermen to establish a Fishermen's Committee to represent the needs of the 4,000 fishermen and their families. The committee, which was elected by the community, has received capacity-building support from PARC to build skills and knowledge. Fishermen came up with innovative alternatives to help them increase their catch despite the imposed restriction. This involved using UV lights to attract more fish and therefore increase yields without having to fish beyond the six-mile limit. The committee also organised the rehabilitation and replacement of damaged boats and fishing equipment, helping to restore fishermen's livelihoods, and paid unemployed fishermen to do this work to provide short-term employment as a side benefit.

The committee is working to promote the rights of fishermen in the areas of social security, taxes and the rights of daily labourers, as well as supporting the rehabilitation of the seaport. The committee reports and documents human rights violations committed by the Israeli authorities to human rights organisations within Gaza, as well as to the United Nations. The Fishermen's Committee has also been successful in raising funding from other organisations including community-based organisations.

However, some solutions, such as lights for the boats, have now been affected by the rapid increase in the price of fuel. This is due mainly to a fuel shortage across Gaza largely outside the control of the Palestinian authorities: Israel controls the amount of fuel that goes in and out of Gaza. The community's adaptability will again be tested if this becomes a longer-term shortage.

iv) Learning

- Multiple interventions are often needed to support resilience, for example both short-term direct, practical support and capacity building to promote long-term solutions and representation are needed.

- The changing context means that solutions have to be constantly adapted, for example as fuel prices rise, or in the event of further military attack.

- Some solutions which are directly linked to the occupation can only be addressed through international advocacy and channels. It is important to recognise with communities and partners where they can have impact and benefit, and know where to focus energies and resources.

Furthermore, the project has provided opportunities for communities to come together to discuss their problems and options. Communities consulted for this study commented on how the process created spaces particularly for women and youth to play a greater role in their communities. The community committee members of Aqbet Jaber Refugee Camp commented on how there had been no space for the various community-based organisations to come together before and that they had independently pursued their own agendas. Being part of a common steering group had brought them together. Such actions help to build the social fabric of a community, itself an element of resilience.

c) Resilience approaches can strengthen national structures and accountability

Community actions can strengthen national structures. For example, in response to communities' limited access to emergency services caused by Israeli-imposed roadblocks and movement restrictions, the project has helped to set up Civil Defence Groups, also called Crisis Teams, which are undergoing training provided by the Palestinian Civil Defence (PCD). These teams are now linked to the PCD's national response system, with community members serving as official volunteers of the PCD, trained and able to respond to disasters within their communities.

Community action plans have often identified areas where the Palestinian Authority needs to play a more active role, whether at village, governorate or national level, for example in the provision of transport in Al Nwei'meh, Al Dyouk and Beit Skariya, where restrictions on movement are severely impeding communities' ability to function effectively. Community advocacy puts pressure on national structures to be more effective and responsive to community priorities, thus strengthening the national governance infrastructure while also increasing much-needed recognition of previously isolated or marginalised communities. The PVCA process has led to the communities taking on this advocacy work, forming a structure, and taking a leading role in calling for their rights themselves.

'The PVCA increased our awareness of risks. We knew about them before but did not do anything to prevent them. So now the council is working on these issues. OK we knew before, but with pressure and demands from the community we have to do more. When people start pressurising, we start to take more note'
Head of village council, Al Nwei'meh and Al Dyouk

d) Humanitarian elements form an essential part

Right: Land confiscated from farmers in Al Nwei'mah, Jericho. Community members are receiving advocacy and legal training and advice to assist them in claiming back land already taken, and to prevent this activity from continuing in future

of resilience in conflict settings

Building resilience is a long-term process but in this case it is taking place in a conflict setting, which has implications for the project and its activities. For example, Operation Pillar of Defence in November 2012 directly affected the farming and fishing communities PARC was working with on the resilience project in Gaza. The operation destroyed land, houses, farmland and boats. Christian Aid, PARC and representatives from the communities worked together to adapt the budget and activities to reflect the most recent change in context. The resilience project was adapted to ensure that the farmers and fishermen most affected by the operation benefitted from interventions to build resilience. This example illustrates the need for contingency funds to meet unexpected immediate needs.

Some aspects of vulnerability are caused by exposure to violence. Protection measures form essential parts of resilience building in this setting, and protection activities have formed part of community and partner activities, for example, farmers in the buffer zone in Gaza have taken measures to reduce the risk of being shot at by remote Israeli forces by only visiting their farmland during the day. (The buffer zone is a military no-go area that extends within the occupied Palestinian territory along the barrier between the Gaza Strip and Israel as well as at sea). Similarly, protective presence initiatives have been used in Gaza and in the Nablus Governorate communities, with PARC coordinating with the local communities and international volunteers to provide physical protection to farmers. The Protection Group established in Beit Skariya, and the work in all nine West Bank communities to establish Crisis Teams with the Palestinian Civil Defence, all strengthen the communities' ability to protect themselves, and feed into bigger national or international protection mechanisms.

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Case study 5. Disaster risk reduction: working with the Palestinian Civil Defence

i) Vulnerability and problems

None of the communities targeted through the project had any disaster risk reduction (DRR) knowledge, training or skills prior to the PPA project. In the West Bank, a commonly identified risk in the PVCAs was the lack of capacity and skills to deal with disasters, such as policies of the occupation, environmental hazards, fires on their land started by Israeli settlers, attacks by settlers on people and community structures such as schools, and road traffic accidents. Communities also identified, to different degrees, their isolation and exclusion from Palestinian Authority services and provision, either because they are in Area C, surrounded by settlements, or under UNRWA's jurisdiction. Despite their vulnerability, communities had little or no interaction, with the Palestinian Civil Defence, the West Bank agency responsible for DRR operations.

ii) Restrictions on solutions

Many of the vulnerabilities and problems experienced by these communities were a result of the occupation and therefore community members asserted they could have little impact. The Palestinian Civil Defence has limited access to communities across the West Bank due to the Area A, B and C restrictions.

iii) Solution identified

PARC, the YMCA and the YWCA worked with communities to identify which risks could be mitigated against, planned for, and better responded to, by interaction and partnership with the Palestinian Civil Defence. Partners then facilitated relationship building between the communities and the PCD.

While acknowledging that macro policies and structures of the occupation could not be circumvented (for example, communities cannot end settler violence), engagement with the PCD enabled communities to hold national Palestinian structures to account; to establish crisis teams within each community through which trained volunteers improve emergency preparedness and respond directly to disasters (both man-made and natural), and to reduce communities' isolation and vulnerability by integrating them into the West Bank national DRR response mechanism. This integration is crucial in ensuring these remote communities and the risks they face are recognised by the Palestinian Authority, and by municipal planning and policy. PARC is now working with the PCD, Ministry of Agriculture and UN agencies to develop a pilot PCD DRR project in communities across the West Bank, which focuses on responding to and preparing for fire risk and damage.

iv) Learning

- It is possible to enhance community capacity to reduce vulnerability without tackling macro policies of conflict and occupation, though in places this project has had success in addressing some of these policies.

- Working with regional and national bodies increases opportunities for the scale up of successful interventions.

- Conflict doesn't have to entirely prevent communities from holding institutions and government structures to account.

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Above: The Palestinian villages of Al Lubban and Amuriya in Area C of the Palestinian West Bank are surrounded on nearby hilltops by illegal Israeli settlements. These settlements mean severe restrictions to movement, access and resources for villagers, as well as settler violence

Endnotes

1   For example, it is a focus of DFID's humanitarian emergency response review; it is prominent in the key themes of the World Humanitarian Summit agenda for 2016; 'resilience and resilient nations' is at the heart of UNDP's strategy and resilience was a focus at the InterAction Forum 2013.

2   OECD *Fragile States 2013: Resource flows and trends in a shifting world,* p51.

3   Conclusions drawn from literature reviewed for this report, including Pail and Levine, 2012; Seth Kaplan, *Enhancing Resilience in Fragile States*, European Report on Development, prepared for the 2009 Conference 'Moving Towards the European Report on Development 2009'; Karen Westley and Vladimir Mikhalev, *The Use of Participatory Methods for Livelihood Assessment in Situations of Political Instability: A Case Study from Kosovo*, Working Paper 190, ODI, 2002; Katie Harris et al, *When Disasters and Conflict Collide: improving links between disaster resilience and conflict prevention*, ODI, 2013.

4   For example, K Harris, D Keen and T Mitchell, *When Disasters and Conflict Collide*, ODI, 2013.

5   A Pail and S Levine, *A Conceptual Analysis of Livelihoods and Resilience: Addressing the insecurity of "agency",* ODI HPG working paper, November 2012.

6   Christian Aid, *Christian Aid Good Practice Guide: Participatory vulnerability and capacity assessments*, Christian Aid, www.christianaid.org.uk/Images/Christian-Aid-good-practice-PVCA-guidelines-February-2013_tcm15-67264.pdf

7   UN OCHA OPT Presentation, October 2013.

8   World Bank, *West Bank and Gaza Area C and the Future of the Palestinian Economy*, Report No. AUS2922, October 2, 2013, http://reliefweb.int/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/west-bank-and-gaza-area-c-and-future-palestinian-economy

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11 UNCTAD, *Report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people: Developments in the economy of the occupied Palestinian territory,* UNCTAD, 13 July 2012.

12 Settlements are illegal according to Geneva convention IV, article 49.

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15 OCHAOPT Fragmented Lives: Humanitarian Overview 2012, p4

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18 World Bank, *West Bank and Gaza Towards Economic Sustainability of a Future Palestinian State: Promoting private sector-led growth*, World Bank Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Department, Middle East and North Africa Region, April 2012 pi.

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20 For example, Palestinian water consumption per capita in the West Bank is three and a half times less than that of Israeli settlers. In one part of the West Bank, fewer than 10,000 settlers use one quarter of the water consumed by the entire Palestinian population of the West Bank, some 2.5 million people. *Separate and Unequal*, Human Rights Watch, December 2010.

21 UN OCHA, *The Planning Crisis in East Jerusalem: Understanding the phenomenon of "illegal" construction,* April 2009.

22 Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey, January-March 2013, www.pcbs.gov.ps/

23 Peace Now, *Methods of Confiscation – How does Israel justify and legalize confiscation of lands?, Peace Now,* http://peacenow.org.il/eng/content/methods-confiscation-how-does-israel-justify-and-legalize-confiscation-lands

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